The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

Department of Communication Arts & Sciences

CIVIL WAR CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION AND THE RHETORIC OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

A Dissertation in

Communication Arts & Sciences

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2016

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines rhetorical tensions between commemorations of the U.S. Civil War centennial and discourses of the "short" civil rights movement from 1961 to 1965. Using theories of public memory, I interpret public arguments, speeches, correspondence, administrative memos, commemorative rituals, and acts of resistance across Civil War commemorations and the civil rights movement. My primary argument is that civil rights activists mobilized a rhetorical strategy of co-opting the centennial moment, repurposing Civil War memories to advance their cause. Prior to the early 1960s, "public memories" of the war typically ignored the issue of slavery and the war's impact on black communities. During the early 1960s, however, civil rights activists spoke directly about the Civil War, inserting racial politics into the processes of commemoration. This action transformed the centennial from an epideictic moment into a deliberative event that forced Americans to reckon with the ugly truths of the nation's racial history and to view commemoration as an opportunity not only for celebration, but also for political action.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not be possible without the support of many, many people. I would like to thank the Penn State Department of Communication Arts & Sciences and the Penn State College of the Liberal Arts Research and Graduate Studies Office for the generous grants that helped to fund my archival research. Special thanks also to the Penn State Center for Democratic Deliberation for their financial support, and for the opportunity to participate in the Dissertation Fellows Writing Group. Jack Selzer, our excellent writing group leader, and colleagues Craig Rood and Earl Brooks gave such helpful feedback on my prose.

I am so grateful to my advisor Kirt H. Wilson, whose guidance on this project and on professional matters throughout my degree has been invaluable to my growth as a rhetorical scholar. I am also appreciative of the support and encouragement of my doctoral committee members: J. Michael Hogan, Jeremy Engels, and Debra Hawhee. It has been an honor and a pleasure to learn from each of them throughout my Penn State career. And, thank you to David Zarefsky, Christian Spielvogel, and John Marsh for taking an interest in my project and sharing their expertise.

This project relies heavily on archival research, and I owe a debt of thanks to the following: the staff at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland; Cynthia Lewis and Elaine Hall at the King Center Library & Archive; Thai Jones at the Columbia University Rare Book & Manuscript Library; Stacey Chandler, Abigail Malangone, and Laurie Austin at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library; Kathleen Shoemaker at

Emory University’s Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library; and Catherine Medich and Bette Epstein at the New Jersey State Archives.

Finally, I am so thankful for my wonderful friends and family. Special thanks to my colleagues Laura Brown, Sarah Adams, Cory Geraths, Lauren Camacci, John Minbiole, and Hillary Jones, and to my dear friend Rebecca Lo. My parents, Brock and Mary, my sister, Hallie, and my Aunt Ruth and Uncle Ron are always there for me, and a constant source of encouragement. Marty and Arvo bring happiness to my life every day. Mark has been there with me for every step of my degree, and I will be forever grateful for his unfailing love and support.

Chapter 1

Introduction

On Friday, April 1, 1960, a group of twenty-four Burke High School students marched to S. H. Kress & Co., a segregated five-and-dime store in downtown Charleston, South Carolina, and sat at the lunch counter. For weeks they had studied nonviolent resistance under the leadership of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) branch President J. Arthur Brown. The students arrived at Kress & Co. at approximately 11:00 a.m., and despite being asked to leave they remained at the counter, singing freedom songs, humming, and saying prayers for six hours. Around 5:00 p.m. the police arrived, charged them with trespassing, and sent them to jail.[1] While this demonstration is not remembered as an iconic moment of the modern civil rights movement, its effects on the city of Charleston were significant. Charleston had a long and troubled racial history and was, like other Southern cities, slow to desegregate. The actions of these high school students embroiled the city in the civil rights movement, disrupting Charleston's resistance of progress toward black equality.

The student sit-ins that began two months prior in Greensboro, North Carolina inspired the Burke High School students to risk their action. On February 1, 1960, students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College started a widespread sit-in movement when they sat at the lunch counter of the Woolworth in downtown Greensboro. Although civil rights activists performed sit-ins "between 1957 and 1960 in

at least sixteen cities" across the country, this particular sit-in garnered a great deal of media attention and has "come to be known as the opening of the sit-in movement."[2] Lunch counter sit-in demonstrations occurred at approximately seventy Southern cities from February through April, involving more than 50,000 students.[3] These demonstrations "rapidly evolved into a mass protest that strengthened the civil rights movement and its organizational base; gave rise to the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a major student civil rights organization;" and inspired the formation of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the primary white student-led progressive organization of the 1960s.[4]

One year after the sit-ins had begun, members of the Civil War Centennial Commission (CWCC) gathered in Charleston as part of their official commemoration of the one-hundredth anniversary of the Civil War. President Dwight D. Eisenhower established the CWCC a few years earlier in September 1957. The Commission's charge was to plan official commemorations and memorials of the war. Eisenhower characterized the Civil War as "a demonstration of heroism and sacrifice by men and women of both sides" and as struggle out of which came "a transcending sense of unity and larger common purpose."[5] The CWCC was set to meet in Charleston in April of 1961 to hold its annual National Assembly meeting, but the event also was scheduled to coincide with the one-hundredth anniversary of the Confederate attack on the local Fort Sumter, the event that marked the start of the Civil War. Controversy erupted, however, when the site of the annual meeting—the Francis Marion Hotel—refused to accommodate Madaline A. Williams, the first African American woman elected to the New Jersey Legislature and a delegate with the New Jersey CWCC.

The hotel's refusal to provide Williams with a room because she was black garnered national attention, prompting local and national discussion about federal vs. states' rights, desegregation, and the history of Southern secession. The federal CWCC's original response to the hotel's decision was to claim that it could not question the laws of a state. The organization said that attendees would have to abide by the hotel's policy, that the event would proceed as planned, and that the state congresswoman would have to find different accommodations. Dissatisfied with this reaction, President John F. Kennedy sent a letter to the CWCC in which he argued that the Commission, as a federally funded and chartered organization, was subject to federal anti-segregation policies and was required to treat attendees equally.[6] Kennedy's letter was not persuasive, and the CWCC did not alter its position. Soon other parties became involved in the debate. Several state-level CWCC's including both New Jersey and New York threatened to boycott the Charleston meeting if desegregated accommodations were not provided for the attendees. In response to added pressure, Kennedy intervened again, holding a public press conference in which he stated: "any program of this kind in which the United States is engaged should provide facilities and meeting places which do not discriminate on the grounds of race or color."[7]

Although not widely recognized as such, Kennedy's press conference was a significant rhetorical event. It was his first public stand on issues related to black civil rights since assuming office earlier that year. The president had promised African Americans his support while a candidate, but he had yet to follow through on that promise. The words that Kennedy used at the press conference aptly reflected what his civil rights stance would be in the early 1960s. He would intervene in moments of

conflict only when they became a matter of national media attention and only when absolutely necessary. Furthermore, he would use legal arguments as the basis for his intervention. Ultimately, the CWCC acquiesced under Kennedy's pressure and moved its meeting to the federal government's Charleston Naval Station.[8] The majority of the national CWCC representatives, however, did not stay on the Naval Base. They opted to remain at the original segregated hotel instead.

Although the two Charleston events I have described may seem to be discrete, the civil rights movement sit-ins and the CWCC's National Assembly controversy, while not explicitly related, stood implicitly in rhetorical tension with one another. Not only did they occur in the same city, they both highlighted a disjunction between federal policies and state-level practices. Both drew national media attention and both highlighted the discrimination that African Americans faced daily in the South. More broadly, I contend that the rhetorical tension between Civil War commemoration and civil rights movement rhetoric spanned the entire period of 1961 to 1965. This tension became an opportunity for the civil rights movement and its leaders. By imposing themselves onto official efforts to commemorate the war, they were able to draw attention to the movement's demands for social justice.

My primary argument in this dissertation is that civil rights activists mobilized a rhetorical strategy of co-opting the centennial moment, repurposing Civil War memories in a manner that advanced their cause. Prior to the early 1960s, "public memories" of the war typically ignored the issue of slavery, the South's defense of the "peculiar institution," and the war's impact on black communities. Furthermore, the popular history about the Civil War or the War Between the States implied that it was a discrete conflict

confined only to the years between 1861 and 1865. Little thought was given to the reasons that led to the conflict or the political and physical violence that immediately followed it. During the early 1960s, however, civil rights activists spoke directly about the Civil War, inserting racial politics into the processes of commemoration. This action transformed the centennial commemoration from an epideictic moment into a deliberative event that forced Americans to reckon with the ugly truths of the nation's racial history and to view commemoration as an opportunity not only for celebration, but also for political action. In what follows, I will preview my dissertation by providing an overview of the historical and ideational contexts of my project, the rationale for my text selection, my methodology, and the major arguments of each chapter.

Historical and Ideational Contexts

This dissertation draws on three distinct lines of scholarly inquiry: (1) theories of public memory, particularly those pertaining to Civil War memory, (2) historical scholarship on the Civil War centennial, and (3) rhetorical scholarship pertaining to social movements, most notably the civil rights movement. In what follows, I provide an overview of the key aspects of these three fields that help to lay a foundation for this dissertation.

Theories of Public Memory

An analysis of practices of commemoration, such as those advanced during the period of the Civil War centennial period, necessitates a grounding in theories of public memory. In public memory studies, much has been made about whether and how different forms of memory should be labeled with specific terms or concepts. Terms like public memory, collective memory, cultural memory, social memory, and popular memory are sometimes debated at length for their utility and potential application. While I recognize the distinctions that many theoretical scholars have made concerning these terms, I follow the perspective articulated best in the Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott volume, *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*.[9] Dickinson, Blair, and Ott recognize that scholars like Edward S. Casey[10] distinguish between concepts such as public and collective memory; however, they believe—and I agree—that a rhetorical approach to these concepts necessitates no firm distinction between them. Therefore, I will use "public memory" and "collective memory" in this dissertation synonymously. I will, however, make important distinctions between other notions of memory, particularly the difference between what John Bodnar has labeled as "vernacular" and "official" memories.

There are several assumptions that guide public memory studies. These assumptions will inform my dissertation. First, public memories are social constructions. French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs articulated this view of public memories when he conducted the first systematic study of collective memory in the 1920s. He defined collective memories as "essentially a reconstruction of the past in light

of the present."[11] The notion of "reconstruction" recognizes that public memories are rhetorically crafted, mutable, and contextualized. Halbwachs's definition also points to a second defining feature, that public memories are typically crafted to serve the needs of the present. As Dickinson, Blair, and Ott aptly articulate, "memory is activated by present concerns, issues, or anxieties."[12] Yet just as certain aspects of the past are strategically remembered for the present, so too are some aspects willfully "forgotten," argues Bradford Vivian.[13] Third, public memory is theorized as capable of crafting shared identities for groups. In the words of David Lowenthal, "[t]he past is integral to our sense of identity; the sureness of 'I was' is a necessary component of the sureness of 'I am.'"[14] Likewise, "[a]wareness of history. . . enhances communal and national identity, legitimating a people in their own eyes."[15] Fourth, public memories are partisan and frequently contested. Jan Assmann eloquently captures this quality, stating: "That is the ambivalence of cultural memory. From one side it appears as the means of violent disciplining, from the other, as the means whereby we can be rescued from oblivion."[16] Ultimately, public memory, as Stephen H. Browne has argued, is an inherently rhetorical phenomenon, acting as "a means to recreate symbolically a history otherwise distant and mute."[17]

Civil War Memory: White Supremacy, Emancipation, and Reconciliation

Within the past few decades, scholars have taken up the task of studying the Civil War from the theoretical standpoint of public memory. That is, these scholars probe how and to what ends Americans have remembered the war over time. They recognize that

ever since the Civil War ended, Americans have debated its significance, advancing conflicting memories of this event in U.S. history. Most notably, historian David Blight's work[18] has influenced studies of Civil War memory to date.[19] He contends that there are three primary narratives of the Civil War that have shaped America: white supremacist, emancipationist, and reconciliationist.

The white supremacist narrative promoted racial violence and was advanced most commonly in the South. This narrative still traffics in various forms, most notably through nostalgic Southern mythologies. Rhetorical scholar Waldo Braden offers a detailed account of the rhetoric of these mythologies, arguing that there are three common narratives: Old South, Lost Cause, and Solid South.[20] The Old South mythology romanticized the Southern way of life: grand plantations, authoritative masters, refined ladies, and contented slaves. The Lost Cause mythology attempted to ameliorate Southern defeat and shame. These narratives stressed the imbalance of resources between Northern and Southern forces, framing Southerners as valiant for fighting despite the odds. They also glorified Southern military leaders such as Robert E. Lee, and framed Northerners as aggressors. Finally, the Solid South mythology was a rhetoric of brotherhood that imagined Southerners sticking together at all costs. Each of these narratives enforced and strengthened white supremacy in the aftermath of the Civil War.

The emancipationist vision of the war was starkly different. Held mostly by blacks and former abolitionists, this vision saw the war in terms of its relationship to black equality. In this understanding, the war was the result of a conflict over the economic and moral problem of slavery. The primary focus of the war from the perspective of African Americans was to secure freedom. This vision also held that

blacks themselves had been integral to the success of the war by joining the Northern army. Blight contends that, over time, black intellectuals like Frederick Douglass continued to maintain that "the Civil War had been an ideological conflict with deeply moral consequences."[21]

As the war became more distant in the minds of white Americans, they started to forget their hatred for Southerners and also the causes of the war itself, namely slavery. Thus emerged a new vision of the war—a reconciliationist narrative. These patriotic narratives promoted unity and glorified the heroic sacrifices of white soldiers on both sides. The danger of this memory, however, was that it obscured the moral and ethical considerations that had been part of the emancipationist vision. Especially as the reconciliationist narrative downplayed the importance of slavery for the preferred framing of a conflict over "states rights," the divisive issues began to fade away along with the war's promise of freedom for black Americans. Blight contends that while these three narratives have "collided and combined over time," the reconciliationist narrative ultimately trumped the emancipationist vision. He states, "the inexorable drive for reunion both used and trumped race."[22] Yet the tension between these two narratives did not end during the Reconstruction era; they were deeply entrenched in American culture and certainly were alive in the early 1960s.

Historical Scholarship on the Civil War Centennial

There have been a few key studies of the Civil War centennial written by historians. Robert Cook has given the Civil War centennial its most serious scholarly

attention in his 2007 book, *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961-1965*.[23] Cook draws extensively on archival research and offers a political history that centers primarily on the CWCC and state commissions' role in commemorating the Civil War across 1961-1965. He traces the origins of the Commission, as well as its evolution in leadership over time. He maps Southern responses to the centennial, particularly local commemorations of the Confederacy in Montgomery and Jackson. He offers a detailed account of the controversy that erupted in Charleston, South Carolina. And, he accounts for African American commemorations of the Emancipation Proclamation. He contends that by the end of the centennial, the "black emancipationist narrative," of which Blight has written, had resurfaced on the national level, primarily due to the civil rights movement's efforts, which occurred at the same time as the centennial.

David Blight probes the literary and intellectual history of the Civil War centennial through an analysis of the works of four important American writers: Robert Penn Warren, Bruce Catton, Edmund Wilson, and James Baldwin.[24] He contends that the unifying theme across these writers' works about the Civil War is a "tragic temperament." Warren grappled with the war by questioning the ability of humans to create their own fate, Catton authored stories about "real people caught up in a tragic bloodbath," Wilson argued that the Civil War "was not worth its sacrifices," and Baldwin critiqued America's failure to grapple with its history of slavery.[25]

John Bodnar's book *Remaking America* examines commemoration and patriotism in the twentieth century. He is largely concerned with two forms of public memory: "official" memories, crafted by institutionalized sources of power, and "vernacular"

memories of non-institutionalized entities.[26] Bodnar's discussion of the Civil War centennial commemoration examines both national and local events. He concludes that the national commemorative events were highly focused on promoting loyalty to the nation state, while local and vernacular events frequently reflected the goals of the national entities.

There are at least two additional, notable accounts of the Civil War Centennial. Richard Fried contends that the Civil War centennial commemorations were a form of "Cold War pageantry" that served to unify the nation and to promote loyalty to the nation state.[27] Additionally, Robert G. Hartje's book *Bicentennial USA: Pathways to Celebration,* assesses the Civil War centennial—among other commemorations—to provide advice for the United States bicentennial.[28]

These historians recognize the power that oratory and even informal forms of communication can have on the construction of public memories about the past. However, what distinguishes my research project from those of historians who have looked at the same time period is that first, I examine different events and discourses than what they have traditionally considered, and second, I use my training as a rhetorical critic to interpret the rhetorical dynamics at play within the rhetoric that circulated during the period. As such, my dissertation does not just point to the totality of rhetorical texts as evidence for a particular vision of history. Instead, I examine how language and symbolic action not only crafted particular visions of the past, but also encouraged individuals during the centennial period to engage differently with the present.

Social Movements and the Rhetoric of the Civil Rights Movement

This dissertation also seeks to build on rhetorical scholarship pertaining to the study of social movements and to the analysis of the civil rights movement, specifically. In what follows, I will overview these two bodies of literature to provide an account of major trends in scholarship to date.

Rhetorical studies of social movements heavily emphasize the role of rhetoric as a resource that is necessary for mobilization. This perspective is closely tied to the sociological study of resource mobilization among movements, viewing rhetoric as a form of capital that movements can use to obtain their desired goals. The work that illustrates this perspective most directly is Charles J. Stewart, Craig Allen Smith, and Robert E. Denton's book on the rhetoric of social movements.[29] In that text, they argue that rhetoric and communication provide social movements with an important persuasive resource for advancing their cause. David Zarefsky has advocated that an historical, as opposed to a theoretical, examination of social movements is best suited to the field of rhetoric. He contends that rhetorical scholars should study the rhetoric mobilized by movements to learn more about "the use of persuasion in efforts to mobilize for or to resist social change."[30] Over time, scholars have done this by examining "rhetorical acts of resistance" such as strikes, confrontational rhetoric, speeches, and protests.[31] Many of these studies examine how movements perform resistance, envisioning rhetoric as a "bodily art."[32] Further, rhetorical scholars such as Robert Asen and Daniel Brouwer have theorized "counterpublics," as an alternative to the concept of social movements.[33] This line of inquiry probes the role of rhetoric in what Nancy Fraser has described as "parallel

discursive arenas wherein members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs."[34] Rhetorical scholars have theorized the idea of the "counterpublic" through studies such as ones of the antisuffrage movement, the black press, and cyber activists.[35]

Rhetoricians who examine the "short" civil rights movement typically take at least one of three approaches: recovery of speeches, examinations of individual texts, and studies of particular rhetors. For instance, through archival research scholars such as Davis W. Houck, David E. Dixon, and Maegan Parker Brooks have compiled collections that recover women's voices, speeches that reflect the role of the Judeo-Christian religion in the movement, and the speeches of voting rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer.[36] Many rhetorical scholars have also shed light on single speeches or texts, particularly addresses delivered by Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as his "Letter from Birmingham Jail."[37] These analyses have enriched our understanding of important and iconic rhetorical moments from the movement. Others have examined multiple texts by a single rhetor in an effort to craft a picture of what that rhetor was like as a speaker and what their contributions to the movement were.[38] The discipline has also focused its attention on specific notable events from the movement, such as the brutal murder of Emmett Till and its historical and rhetorical contexts.[39] Beyond studies of the movement itself, individuals such as Kirt H. Wilson and Kristen Hoerl have examined how Americans remember the civil rights movement through film and other modes of remembrance.[40] The contributions of these studies are crucial, as they have recovered lesser-known speeches and marginalized voices from the movement, helped us to better understand the rhetoric of

charismatic leaders, shed light on the rhetoric of notable moments from the movement, and explored the way that the movement has been remembered over time.

Dissertation Contributions

This dissertation builds on these bodies of literature in several distinct ways. First, while there has been much written about history of the civil rights movement and Civil War commemorations, this dissertation attempts to read these histories differently. My project asks, what can be learned about the civil rights movement or about Civil War memory if we consider how the *rhetoric* of these two events were mutually constitutive? I move away from the potentially limiting dichotomy of reconciliation and emancipation, to probe how memory operated rhetorically amid the centennial through other narratives and for other purposes. And, instead of focusing on a single text, rhetor, or moment, this dissertation probes civil right movement rhetoric across the commemorative period of 1961 to 1965 to consider rhetorical trends and evolutions over a period of time. Ultimately, this project contributes to historical knowledge by demonstrating that Civil War memory played a role in transforming the civil rights movement from a local issue to a national one, on par with the Civil War and its significance.

I will also consider how the civil rights movement's mobilization of Civil War memory was a significant rhetorical mode through which Kennedy was prodded to change his civil rights stance in 1963. Rhetoric at the intersection of commemoration and political advocacy enabled a new vision of what presidential leadership could be. Commemorating the tragedy of the Civil War highlighted the difference between

procedural and revolutionary leadership, embodied in President Lincoln. By commemorating the memory of Lincoln's leadership, civil rights advocates applied the crisis of the Civil War to the context of the civil rights movement. This rhetorical move changed the stakes of the movement and called for bolder presidential leadership.

This dissertation also builds on existing social movement scholarship by theorizing how commemoration operates as a rhetorical resource for social movements to advance their cause. Public memory scholars have written extensively about the unifying function of commemoration. Commemorative practices, especially when initiated by official entities, function to constitute communities, to construct social and political values, and ultimately to reinstantiate power. However, in every commemorative moment there is also the potential for disruption, when memory narratives become objects of social or political critique. Oftentimes these disruptions are singular, fleeting, and easily managed. But occasionally, they become tied to something larger such as a social movement. I argued that this is exactly what happened amid the U.S. Civil War Centennial, which stretched from 1961 to 1965. In Chapters 2 through 5, I examine the specific rhetorical tactics advanced by civil rights advocates to hijack the Civil War centennial commemoration. And, in the concluding chapter I reflect at a more theoretical level on the advantages and disadvantages that social movements may face when using commemoration as a rhetorical resource.

Project Overview

In what follows, I offer an overview of the Civil War centennial commemoration period, to provide a general sense for the commemorative landscape of 1961 to 1965. I then offer a rationale for the texts and rhetorical moments I have chosen to analyze. Finally, I end by previewing each chapter of this dissertation and by reflecting on my primary research questions.

Overview of Civil War Centennial Commemoration Period

The Civil War centennial stretched from 1961 to 1965. Throughout this period, the dominant purveyor of Civil War memory was the Civil War Centennial Commission (CWCC). President Dwight D. Eisenhower established the Commission in 1957 in response to the campaigning of three organizations: the National Park Service, the Civil War Centennial Association (CWCA), and a well-established Civil War Roundtable located in Washington, D.C. Each of these entities had different visions for how the Civil War should be commemorated. The National Park Service hoped to renovate and expand historical sites across the country, including several historic Civil War battlefields. The historians and professionals who composed the CWCA sought to commemorate the centennial in a sophisticated and academic manner. The D.C. Roundtable, in contrast, wanted commemorations with popular and commercial appeal.

Eisenhower tasked the CWCC with reconciling these different commemorative agendas. The Commission's membership consisted of businessmen, members of local

Civil War roundtables, politicians, and historians. Karl S. Betts, founder of the D.C. Civil War Roundtable, and Major General Ulysses S. Grant III, grandson of the famed Union commander, were selected as Commission leaders. In contrast to the diversity of the Commission's membership, their commemorative agenda became quite unified. Their primary goal was that of fostering unity: "the centennial observance must be a new study of American patriotism—a study which should give use a deeper understanding of the immense reserves of bravery, of sacrifice and of idealism which lie in the American character."[41] The CWCC aimed to accomplish this by adopting a commemorative stance undergirded by a reconciliationist vision. As Grant outlined in a planning document: "The Civil War was the greatest test our country ever faced. Built of the heroism and endurance that were drawn from men and women of both sections by devotion to principles valued more than life itself, it was our most profound and tragic emotional experience… The loss, the gain and the experience itself are a common national possession."[42]

To advance this conception of the Civil War, the CWCC took a decentralized approach. The federal CWCC would provide the commemorative vision, but state and local entities would plan and execute the actual events. In the words of their published "Guide for Observance of the Centennial of the Civil War," the Commission would take a "true American approach" to commemoration. Commemorative events should be planned at the state and local level to commemorate histories relevant to those specific areas.[43] This approach resulted in hundreds of events organized by more than three hundred local CWCCs; "Virginia alone boasted 116 county and local commissions."[44] These commemorations included reenactments of events and battles that occurred on

their own land, as well as out-of-state battles in which units from their state took part. New Civil War markers were erected, graves of Civil War soldiers were located, and highways received new names in honor of Civil War military units, battles, and notable heroes. Educational activities such as essay contests, scholarships, and symposia featuring Civil War experts were prevalent, as were new volumes and research on the war. The federal CWCC itself organized only two national-level events: a commemoration of the Emancipation Proclamation centennial in September 1962, and an academic panel in honor of the Gettysburg Address in January 1964.

Methodology and Rationale for Text Selection

Given the multitude of commemorative events that transpired across the centennial period, there were many texts and events to choose from for this dissertation. I turned to archival research to determine which texts to analyze in my project. Ultimately, I examined: records of the CWCC at the National Archives (College Park, MD); the papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. at The King Center Archives (Atlanta, GA); the papers of John F. Kennedy at his presidential library (Boston, MA); records of the New Jersey CWCC at the New Jersey State Archives (Trenton, NJ); the papers of CWCC historian Bell I. Wiley at Emory University's Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library (Atlanta, GA); and the papers of historian Allan Nevins, who took over as Chairperson of the CWCC in 1961, located at Columbia University's Rare Book & Manuscript Library (New York, NY). Another crucial resource was newspaper and magazine coverage of the

civil rights movement and Civil War commemoration events, particularly coverage written by the black press.

Through my time in the archives, I was exposed to a wide range of texts that circulated during the centennial period, including speeches, published brochures and informational pamphlets, private memos and letters, event programs, etc. Ultimately, I chose to include texts in this dissertation that had the greatest influence over how people viewed the Civil War centennial and its connection to civil rights. What I mean by this is that in the archives I looked for rhetorical themes that appeared and reappeared across the texts that I analyzed, and chose to make those the focus of my analysis. Thus, my use of the word "influence" does not imply an "effects" argument. Rather, I tracked influence in the archives by locating those texts and rhetorical moments that contained themes that repeated themselves beyond one single moment of articulation.

Based on my archival findings as well as additional contextual research, I engaged in close textual analysis of texts both public and private, analysis of historical contexts, and comparative analysis of Civil War centennial commemorations and rhetoric of the civil rights movement. Throughout this project, the concepts of rhetorical theory and public memory guide my interpretative claims. While no single theory or theorists dominates my critical perspective, this project does constitute a form of public address scholarship that takes seriously the ability of commemorative rhetoric to open spaces for deliberation and political action.

Chapter Previews and Research Questions

In the chapters that follow this Introduction, I trace moments of rhetorical tension between the civil rights movement and Civil War commemorations, to examine how the movement rhetorically co-opted the centennial moment. Chapter 2 is an analysis of the four primary voices present across the commemorative period. The leaders who founded the CWCC constituted the first voice, which I label as the "conservative" voice of unification. These individuals propagated the reconciliationist Civil War memory that had come to dominate U.S. society; subsequently, the public memory that dominated their commemorative efforts ignored slavery and the problems of racial discrimination and "remembered," instead, the heroic sacrifice and bravery of white soldiers. While powerful, this public memory narrative was not indestructible. This became apparent at the 1961 CWCC National Assembly Meeting discussed at the start of the current chapter. The most controversial moment of this meeting—second only to the controversy over Madaline Williams—was a speech delivered by the keynote speaker, Southerner Ashley Halsey, who I argue represented the "white supremacist" voice. In the second chapter I analyze his speech, as well as public and private reactions of "liberal" commemorators, to argue that Halsey's address demonstrated the disruptive potential of "vernacular" memories, as well as the extent to which such singular, fleeting disruptions are easily managed by "official" commemorative entities. The fourth voice, I argue, consisted of leaders and activists from the civil rights movement. They offered a more significant challenge to dominant commemorative narratives by attempting to hijack the Civil War centennial movement and to repurpose it to advance the cause of the movement. My

discussion of these four voices serves to establish the historical and critical framework that will continue to evolve over the course of the remaining chapters.

In Chapter 3, I examine Martin Luther King, Jr.'s call for President John F. Kennedy to issue a second emancipation proclamation. Specifically, I argue that Dr. King used the anniversary and commemorative events planned to celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation to force Kennedy to be a more active supporter of black civil rights. King composed a lengthy "Appeal" document for the president and mobilized an associated oratorical campaign from 1961 through 1963. Through these discursive practices, King articulated a position for President Kennedy that made him not only the chief voice for a particular understanding of the Civil War centennial, but also as a moral, political leader in the 1960s. King called on Kennedy to use the Emancipation Proclamation centennial as an opportunity to eliminate segregation and discrimination through rhetoric and executive power—to act as a "twentieth century Abraham Lincoln." Unlike much of King's rhetoric, his call for a second emancipation proclamation did not depend on stylistic eloquence or spiritually transcendent ideas. Instead, this little-known, yet historically-significant moment reveals King's use of compositional and oratorical rhetoric as tools of political power and persuasion, aimed at shifting the rhetoric of the Civil War centennial and making the president accountable for the moral and social fabric of American society.

While King offered a powerful challenge to dominant modes of commemorating the Civil War, the movement rarely controlled the memory scape across the centennial. Chapter 4 examines one moment in which Civil War memory came back under the control of "official" entities. The CWCC's 1962 national commemoration of the

Emancipation Proclamation, held at the Lincoln Memorial, featured speeches by John F. Kennedy, Thurgood Marshall, Adlai Stevenson, and Nelson Rockefeller. In addition, it included an original poem written and delivered by Archibald MacLeish. Through my analysis, I recover three argumentative themes. First, Stevenson, Marshall, and Rockefeller transformed the Emancipation Proclamation from a document with a specific historical purpose into a symbol of abstract values such as freedom and spirituality that could be applied to present-day international politics. Second, Kennedy framed the proclamation in celebratory terms, as an American achievement that enabled progress. Both of these arguments, transformed the civil rights movement into a tool of American power for the Cold War. Finally, the only divergent voice of the day was MacLeish, whose poem critiqued the "blind remembrance" propagated by official commemorators and directly linked Civil War history to the modern-day struggle for civil rights.

The primary focus of Chapter 5 is a speech delivered by Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson in commemoration of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address on Memorial Day in 1963. I argue that Johnson's speech was an enactment of moral leadership—the kind that King had urged of Kennedy. His address offered a rededication of Gettysburg that transformed the battle into a fight for black equality. Thus, Johnson's speech demonstrated that civil rights activists' co-optation of the Civil War centennial was finally heard and acted upon, making its way into official commemorative discourse.

Finally, the Conclusion of this project offers a reflection on the advantages and disadvantages that civil rights activists faced in co-opting the Civil War centennial to advance their agenda. Drawing on contemporary examples, I also consider what happens

when social movements engage in what David Zarefsky has called a "rhetoric of history."[45]

My analysis in each of these chapters probes questions such as: What can we learn about the civil rights movement or about commemorations of the Civil War centennial if we consider how the rhetoric of these two events were mutually constitutive? What advantages and limitations did official commemorations pose as a rhetorical resource for the civil rights movement? How do white citizens structure their memories of the United States in relation to African American citizens? And, ultimately, what capacity do racial politics have to shape and manage public memories of America's past?

Notes

[1] For accounts of this sit-in protest, see "'The Fight was Instilled in Us': High School Activism and the Civil Rights Movement in Charleston," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 114 (January 2013): 4-28; Adam Parker, "A lunch unserved: How the 1960 Kress sit-in changed Charleston," *The Post and Courier* (Charleston, SC), August 3, 2013, accessed February 20, 2016, http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20130803/PC16/130809797.

[2] Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York, New York: The Free PRESS, 1984), 188.

[3] Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, 195; Stanford University Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, "Sit-ins," *Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Global Freedom Struggle*, accessed February 22, 2016, http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_sit_ins/.

[4] Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, 195.

[5] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "A Proclamation By the President of the United States of America," folder "Dummy Final Report," Box 30, Subject Files, 1957-1966, Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[6] "Kennedy Tells Civil War Group: Avoid Segregation," *Register* (Des Moines, IA), March 18, 1961, Box 20, Scrap Books, New Jersey Civil War Centennial Commission, Records: 1961-1965, New Jersey State Archives, Trenton, NJ.

[7] As quoted in, Kevin Allen, "The Second Battle of Fort Sumter: The Debate over the Politics of Race and Historical Memory at the Opening of America's Civil War Centennial, 1961," *The Public Historian* 33 (2011), 103.

[8] Robert Cook, "(Un)Furl That Banner: The Response of White Southerners to the Civil War Centennial of 1961-1965," *The Journal of Southern History* 68 (2002), 894.

[9] Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott, "Introduction," in *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, eds. Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 6.

[10] Edward S. Casey, "Public Memory in Place and Time," in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall Phillips (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 17-44.

[11] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 34.

[12] Dickinson, Blair, and Ott, "Introduction," in *Places of Public Memory*, 6.

[13] Bradford Vivian, *Public Forgetting: The Rhetoric and Politics of Beginning Again* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010).

[14] David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 41.

[15] Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 44.

[16] Jan Assmann and Rodney Livingstone, trans., *Religion and Cultural Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 92.

[17] Stephen H. Browne, "Remembering Crispus Attucks: Race, Rhetoric, and the Politics of Commemoration," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 85 (1999): 169.

[18] See, David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001); David W. Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory, and the American Civil War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002).

[19] For instance, in rhetorical studies, Blight's work is integral to, Christian Spielvogel, *Interpreting Sacred Ground: The Rhetoric of National Civil War Parks and Battlefields* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2013).

[20] Waldo W. Braden, "Repining over an Irrevocable Past: The Ceremonial Orator in a Defeated Society, 1865-1900," in *Oratory in the New South*, ed. Waldo W. Braden (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 8-37.

[21] David W. Blight, "'For Something beyond the Battlefield': Frederick Douglass and the Struggle for the Memory of the Civil War," *The Journal of American History* 75 (1989): 1162.

[22] Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 2.

[23] Robert Cook, *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961-1965* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007).

[24] David Blight, *American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).

[25] Blight, *American Oracle, 28.*

[26] John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

[27] Richard M. Fried, *The Russians are Coming! The Russians Are Coming!: Pageantry and Patriotism in Cold-War America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[28] Robert G. Hartje, *Bicentennial USA: Pathways to Celebration* (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History, 1973).

[29] Charles J. Stewart, Craig Allen Smith, and Robert E. Denton, Jr., *Persuasion and Social Movements,* 6th ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2012).

[30] David Zarefsky, "A Skeptical View of Movement Studies," *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 245.

[31] For an overview of this scholarship, see Robert Cox and Christina R. Foust, "Social Movement Rhetoric," in *The SAGE Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*, eds. Andrea A. Lunsford, Kirt H. Wilson, and Rosa A. Eberly (Washington, D.C.: SAGE, 2009), 605-627.

[32] For insight into how rhetoric, since antiquity, has been considered a performed activity, see Debra Hawhee, *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece* (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 2004).

[33] Robert Asen and Daniel C. Brouwer, eds. *Counterpublics and the State* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2001).

[34] As quoted in Asen and Brouwer, eds., *Counterpublics and the State*, 7.

[35] See, Kristy Maddux, "When Patriots Protest: The Anti-Suffrage Discursive Transformation of 1917," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 7 (2004): 283-310; Catherine Squires, "The Black Press and the State: Attracting Unwanted (?) Attention," in *Counterpublics and the State*, eds. Robert Asen and Daniel C. Brouwer (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2001), 111-136; Catherine Helen Palczewski, "Cyber-movements, New Social Movements, and Counterpublics," in *Counterpublics and the State*, eds. Robert Asen and Daniel C. Brouwer (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2001), 161-186.

[36] Davis W. Houck and David E. Dixon, eds., *Women and the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2009); Davis W. Houck and David E. Dixon, eds., *Rhetoric, Religion and the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006); Davis W. Houck and David E. Dixon, eds., *Rhetoric, Religion and the Civil Rights Movement,* vol. 2, *1954-1965* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014); Maegan Parker Brooks and Davis W. Houck, eds., *The Speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To Tell It Like It Is* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2011).

[37] See, for example, Kirt Wilson, "Interpreting the Discursive Field of the Montgomery Bus Boycott: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Holt Street Address," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8 (2005): 299-326; Mark Vail, "The 'Integrative' Rhetoric of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' Speech," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9 (2006), 51-78; Keith D. Miller, *Martin Luther King's Biblical Epic: His Final, Great Speech* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2012); James Jasinski and John Murphy, "Time,

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[38] For instance, Maegan Parker Brooks has written about Fannie Lou Hamer's vernacular persona and Robert Terrill has analyzed Malcolm X, arguing that his speeches act as interpretive guides for his audience members. Maegan Parker Brooks, "Oppositional Ethos: Fannie Lou Hamer and the Vernacular Persona," *Rhetoric & Public* Affairs 14 (2011): 511-548; Robert Terrill, *Malcolm X: Inventing Radical Judgment* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007).

[39] Davis W. Houck, "Killing Emmett," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8 (2005): 225-262; Christine Harold and Kevin Michael DeLuca, "Behold the Corpse: Violent Images and the Case of Emmett Till," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8 (2005): 263-286; Dave Tell, "The 'Shocking Story' of Emmett Till and the Politics of Public Confession," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94 (May 2008): 156-158; Davis W. Houck and Matthew A. Grindy, *Emmett Till and the Mississippi Press* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2008).

[40] See, for example, Wilson, "Interpreting the Discursive Field of the Montgomery Bus Boycott," 299-326; Kristen Hoerl, "Burning Mississippi into Memory?

Cinematic Amnesia as a Resource for Remembering Civil Rights," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 26 (2009): 54-79; Kristen Hoerl, "Mississippi's Social Transformation in Public Memories of the Trial against Byron de la Beckwith for the Murder of Medgar Evers," *Western Journal of Communication* 72 (2008): 62-82.

[41] *To Amend the Act of September 7, 1957, Providing for the Establishment of a Civil War Centennial Commission: Hearings on H.J.Res. 557, May 7, 1958, Before the Subcommittee No. 4 of the Committee on the Judiciary*, 85th Cong. (1958) (letter submitted by Major General Ulysses S. Grant: "Suggestions for Civil War Centennial Commemorations," January 15, 1958), online at ProQuest® Congressional Hearings Digital Collection (accessed January 15, 2014). Hereafter cited as "Grant, 'Suggestions for Civil War Centennial Commemorations.'"

[42] Grant, "Suggestions for Civil War Centennial Commemorations."

[43] The Civil War Centennial Commission, "Guide for the Observance of the Centennial of the War," February 1959, folder "Commission Publications," Box 9, Subject Files, 1957-1966, Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[44] Jared Peatman, *The Long Shadow of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013), 164.

[45] David Zarefsky, "Four Senses of Rhetorical History" in *Doing Rhetorical History: Concepts and Cases*, ed. Kathleen J. Turner (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 19-32.

Chapter 2

Commemoration as a Social Movement Strategy: How Members of the Civil Rights Movement Co-opted the Centennial Celebration of the Civil War

On June 17, 2015, twenty-one-year-old Dylann Roof walked into Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in downtown Charleston, South Carolina and opened fire on a Bible study group, killing nine people. The shooting was a hate crime that Roof deliberately inflicted upon members of the historically black church in an effort to "fan racial flames" of hatred and "exact revenge."[1] In the shooting's aftermath, a photograph surfaced featuring Roof holding a handgun and a Confederate flag. The photograph and, in particular, the presence of the Confederate flag, renewed a nation-wide debate over the Civil War emblem. On the one hand, those who defended the flag used "history and tradition" as reasons for the flag's continued role in Southern life.[2] Its presence on the statehouse grounds of South Carolina, for these individuals, helped to define the state's identity. Those who defended the flag's continued presence claimed that removing the flag would be an affront on the Southern way of life and an unnecessary act of political correctness. On the other end of the spectrum, opponents of the flag argued that it was a symbolic affirmation of slavery and a sign of continued racism. In an impassioned speech delivered on the floor of the House, civil rights activist John Lewis vehemently critiqued the Confederate flag: "It is a symbol of division, a symbol of separation. It is a symbol of hate. It is a relic of our dark past. We must defeat

every attempt to return this flag to federal property."[3] Historian David S. Reynolds wrote in the *Atlantic* that the Confederate flag should be removed. The "Lost Cause itself must be held up to the honest light of history, and revealed to be what it is: a white-supremacist fraud and a profoundly anti-American fairytale," he affirmed.[4] In his eulogy for Rev. Clementa Pinckney, the pastor of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, President Barack Obama argued,

> Removing the flag from this state's capitol would not be an act of political correctness; it would not be an insult to the valor of Confederate soldiers. It would simply be an acknowledgment that the cause for which they fought -- the cause of slavery -- was wrong -- (applause) -- the imposition of Jim Crow after the Civil War, the resistance to civil rights for all people was wrong.[5]

A month after Obama made these claims, activist Bree Newsome climbed the flagpole on the South Carolina Capitol grounds and "forcibly" removed the flag, highlighting the idea that "removing the Confederate flag is not a mere distraction. It is, instead, something to be thought about deeply, a provocation that could lead to a fundamental change in cultural attitudes on many issues."[6]

The American public is familiar with the present-day controversy over the Confederate flag and its place on government property in the South, but few realize that the flag over the South Carolina Capitol was raised, first, to commemorate the centennial anniversary of the Civil War. In 1961, the legislature chose to honor the state's part in the Civil War by placing the Confederate battle flag on the capital grounds. But while the ostensible reason for its presence related to the commemoration of the Civil War, at the time is was equally obvious that the state legislature's decision was a repudiation of the

civil rights movement. 1961, after all, was not only the start of memorial events meant to "recall" the Civil War, it was also the point at which the civil rights movement was evolving from a regional to a national movement. The sit-in demonstrations of 1960 had spread throughout the South and Atlantic states. The Freedom Bus Rides of May 1961, which involved groups of integrated students traveling from Washington, D.C. across the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi had illustrated just how widespread segregation was in the region. Indeed, there are many similarities between today's debates over the proper place of the Confederate flag and the complex politics of the Civil War Centennial commemoration. The Centennial, itself, was embedded with several key memory narratives, each of which thrived on ideologies unique to the different commemorative stakeholders.

The first and most dominant commemorative voice was that of conservative commemorators who founded the Civil War Centennial Commission (CWCC), the federal organization tasked with commemorating the war in an official manner. These individuals, led by Karl S. Betts and Ulysses S. Grant, III, sought to commemorate the war through narratives that promoted patriotism and unity. In contrast to this first group, a smaller subset of Commission members wanted to use the centennial events to reinvigorate nostalgic Southern mythologies that had originated at the time of the Civil War and that continued to thrive in pockets of the South. A third group, composed of liberal commemorators and Civil War historians eventually assumed leadership roles in the CWCC. Historians James I. Robertson and Allan Nevins, for example, embraced the unifying narrative of the conservatives but also tried to create commemorations that were both more inclusive of African Americans and more objectively educational. Finally, a

fourth group, largely comprised of civil rights activists and black journalists, argued that the commemorative agenda of the CWCC ignored the racial politics of that moment. They argued that no matter the political orientation of Commission members, conservative, Southern, or liberal, the Commission was undermining the goals of the civil rights movement and the struggle for black equality.

In this chapter, I examine each of these four voices in turn. In the first section, I consider how the conservative commemorators who founded the CWCC repeated a version of collective memory about the Civil War that had emerged in the decades immediately after the conflict. As I discussed in this project's introduction, in the aftermath of the Reconstruction era, a memory of the Civil War emerged that downplayed and, eventually, ignored issues of slavery and racial oppression. Instead, this memory highlighted the shared sacrifice and heroism of white soldiers, which had the immediate effect of promoting national unity. This collective memory narrative was still powerful in 1961, but it was not unassailable. In the aftermath of World War II, the consensus over what the Civil War "meant" to American history was under pressure. This fact was evidenced, first, at the CWCC's National Assembly Meeting in April 1961. In sections two and three of this chapter, I analyze a speech delivered at the assembly by Ashley Halsey, a Southerner who repudiated the unity theme of the dominant collective narrative in favor of a sectional history that condemned Northern aggression. Halsey's speech demonstrated the disruptive potential of "vernacular" memories, as well as the extent to which such singular, fleeting disruptions are easily managed by "official" commemorative entities. In the fourth section, I consider how individuals from the civil rights movement offered a more substantial challenge to the dominant commemorative

narratives by attempting to co-opt the Civil War centennial, itself. Their desire was to repurpose the centennial events by highlighting the past and immediate problem of racism. Activists used commemoration to propose a conception of citizenship premised on three key ideas: citizenship means questioning authority, facing the truth of the unpleasant past, and challenging dominant histories for the sake of justice.

The Conservative Commemorators and Public Memory's Unifying Function

In the early planning stage and first year of the Civil War centennial, the dominant commemorative voice was that of the conservative commemorators who constituted the CWCC. From its inception in 1957 through mid-1961, the CWCC was led by executive director Karl S. Betts, a "media-savvy" businessman and founder of the Washington, D.C. Civil War round table. He was joined by Ulysses S. Grant III, a veteran U.S. Army officer and grandson of the famed Union Army general.[7] Betts and Grant led the Commission in a commemorative agenda that promoted the willful forgetting of historical structures of racism by crafting Civil War memories centered on the shared sacrifice and heroism of white soldiers and citizens.

In so doing, the CWCC's commemorative agenda hinged on one of the most powerful functions of dominant public memories: unification. Memory scholars commonly argue that a key function of public memory is its ability to offer "a common identity, a construction that forwards an at least momentarily definitive articulation of the group."[8] Furthermore, there is an extensive body of literature that examines the unifying capacity of what John Bodnar has termed "official memories," public memories

propagated by institutionalized sources of power.[9] This scholarship recognizes that official public commemorations serve at least two important functions. First, they act as a form of social control. As Bodnar argues, official entities use public commemoration “to calm anxiety about change or political events, eliminate citizen indifference toward official concerns, promote exemplary patterns of citizen behavior, and stress citizen duties over rights.”[10] Second, through the process of unification, official public commemorations have the capacity to obscure and supplant “vernacular memories,” alternative memories that sometimes work against the interests of public officials. Most of the time, vernacular memories are “derived from the lived or shared experiences of a small group” or they are articulated by small, local entities instead of through institutionalized sources of power.[11] Vernacular memories can challenge official memories, not only because they are rooted in recollections of small groups and individuals who “lived” or “experienced” the events in question, but also because vernacular memories serve the interests of a locale rather than the typically abstract or wider interests of institutions, museums, and state officials. Official memories, then, tend to displace the “pluralistic dimensions” of vernacular cultural memories, which are typically fleeting and easily managed.[12] Official memories act as “ideological weapon[s]” that do violence to vernacular, cultural memories by controlling “the historical narratives in which people understand themselves.”[13]

Initially, the CWCC’s commemorative agenda operated both to unify white Americans through a celebratory narrative about brave war heroes who fought for their convictions and to eclipse the very powerful regional Civil War memories that continued to thrive in the South. It did this through a rhetoric that promoted consensus but that did

not completely squeeze out Southern memory narratives. That is, the leaders of the CWCC recognized that they could advance their goals only if they accommodated powerful Southern interests who insisted on participating in the celebrations. The Commission did this by allowing select types of Southern mythology to dictate their commemorative stance. Evidence for this claim is found in the CWCC's "Guide for the Observance of the Centennial of the Civil War," printed during the centennial planning stages in February of 1959.[14] The back cover of this guide features an illustration by Angus MacDonall entitled "Bygones." The caption that appeared with the illustration read: "This characteristically American painting… might well serve as the symbol of the forthcoming Centennial."[15]

The illustration was printed originally in *McClure's Magazine* in 1911. In 1912, *Life Magazine* featured it in several issues and also offered a free print of the illustration as an incentive for subscribers. "Bygones" thus circulated as a piece of nostalgia in American culture at the time of the Civil War's fiftieth anniversary. Fifty years later, the CWCC appropriated the image and positioned it as an emblem of the impending centennial anniversary, thus reinforcing the themes of the earlier anniversary.

The *McClure's* illustration reveals the CWCC's nostalgia for the commemorative climate of the war's fiftieth anniversary. The scene depicted is one in which two aging Civil War veterans—a Southerner and a Northerner—engage in a conversation in a peaceful outdoor setting. The illustration's title—"Bygones"—hints at the nature of their conversation. The two men are embodiments of the expression "let bygones be bygones," and it can be inferred that the conversation in which they are engaged revolves entirely around topics held in common: their mutual experience of sacrifice and suffering during

the war and their common interest in moving forward together. What the image also implies is that both men are engaged in a collective act of forgetting those issues about which they do not agree.

Yet this collective act of forgetting is not politically or socially neutral. Although the reminiscing is peaceful, it is performed entirely on Southern, white terms. The oak trees draped with Spanish moss that frame the scene and tall white columns of a plantation home visible in the background clearly signal a Southern setting. The two are soldiers dressed in their respective blue and grey uniforms, but they are now engaged in a pleasant conversation over cigars and characteristically Southern mint juleps. In the image, the Southern veteran also assumes a more active role. He is seated on the edge of his seat, arms propped on the table, one hand raised to point at his friend who relaxes, leaning back in his chair, legs crossed. The finger is not pointed aggressively, but rather to denote a civil difference of opinion.

The fact that the CWCC revived “Bygones” as an emblem for the centennial commemoration reveals, as well, a temporal association between the public memories of 1911 and the memory that the Commission sought to create in 1959. This collective memory was tied to a romanticized notion of the Old South made anew through post-war reconciliation. David Blight describes the climate of the fiftieth anniversary, stating that “reconciliation joined arms with white supremacy in Civil War memory at the semicentennial in an unsteady triumph.”[16] One of the most notable moments in which this collision of memory occurred, argues Blight, was the 1913 Gettysburg reunion at which 53,000 white veterans gathered for a “segregated affair where the issues of slavery, emancipation, and racial equality were absent.”[17] The commemorative event ignored “the

ghost of slavery" in favor of remembering the Battle of Gettysburg as "an epic conflict among whites," transforming the event into a national myth.[18]

It is this myth that "Bygones" depicted in 1911 and that the CWCC attempted to replicate in 1959. In fact, CWCC founding documents demonstrate that the spirit of "letting bygones be bygones" became the central mode of remembrance propagated by the Commission in the early 1960s. It was also how the Commission attempted to promote interest among white Americans. For instance, President Eisenhower, Ex Officio member of the CWCC and the President who established the Commission, articulated two competing memories of the Civil War. In a letter published in the introduction of the CWCC's booklet "Facts about the Civil War," he wrote that the Civil War could be remembered "as a period in our history in which the times called for extraordinary degrees of patriotism and heroism on the part of the men and women of both the North and the South."[19] This official Civil War memory focused on the common experiences of the war itself. Alternatively, Eisenhower also asserted that the war was a "tragedy" out of which "emerged a new nation unified, with a new degree of national self-consciousness."[20] Both framings of the war—as a common struggle and a shared tragedy—promoted unity at the cost of forgetting sectional tensions and the divisive issue of slavery that brought the war about in the first place.

At the start of the centennial period, the CWCC encouraged Americans to organize and participate in commemorative events, stating: "In so doing, young and old alike will be inspired to adopt a truly American way of thinking, and tribute will be paid to the memories of our forefathers who took part in the bitter conflict to determine the exact path our national government should follow."[21] The CWCC positioned itself as the

entity that could guide Americans through the complexity of the conflict, arguing that Congress established the Commission "believing this action to be for the making of better Americans."[22] The CWCC posited that the Centennial was a "splendid opportunity to bring home to the citizens of our country the great lessons in Americanism learned from the Civil War."[23] These lessons were arguably the importance of personal bravery, national unity, and American patriotism.

Thus, from 1960 through mid-1961, the CWCC encouraged state organizations to engage in commemorative events that reinforced a sense of national unity and reconciliation. These commissions planned events primarily commemorating their own state's participation in the Civil War, including activities such as battle reenactments, educational symposia, the publication of new books and research about the war, and ceremonies marking important Civil War events, military units, and notable heroes. Amid these commemorative events, an official memory of the conflict thrived that made the issues of slavery, racism, and oppression invisible.

Southern Mythologies and the Disruptive Role of Vernacular Memories

Yet within any commemorative moment there lies the potential for disruption. This was undoubtedly the case with the CWCC's unifying commemorative agenda, which became the object of frequent contestation and controversy across the centennial period. Try as it might, it quickly became clear that the CWCC's attempt to constrain which memories were celebrated and which were excluded was impossible. One significant moment of contestation occurred amid the CWCC's Fourth National

Assembly meeting, April 11-12, 1961. Every year since its founding in 1957, the CWCC had held an annual National Assembly, to which it invited members of the state-level commissions and other Civil War commemorative organizations. In 1961, the CWCC accepted an invitation from the South Carolina Commission on the War Between the States to hold its fourth National Assembly meeting in Charleston. The fact that the South Carolina Commission used the words "War Between the States" rather than the Civil War was an ominous foreshadowing. The event would be held in conjunction with a grand ceremony to mark the centennial of the attack on Fort Sumter, located on an island off the coast of Charleston. The CWCC readily accepted the invitation, eager to take advantage of the media attention to be gained from hosting its meeting alongside this centennial commemoration.[24] The meeting's agenda involved a mixture of administrative matters, such as discussion of National Park Service plans for the centennial, reports from state commissions, discussion of tourism opportunities, organizing at the local level, and the role of advertising. Commemorative events were included as part of the Assembly, including the dedication of a monument memorializing the first shot fired in the attack on Fort Sumter and the introduction of a Fort Sumter stamp, the first of a series of Civil War stamps to be issued over the course of the Centennial.[25]

The most notable event of the Assembly meeting, however—second only to a controversy surrounding the refusal of the event hotel to accommodate Madaline Williams discussed in the introduction—was the keynote address delivered by Ashley Halsey, Jr., Associate Editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*.[26] The federal CWCC selected Halsey as their keynote speaker and touted his credentials as a native Charlestonian, former naval intelligence officer, and journalist who was currently publishing a Civil War

centennial series in the *Saturday Evening Post*.[27] The Commission, however, did not anticipate that Halsey's speech would disrupt the CWCC's official commemorative stance by articulating a confrontational and bitter regional rhetoric that revived romantic, Southern mythologies. As we shall see, Halsey's speech was rooted in the personal experiences of his family and the memories of Charleston's "mistreatment" at the hands of outsiders. In this way, Halsey's vernacular memory engaged in what Jeremy Engels has termed a "politics of resentment."[28]

Both in terms of its style and content, Halsey engaged in a confrontational, resentful rhetoric. Engels argues that this type of rhetorical approach is a "strategy of distraction that focuses attention on the grievance as an excuse to taunt and offend."[29] This rhetoric was evident, for example, in a narrative that Haley presented about his grandmother. According to him, F.D.R. had decided to visit Charleston in 1936. To greet the president, Halsey said that his grandmother flew an "enormous" Confederate flag from the "second-floor piazza" of her home, which attracted the attention of White House correspondents. Halsey narrated,

> Grandmother and her Confederate flag, a sort of Barbara Fritchie[30] in reverse, held the lead of the news story until Mr. Roosevelt did a very unkind thing to grandmother. He snatched the headlines away from her. Instead of making a commonplace little talk as scheduled, he launched into an important unexpected speech on foreign policy. Grandmother and her flag became a side item, and there has been a feeling ever since that F.D.R. was not quite the gentleman that he might have been.[31]

While this eccentric story seems a bit out of place for a keynote speech about the Civil War, it actually reinforced a theme that Halsey then drew throughout his speech. The narrative of his grandmother operated as an analogy for the injustices Halsey believed the North had inflicted upon the South in the past and, again, amid the Centennial anniversary. Just as F.D.R.'s speech drew attention away from his grandmother's Confederate flag, so too did the CWCC's unifying agenda obscure the Civil War memory narratives that were unique to the South. Halsey made this connection between past and present when he followed his story with the claim: "I cannot stand before an audience in Charleston without being true to grandmother and in a sense 'showing you our flag'."[32] Embedded within this metaphorical flag was a particular agency: an allegiance to regional identity premised on a rejection of black civil rights concerns *and* of the politics of reconciliation. But, the flag also operated as a distraction that drew attention away from the "real" lessons of the Civil War. It incited resentment in Southerners who identified with Halsey's narrative, in white liberal commemorators who were embittered toward Halsey's disruptive vernacular memories, and in civil rights advocates who recognized that Halsey's nostalgic rhetoric endorsed the willful forgetting of historic and contemporary systems of white supremacy.

Halsey was committed to highlighting regional suffering, not the shared military experiences lauded by dominant memories of the Civil War. Instead of framing national unity as the enduring legacy of the war, Halsey focused on disunity in the war's immediate and long-term aftermath. In so doing, he invoked romantic Southern mythologies. The South is the most self-mythologized region of the nation, largely because it is the one region that had its identity torn apart in the Civil War. Historians

such as W. Fitzhugh Brundage have explored these narratives, commenting that Southerners "have used history to mold their deepest sense of self and to articulate their aspirations for the region they call home."[33] These romanticized narratives advanced a particular way of remembering the South, both pre- and during the Civil War, and soon after the conflict became a way that Southern orators, politicians, and citizens refashioned their identity in the midst of military defeat. As historian Gary W. Gallagher has argued, "white southerners emerged from the Civil War thoroughly beaten but largely unrepentant."[34] In this climate, Southerners looked for "a balm for their bruised egos" and to answer questions regarding why the South had lost.[35] Romanticized Southern mythologies became this balm. These narratives advanced public memories of the war that softened the blow of Southern defeat. One strand of these mythologies articulated a "legend of the Old South," which framed the Civil War as a fight to maintain the culture of the antebellum South: "great plantations, the patriarchal master, the genteel lady, and, of course, the happy slaves."[36] Lost Cause mythologies justified the South's military loss. For instance, these narratives maintained that the industrial North possessed resources that the South could not match, but even knowing that fact brave Southerners fought anyway. Lost Cause narratives also focused on the uneven number of soldiers that existed between the North and the South. They praised the bravery, heroism, and sacrifice of Southern soldiers, and lauded the strategic superiority of Southern military leaders such as Robert E. Lee. There was also the "Solid South" mythology that "advanced the concept that Anglo-Saxon southerners must stand united in order to meet threats from without and the uprising of the Negroes from within."[37] These narratives each propagated

a rhetoric of white supremacy that ignored the role that slavery played in inciting the Civil War.

While the romanticized Southern mythologies had not disappeared at the time of the Civil War centennial, they were narratives that the CWCC attempted to suppress from official commemorative events so that controversy would not emerge. Halsey, however, apparently embittered by this official commemorative stance, refused to accept the CWCC's suppression of these vernacular and regional memories. He became the vehicle through which these narratives were heard. For example, he argued that the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments were illegitimate, because they had been passed unethically. He claimed,

> All voters who had served the Confederacy were disenfranchised. With nearly all white Southerners thus barred from the polls by bayonets, the two rejected amendments were rammed through to enactment. It was by this incredibly arrogant and undemocratic arrangement that those amendments became part of our Constitution and are so today.[38]

In opposition to the CWCC's attempt to promote unity, Halsey cast Southerners as victims of Northern aggression and pride. Of particular note here is the fact that this version of history supported Halsey's stance on the modern civil rights movement. He argued that the two amendments—forced into the Constitution against the South's wishes or wisdom—were "the basis of our present racial unrest."[39]

There were at least two implications of Halsey's focus on regional memories in this account of history. First, it called into question the idea that the enduring legacy of the Civil War was national unity by highlighting white, regional disunity in the aftermath

of the war and its enduring consequences. Second, it offered an inaccurate and rather troubling historical rationale for white Southern opposition to black civil rights in the 1960s. For instance, later in his speech Halsey described a recent visit to Philadelphia during which someone asked him angrily: "Why won't the South give the Negroes their rights?"[40] He contended, "The answer is that the South never has consented to those rights. The amendments in question were imposed upon the conquered South… by military force and not by democratic process."[41] Any fault that might be found in how white Southerners were reacting to the demands of black activists should be laid at the feet of the North. It was the North's decision to force the amendments on the South after the Civil War that had led to the current conflict of issues like segregation.

Halsey's treatment of Southern identity was disruptive, then, in two senses. His account of Civil War history distinguished between Southern and Northern experiences, thus complicating the unifying narratives offered by the CWCC and those organizations that had adhered to its directives. Furthermore, Halsey's commemorative rhetoric linked the Civil War past with the civil rights present, a polarizing decision that the CWCC had tried to avoid. By mobilizing the Lost Cause mythology to reframe the South's relationship to 1960s racial politics, Halsey's account transformed both the white experience of the Reconstruction era South and the immediate experience of Southern whites into one of common victimage.

Charleston was kariotic for Halsey, a native Charlestonian with a long family history in the area, in another sense. It afforded him the opportunity to speak about the Civil War in very personal terms. For the CWCC's version of commemoration, place mattered, but only in an imagined sense, as a way to envision and actualize a unified

nation. In Halsey's rhetoric, Charleston mattered as a place not because of its historical importance, but rather for the particulars of lived, personal experience that he narrated. His speech consisted of stories of Civil War heroes who came from Charleston—family stories and personal memories. In Halsey's view, remembrance was a deeply personal process; consequently, it did not include most of his audience and it definitely did not include the national leaders of the CWCC. In fact, Halsey's vernacular account of Civil War history was quite the opposite: it was exclusionary. He revealed this perspective in a moment of self-reflexive clarity, stating, "I speak of my relatives not in eulogy or exaltation, but because their Civil War experiences represent an intimate personal yardstick which is perhaps the most accurate measurement of what that awful war did to the South."[42] Through this claim, Halsey positioned personal experiences as the most appropriate tools for assessing how the Civil War should be remembered. Further, from his vantage point, the national commission did not have the same access to these memories that he did. Halsey reflected on the stories that he had included in his speech, stating: "There I go----talking family. This is a pernicious local custom, and I hope you will forgive me for it, because I intend to do more of it."[43] Embedded in this unapologetic stance is a recognition that the personal nature of his rhetoric was disruptive; it flew in the face of the official memory advanced by the CWCC. This privileging of personal experience was a strategic move—one deeply rooted in the Southern tradition of orality— that complicated the unifying narratives of shared tragedy and common heroism that the CWCC preferred. Halsey's speech implicitly argued that the nation could not commemorate the Civil War as a shared experience when those who lived the war and its aftermath experienced it in such different, individual and regional, terms.

Liberal Commemorators:

Managing the Disruptive Force of Halsey's Vernacular Voice

Ashley Halsey succeeded in disrupting the official memory of the CWCC, but the impact of that disruption likely was not what he intended. Rather than embrace or even acknowledge the legitimacy of Halsey's memory, his speech in South Carolina became an opportunity for a third voice, a more liberal, academic voice to enter the commemoration process. Specifically, a number of individuals who represented interests not tied to the South chose this moment to first condemn Halsey's speech and then to recommend changes to the commemorative process.

The first critique came from Donald Flamm, Chairman of the New Jersey Centennial Commission. Flamm already had demonstrated a more liberal position when he, along with his state commission, threatened to boycott the CWCC's Fourth National Assembly. The boycott threat came after learning that a Charleston hotel had refused to accommodate their African American delegate, Madaline Williams. The day after Halsey delivered his inflammatory remarks, Flamm made a statement at the Fourth National Assembly meeting in which he censured Halsey for his resentment-inciting rhetoric. He said that Halsey's speech was "calculated to incite bitterness, to open old wounds, and for good measure to rub salt into the tortured flesh."[44] In particular, Flamm took issue with Halsey's attack on Abraham Lincoln and with Halsey's "pattern of character assassination" directed at members of the New Jersey commission.[45]

Calling attention to Halsey's affective rhetoric devalued the vernacular memories he offered. Flamm insisted that the speech was not only divisive, it also was a form of

emotional manipulation, designed to create hard feelings in the South and among Southern delegates to the Assembly. In addition to this critique, Flamm articulated an instructive vision of what Civil War centennial commemoration *should* entail:

> Perhaps I have been naïve about my understanding of the purpose and objectives of the Civil War Centennial. We, the members of the New Jersey delegation, believe that the primary objective is to achieve good will and understanding between all the states of the Union and all the people of our Country.[46]

This was a crucial statement. Although Flamm held a more liberal commemorative position, his vision of commemoration aligned with that of the official commemorators who had emphasized the "shared sacrifice / shared heroism" memory. He, too, argued that the primary goal of commemoration should be unification, but he went one step further to suggest that the unification should include African Americans as well as people of European descent. Unity, from Flamm's more liberal position, must not come at the expense of black history. It needed to tell that history, too.

Although Halsey's speech unsettled the federal CWCC's unifying narrative, representatives of both the federal and state-level commissions responded quickly to manage the disruption. Flamm depoliticized Halsey's speech as a display of "bad manners and bad judgment" that contrasted greatly with the "noble effort" of memorializing the Civil War.[47] He also undermined Halsey's attempt to use Charleston as support for his personal, regional arguments, by dissociating him from the city. Flamm stated,

> We, the members of the New Jersey Civil War Centennial Commission are thankful to the hospitable people of Charleston for their cordiality and friendship

> and we want them to know that despite Mr. Halsey's claim to being one of them, we don't hold it against them and we leave Charleston with pleasant memories of the warmth of their reception to us from the time we arrived at daybreak yesterday until this very moment.[48]

This section of Flamm's speech strategically aligned the place and people of Charleston with the goal of fostering "good will and understanding" through the Centennial, while simultaneously positioning Halsey as an outsider. In this way, Flamm attacked one of the ideas central to Halsey's speech—that his personal experiences as a Southerner and Charlestonian gave legitimacy to the personal, regional memories that, he believed, should constitute the Civil War centennial celebration in the South.

Bell Wiley, the federal CWCC's historian, also critiqued Halsey, inserting an academic voice into the conversation. From the start of the centennial, Wiley had expressed his desire for a more historical and objective approach to commemoration. In this regard, he had disagreed with the commercialized events planned by CWCC Executive Director Karl S. Betts. As I described in the Introduction to this dissertation, the CWCC was created at the prodding of two organizations: the Civil War Centennial Association (CWCA) and the Civil War Round Table of the District of Columbia. Wiley was a member of the former, a small, nonprofit organization with a "select" membership that included prominent historians such as Allan Nevins and Bruce Catton. The CWCA's mission and explicit role in the national effort to commemorate the Civil War was to propagate "good scholarly history."[49] But, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower first established the CWCC, the resulting Commission was composed of members of both the CWCA and the D.C. Roundtable. Betts had founded the D.C. Roundtable, an

organization that envisioned commemorations that appealed to the mass public, "democratic and commercialized" events that would "entertain as well as educate."[50] Conservative commemorators such as Betts and CWCC Chairperson Ulysses S. Grant, III were designated to lead the commission, while the academic members of the commission, such as Wiley, were given representation on the board. This composition resulted in certain tensions in the Commission's commemorative agenda from the beginning, but these tensions came to a head after Halsey's inflammatory speech.

In a letter to Charlotte Capers, Director of the Mississippi State Department of Archives and History, Wiley reflected on Halsey's speech: "If I could have found a hole to crawl through while he was giving his speech (which was the speech at the banquet) I should have gladly done so."[51] In this sentence, Wiley dissociated himself from Halsey's speech and the ideology it contained. In the process, he avoided any blame for Halsey's remarks. Like Flamm, Wiley also juxtaposed Halsey's speech against the unifying goals of the CWCC, claiming that Halsey "got so highly provocative and inflammatory that it undid all that we had worked so hard to build up in the way of amity and concord."[52] Here Wiley implies that Halsey was a rogue element who defied his sanctioned role as the CWCC's Assembly keynote speaker. The blame for these actions, in Wiley's framing, fell not only to Halsey but also to the conservative leaders of the commemoration, particularly CWCC executive director Betts. Wiley argued that, "Our executive director sadly bungled this business from beginning to end. I am very unhappy with him and the way that he has conducted the affairs of the Commission."[53] Ultimately, Betts's selection of Halsey as the keynote speaker (among other reasons) cost the executive director his position. In the summer of 1961, Wiley and other liberal members

of the CWCC led a "covert effort to oust" Betts, which ultimately succeeded.[54] Betts was fired in August 1961, and became a scapegoat for the disruption caused by Halsey's vernacular rhetoric.

As the responses of Flamm and Wiley suggest, the primary concern of the liberal commemorators was how the speech turned what was meant to be a "neutral" commemorative moment into a political one. Arguably, liberals from the state and federal commissions like Wiley and Flamm recognized that Halsey's Lost Cause rhetoric was untenable amid the shifting political climate of the early 1960s. These commission members were the same individuals who had supported Madaline Williams when the event hotel refused to accommodate her. Yet despite their censure of Halsey's speech, it is important not to over-read their reaction. The liberals who helped to lead the commemoration efforts were discomforted only by the inflammatory nature of Halsey's Lost Cause rhetoric and how it disrupted the conciliatory nature of commemorative events to date. Halsey's rhetoric, in effect, was too radical. It undermined the reconciliationist interpretation of the Civil War that had developed by the turn of the twentieth century. As Bell Wiley said in a talk delivered to the Society of American Archivists in December 1959, "As the South views the Confederate flag, of which it has every reason to be proud, it ought to regard that flag as a symbol of the suffering, the sacrifice, and the greatness of our forefathers, and not as an emblem of hatred and continuing defiance."[55] This statement aptly represents the ideology embodied by much of the liberal rhetoric of the time. Liberal commemorators expressed an allegiance to narratives that would unify the nation while they also trusted that their more conservative colleagues would show discretion by not making their old Lost Cause narratives public. If

the conservatives wanted to cling to their outdated ideas about Southern heroism and white supremacy, the liberals would not object unless and until those attitudes caused public embarrassment. Halsey had crossed that line; consequently, the liberal commission members were forced to address the matter.

The stance of the liberal commemorators no doubt seemed reasonable and even equitable to those members; nevertheless, among those civil rights activists who constitute the final voice I will analyze in this chapter, it was too little, too late. As we shall now see, black activists argued that the liberal ideology might purport political neutrality, but it was deeply biased against the interests of the civil rights movement. It might make room for African Americans in the context of commemoration, but it did not take seriously the claim that the racist oppression that had caused the war continued to the present day. For black journalists, historians, and activists, the original conservative leaders of the CWCC and the new liberal, academic leadership of the origination were more or less indistinguishable. They were all implicated in efforts to ignore the past and present reality of racism in America.

The Civil Rights Movement: Co-opting the Centennial Commemoration

Advocates from the civil rights movement mounted a significant challenge to the CWCC's dominant mode of commemoration. Individuals within the movement attempted to co-opt the commemorative moment of the Civil War centennial to advance their cause. In so doing, I will argue that the movement used rituals of the centennial commemoration as a "technology of citizenship." Ekaterina V. Haskins theorizes commemorative

practices as "technologies of citizenship," stating that "mnemonic practices serve not only as tools of ideological domination or political self-assertion, but also as rhetorical invocations of identity that can expand or limit our civic horizon as well as induce or discourage identifications with various others."[56] Haskins explores how participatory commemorative practices enable more inclusive practices and conceptions of citizenship. Her conception of commemoration as a citizenship technology also helps us to understand how social movements can mobilize already established practices of commemoration or commemorative moments to advance their cause. In the case of the civil rights movement, commemoration was a technology that allowed the movement to position citizenship in terms similar to what Robert Asen calls "a performance, not a possession."[57] The civil rights movement mobilized rhetorical tactics to co-opt the Civil War centennial and to offer a re-envisioned conception of what it meant to be an American citizen. This conception moved beyond just inclusion to propose a vision of citizens who question authority, face difficult truths of the past, and act as their own historiographers for the purpose of achieving justice.

Citizenship Means Questioning Authority

As I have argued, a belief in and commitment to political neutrality was embedded within the CWCC's unifying commemorative stance. Many civil rights advocates claimed that this "neutral" commemorative agenda actually was biased against the movement, as the Centennial could only thrive as an "apolitical" event by avoiding the racial politics at stake in the Civil War and the continued existence of white

supremacy. These issues lurked beneath the surface of the Centennial, and one way that some civil rights movement advocates brought them to the public's attention was through conspiracy rhetoric that tried to unmask or reveal the racial politics of seemingly nonpartisan epideictic events. At a most basic level, conspiracy arguments operate to accuse an individual or group of "secretly plotting to deceive the people in order to bring about a loathsome result."[58] David Zarefsky argues that conspiracy arguments have been a "staple of American politics" since colonial times, and are most likely to be believed "during times of social stress and strain."[59] Zarefsky further asserts that sometimes these arguments highlight only an "ulterior motive," whereas in other instances the accuser charges the accused of something more "clandestine."[60] One strand of civil rights advocates mobilized conspiracy arguments to accuse official commemorators, such as the CWCC, of using the Centennial to mask enduring white supremacy and the real cause of the Civil War, slavery. These advocates, such as Howard Meyer and A. Philip Randolph, represented a more radical voice among civil rights activists, dedicated to the idea that the Centennial was a widespread, sinister effort to undermine the interests of the civil rights movement. Through their conspiracy rhetoric, these activists articulated a vision of citizenship that critiqued complacency and questioned authority.

Howard Meyer, an African American lawyer and amateur Civil War historian, engaged in public acts of rhetorical criticism of the CWCC's commemorative discourse to reveal the white supremacy embedded in the CWCC's rhetoric and to implicitly call for a more truthful, ethical, and transparent rhetoric of commemoration. Just months after the Civil War centennial began, Meyer published a widely-read article entitled "Rally Round What Flag?" in *Commonweal*, a liberal Catholic journal.[61] In the essay, he

vehemently critiqued official Civil War centennial commemoration events for their purported neutrality and asserted that the dominant commemorative stance actually fortified and strengthened white supremacy, particularly in the South. Writing about the CWCC's widely-circulated public information booklet strategically titled, "Facts About the Civil War," Meyer asserted, "It is what the brochure does not say, however, rather than what it does, that is most important. A man from Mars (or Stanleyville or Vientiane) after reading the twenty pages of this fact-packed product of the Commission would not know that the War was *about* anything."[62] It is in passages like this that Meyer's conspiracy rhetoric is revealed. By calling the public's attention to "what the brochure does not say," he encouraged readers to regard the CWCC with suspicion and to question what the Commission might be withholding. Meyer further cast suspicion on the CWCC's politics by framing their decisions as exclusionary. For instance, he asserted that, "it was privately decided, in the Centennial planning, to suppress all reference to the moral and political issues at stake" in the Civil War.[63] The word "privately" in this passage implied that the CWCC needed to hide something during their process of developing a commemorative agenda. This passage also critiqued the Commission for their amoral and apolitical commemorative stance, which disregarded the history behind the Civil War, particularly issues of race.

One of the most significant consequences of this ahistorical rhetoric, contended Meyer, was that the CWCC excluded blacks while leaving a space for Southern Lost Cause narratives. This idea was apparent in the title of Meyer's essay, "Rally Round What Flag?," which metaphorically called into question the CWCC's desire to use commemoration to reinforce national unity. The implication was that while the CWCC

argued that their commemorations promoted loyalty to America as a whole, their politics may have actually supported ideologies embedded in the Confederate flag—racism, white supremacy, and a loyalty to regional identity. This idea was reinforced in the version of the essay that was later reprinted in the African American magazine, the *Negro Digest*, under the pointed title: "Did the South Win the Civil War?"[64] Through this question Meyer highlighted the extent to which issues like racism, legal discrimination, and oppression—relevant issues in 1861—continued to thrive in the 1960s, even if more illusively through the seemingly apolitical discourse of dominant commemoration narratives.

One of the primary goals of many civil rights proponents with regard to the Civil War centennial was to make visible for the nation how the ideologies present at the time of the Civil War continued to thrive in the 1960s. Meyer drew this parallel metaphorically when he asserted, "The stone wall of 1961, it might be said, is one that keeps little children out of the schools that the Constitution has been held to entitle them to attend."[65] By equating Massive Resistance with Confederate General Stonewall Jackson's famed stand against Union troops at the First Battle of Bull Run, Meyer also equated the racial ideologies of the 1800s with those of the 1960s. As further proof of this idea, Meyer made a comparison,

> As only one example, is it mere coincidence that it was in Montgomery, Alabama that the most elaborate and prolonged ritual in observance of the birth of the Confederacy was staged in February 1961–and that martial law was needed to protect a meeting in a Negro church in May?[66]

May 1961 marked the start of the Freedom Rides, a civil rights protest led by the Congress of Racial Equality, through which a group of civil rights activists journeyed by bus from Washington, D.C. through the South to protest racial discrimination in interstate travel. The Freedom Riders faced extreme violence upon reaching Alabama. In Montgomery, they were attacked by a mob of white supremacists. After this event Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke at Ralph Abernathy's First Baptist Church in Montgomery, in honor of the Freedom Riders. While he was speaking, a mob surrounded the church, threatening the individuals inside. In response to that action, President John F. Kennedy threatened federal government intervention, and Governor John Patterson called in the Alabama National Guard to disband the mob. Meyer drew attention to this specific event, arguing that it was no coincidence that Montgomery produced a grand anniversary celebration of the Confederacy and opposed Dr. King. In the same city where civil rights activists were besieged by a racist mob, they simultaneously embraced the memory of secession. Juxtaposing the mob violence in Montgomery with the peaceful commemoration of the Confederacy's birth made visible the extent to which white supremacy undergirded Civil War commemorative politics.

Meyer also used conspiratorial rhetoric to challenge the idea that white supremacy existed solely in the South, suggesting that it thrived even more illusively in the North. He argued that "Southern apologists" since the time of the Civil War had "swept under the rug" aspects of history such as abolitionism and the Underground Railroad. They had painted these freedom struggle efforts as extreme or fanatical. He also asserted, "The success of Southern apologists meant not merely that the Confederate side of the War was hygenized and glamorized. The cause of the North was correspondingly

demeaned."[67] Yet more importantly, Meyer claimed that the North was equally complicit in allowing such ideologies to thrive and dominate American society,

> The rebels may have manufactured the Myth of the Old South, but it was the Yankees who accepted it…The guilt responsibility for the century of deferral of true emancipation of the Negro is heavy enough to be shared through all America, including those of us immigrant stock who accepted from the nineties to the fifties the tainted gift of White Supremacy, as a compensation for our own second-class citizenship.[68]

Meyer argued that this same type of complicity was evident in the CWCC's attempts to commemorate the Civil War in "a manner that drains it of all meaning" and that "emboldens those guilty today of offenses identified with the Secession."[69]

Similar to Meyer, civil rights activist and labor organizer A. Philip Randolph used conspiracy arguments to unveil the racism of the CWCC's commemorative politics. However, his discourse relied to a greater extent on a rhetoric aimed at inducing fear and a discomfort with celebratory commemorative practices—emotions that would help the American public become attuned to the politics embedded in the Civil War centennial commemorations. Randolph's rhetoric was different from Halsey's speech, which had induced resentment purely to disrupt. Instead, Randolph's fear-inciting rhetoric functioned to elevate the significance of the political and social consequences of Civil War commemoration in the eyes of those who were complacent with the CWCC's unifying narratives. He wished to inspire action.

Randolph's rhetoric emphasized that the centennial entailed important political and social stakes and that citizens across the country needed to take it seriously. For

instance, shortly after Howard Meyer's article was published in *Commonweal*, Randolph wrote a private letter to President John F. Kennedy in which he quoted the article directly. Extending Meyer's conspiracy arguments, Randolph warned that the Centennial was a "far-reaching and colossal brainwashing enterprise against the civil rights liberation revolution."[70] Here Randolph positioned the Centennial as an active campaign against the civil rights movement, not merely as a series of commemorative events that happened to coincide with the movement. Extending this line of reasoning, Randolph wrote,

> Without a doubt, this Civil War Centennial Celebration is a massive, sinister, ultra-Fascist, racial cold war against the new uncompromising surge of black Americans to achieve complete political, economic and social equality, and is certain to do grave danger to the image of our country among the people of Africa and Asia.[71]

At least two things are interesting about this quotation. First, Randolph used Cold War logic to shed light on how the Civil War centennial was operating on a domestic level. He positioned the CWCC's Centennial efforts not as a passive commemoration but as an active movement, a key component of an anti-civil rights campaign. Unlike the dominant mode of Civil War commemoration, Randolph portrayed the Centennial not as evidence of the U.S.'s "progressive" stance on racial politics, but as the exact opposite. In Randolph's letter to Kennedy, for instance, he also stated that the Centennial "seeks adroitly to psychologically to condition the American mind in the decade of the Sixties so as to prepare it to turn back the clock of Negro liberation."[72] Second, official commemorators' largely epideictic approach to commemoration positioned the

Centennial as an event that would improve America's image globally, by which they primarily had in mind the countries of Eastern and Western Europe. Randolph disrupted this argument by inserting a racial element, pointing out that other nations—namely those in Africa and Asia—would be able to see the Centennial as it truly was: an effort to mask America's racial problems and improve its own image internationally.

Ultimately, civil rights activists like Meyer and Randolph used conspiracy arguments as a form of agitation to disrupt the dominant discourse that favored pragmatic concerns (such as appeasing Southern stakeholders) and reconciliation (such as the theme of shared sacrifice and unity) over historical accuracy and the advancement of black civil rights. These activists sought to demonstrate that embedded within the neutral politics of the Civil War Centennial was a host of problematic ideologies. As Randolph warned in his letter to Kennedy, the Centennial had the capability to break open "Pandora's Box of Zeus… with its evil omens and portents of racism."[73] By invoking conspiracy arguments, then, these civil rights activists discouraged complacency, and instead enacted citizenship through active questioning of memory narratives articulated by entities of power.

Citizenship Means Facing the Truths of an Ugly Past

Throughout the Civil War centennial, white leaders of official commemorative entities failed to account for black history. In response to these collective acts of "forgetting," civil rights leaders such as John Hope Franklin and Martin Luther King, Jr. responded by critiquing Civil War commemorative efforts that adopted a strictly celebratory tone and that focused on progress, instead of on the work left to be done.

Such movement leaders posited that true citizenship is enacted when individuals face the truths of the nation's ugly past.

Franklin offered this vision of citizenship amid a controversy that erupted over the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights report, *Freedom to the Free*. The Kennedy administration had commissioned black historian John Hope Franklin to write the report in commemoration of the Emancipation Proclamation centennial.[74] The document's introduction asserted, "the purpose of this report is to follow this quest [for black equality and full citizenship] from the time of the Emancipation Proclamation until the present."[75] Controversy arose over the original draft of this report in 1962. Members of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and white historians who were asked to read the draft believed it to be too negative in tone and insufficiently celebratory of the *progress* America had made in the realm of civil rights.

CWCC Executive Director Allan Nevins, the liberal successor to Karl S. Betts, also served as a consultant to the U. S. Civil Rights Commission. He was tasked with reviewing Franklin's draft of the *Freedom to the Free* report. In a letter to Franklin, Nevins provided a number of recommended edits, including the following, "In my opinion it ought to be rewritten in order to…strike a note of greater tolerance and moderation, and to give more emphasis to the constructive contributions of the Negro to Amer [sic.] life, since his position with respect to civil rights has been improved."[76] Franklin responded to this suggestion in the following manner, "I fear… that I cannot agree that it needs more 'tolerance' or that the contributions of the Negro to American life are essentially relevant to the history of civil rights. Where it is relevant, I have sought to make it clear."[77] This reply did not end the matter. Echoing Nevins's concerns,

Berl I. Bernhard, the Commission's Staff Director, reframed Nevins's critique in a second letter to Franklin:

> I think that what troubles the Commission, and I must say, causes me concern, is that the book as it stands would not inspire further progress because it reflects a lack of National concern and infinitesimal progress. We are all aware of the grave deficiencies in our body politic regarding civil rights, but the Commission feels that the way to accelerate progress on this particular occasion would be to show why and how problems were corrected to stand as lessons for the future.[78]

Challenging this critique, Franklin replied that, "the history of the Negro and civil rights in the United States is not a 'pretty picture.' I would have thought that in a country like ours, with its great vigor and its determination to do what is right, a knowledge of the facts would inspire it to correct its injustices and make further progress."[79]

Of particular interest to this case study is how Franklin's replies to critics re-envision the qualities of citizens. In Franklin's framing, American citizens are not characterized by their patriotism and their celebration of the nation's strengths, but rather by their willingness to face the grimmer aspects of their country's history. Further, true citizenship, according to Franklin, involves a willingness to learn from difficult historical lessons. Franklin argued, "The fact that Marian Anderson or Leontyne Price or Charles Drew or Jackie Robinson made their mark is hardly a part of the history of civil rights."[80] Through this claim, he highlighted the problem of defining civil rights success for an entire race as the individual success of particular heroes. The "Great man/woman" orientation toward history was not, he argued, a good way to understand the history of civil rights in America. Arguably, it was Franklin's subject position as a black historian

that made him attuned to this history in a way that the white historians of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and members of CWCC were not.

Franklin was not the only prominent African American who called on citizens to use the Civil War centennial to confront the country's past. Martin Luther King, Jr., too, emphasized the necessity of dealing with the traumatic realities of that history. In a speech delivered to the New York State Civil War Centennial Commission on September 12, 1962, King claimed that, "American historiography itself has been a victim of the unresolved race question and is yet to be purged of error if it is to be scientific history."[81] In this same speech, he offered a reimagined account of the nation's history—one that portrayed America as plagued by racial politics since its origins. He stated,

> If we look at our history with honesty and clarity we will be forced to admit that our Federal form of government has been, from the day of its birth, weakened in its integrity, confused and confounded in its direction, by the unresolved race question. It is as if a political thalidamine drug taken during pregnancy caused the birth of a crippled nation.[82]

The unresolved question of racial prejudice and discrimination, King asserted, "is a pathological infection in our social and political anatomy, which has sickened us throughout our history."[83] Whereas Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address portrayed an America that was "conceived in liberty," King used the commemorative moment of the Emancipation Proclamation's centennial to implore his audience to confront the realities of America's racist past.

Ultimately, Franklin and King both articulated a risky and unpopular position. They implied that celebratory commemorations were not acts of true citizenship, but

rather a means of evading controversy and discomfort. Instead, Franklin and King re-envisioned what Civil War commemoration could be: a mode of citizenship based in reckoning with the ugly past. Memory, itself, could provide the nation with a motivation to move toward a more egalitarian future.

Citizenship Means Challenging History

Civil rights activists also used rhetoric that encouraged a historiographic approach to commemoration, an approach focused on representation and inclusion to disrupt dominant trends in Civil War commemoration. In October of 1962, the *Negro Digest* quoted Howard Meyer as saying, "I think that the most important and the most neglected area of the Civil Rights battle is the teaching and writing of history."[84] Arguably, the centennial of the Civil War became a kairotic moment for the civil rights movement to advance the struggle for civil rights by arguing for a change in how history is researched, recorded, and shared. That is, civil rights advocates acted as and called for others to become interested historiographers: historians for the sake of equality, justice, and social transformation. Centennial events, therefore, became one important mechanism through which black history—and therefore American history—was understood and accounted for.

Throughout the centennial, civil rights proponents argued that narratives of Civil War history were both incomplete and inaccurate. E. Pauline Myers, Director of Public Relations for the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, made this argument powerfully in 1959. Myers argued for the inclusion of a black representative on the

CWCC asserting, "My view is that the person selected to help coordinate the program should come from the Negro community so that the story can be treated accurately, effectively and sympathetically."[85] Activists who mobilized conspiracy arguments asserted that official commemorators deliberately neglected to incorporate black history into their commemorative efforts. Myers, in contrast, was subtler in her critique. In a memo written to CWCC Executive Director Karl S. Betts she said,

> My conversations with you and Mr. Conrad Wirth were reassuring that there is no serious intention on the part of the Commission to by-pass the Negro. It could very well be that the Commission, without any malice whatever, has simply neglected to approach the period with the Negro in mind.[86]

In contrast to black speakers who actively blamed the motives of the CWCC for its lack of inclusivity, representation, and historical accuracy, Myers' letter reflected a rhetorical strategy premised on empathy. She approached the CWCC in a manner that Kenneth Burke described as the comic frame, using rhetoric that portrayed the Commission not as "vicious" in their intent but rather as "mistaken" due in large part to their standpoint.

Myers's push for adding black members to the Commission advocated for more than inclusivity, however. She recognized that increasing inclusion would make possible a different vision of African American citizenship and American history. For instance, she argued in a letter to letter to Conrad Wirth, Director of the National Park Service, on April 24, 1959:

> Authoritative scholars have given painstaking research to the part which Negroes played in the Civil War. Thousands of Negro men and women – North and South – participated in that struggle. Thousands gave their lives. Many were noted for

> outstanding heroism beyond the call of duty. Unless some accounting of their deeds, valor and sacrifice be made a definite part of this Centennial Observance, the chances are that we will lose for America one of the greatest opportunities of history. So many white Americans have perforces been living on a steady diet of historical lies for over a century. My view is that in order that the record be set straight some professional staff recruits should come from the Negro community.[87]

Myers advocated for the inclusion of black members on the CWCC, thus, in order to reclaim histories of African Americans that highlighted the acts of citizenship performed by blacks since the time of the Civil War. This account of black history also changed collective memories of *America's* past. Myers's account of history affirmed that the outcomes of the Civil War were not the achievements solely of whites, but rather of *all* Americans.

In her memo to Betts, Myers further reflected on how she would approach commemoration of the Civil War. The following passage illuminates what such a subject position could enable. She stated,

> Since most people read very little, historical fact can best be recorded by graphic displays that thousands may see and understand, even though semi-illiterate. I am intrigued with visions which come to me of how we can do this. I can see audio-visual displays arranged so attractively that the smallest child can understand; I can see Frederick Douglass recruiting the first Negro regiment of that War; I can see Uncle Tom's Cabin come alive with all of its color; I can see Underground Railroads; I can see kind white officers teaching Negroes to read behind the lines;

> I can see patient, devoted slaves sacrificing their lives for the protection of their masters' wives, children and property; I can hear again the enchanting melodies of Stephen S. Foster, the work songs, sorrow songs and spirituals that came from the souls of black folks; I can see colorful exhibits of log cabins, plantation scenes, murals, wax works, and beautiful pageantry arranged to re-create the period. I can go on and on imagining how all these things can be reproduced at the battlefield sites, monument grounds, and park areas so as to tell the story to this generation of Americans, who know so little of how our democracy and its freedoms have evolved.[88]

The repeated use of "I can see…" in this passage invited the CWCC to envision how Civil War history could be visualized along racial lines. Her vision was creative and multimodal. It emphasized the historical contributions of African Americans and abolitionists. It catered to the lay public and emphasized the potential for education and not just celebration.

Howard Meyer also attempted to persuade the CWCC to recognize black contributions in American history. However, his argument differed from that of E. Pauline Myers. Instead of asking the Commission to invite African Americans to take part in the commemoration process, he advocated that the all-white Commission take strides to include black histories in their commemorative events. He also took a more direct approach to persuasion, instead of mobilizing invitational rhetoric, in a letter he wrote to historian James Robertson, the newly appointed Chair of the CWCC, on December 6, 1961. He wrote,

> Congratulations on your appointment to the perhaps unenviable job of Executive Secretary to the Commission. I hope that the Commission will not merely de-emphasize battle re-enactments, as has been announced, but also give full and fair measure to the role of the Negro as fighting for freedom in the Civil War – and equality, the 'deferred commitment' to use Professor C. Vann Woodward's phrase.[89]

Meyer was also quoted in the *Long Island Press* in July 1962 as saying: "Two hundred thousand Negroes fought in that war… but you never hear of them. We buried their achievements, as we buried those of other leading Negroes immediately after the war, when we defeated slavery but accepted segregation." This resulted in a "distorted history," according to Meyer.[90]

This inaccurate history ignored things like, "the fact that the Negro 'produced,' and was a vital cog in the final Union victory."[91] And, it overlooked "the fact that Negroes served in Congress after the war, that some freed Negroes immediately began learning to read and write, that he showed himself as good as any other immigrant starting out as a new citizen of this country in 1866."[92] One key way that Meyer attempted to disrupt dominant Civil War memories was through republishing a pocketbook edition of Thomas Wentworth Higginson's *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, a diary written while commanding the first black regiment to fight in the Civil War.[93]

These arguments made by Meyer reflect a common argumentative strategy mobilized by civil rights activists amid the Civil War centennial. This strategy asserted that American history to date was incomplete and non-inclusive and that the way to remedy this was to highlight black achievements from the Civil war to the present. For

instance, in 1964 the NAACP published a book entitled *Negro Heroes of Emancipation*, a collection of the "biographical sketches" that "were prepared and distributed as part of the Association's regular press service to some three hundred daily and weekly newspapers."[94] The book consisted of brief, one to two-page, illustrated biographical sketches featuring individuals like Phillis Wheatley, Sojourner Truth, Samuel Cornish, Frederick Douglass, and Richard Allen. These sketches demonstrated the contributions of blacks to the fields of literature, public oratory, politics, religion, and public advocacy. The book also featured two short thematic discussions, one on black "heroes of rebellion" and another on the contributions of black soldiers in the Civil War. The first theme countered the idea that blacks played a passive role in their own liberation. As the book claimed, "The argument that the Negro is innately docile and that he has always felt secure under white ownership is not borne out by history. On the contrary, the story of American slavery is a violent one, repeatedly punctuated by thwarted insurrections and bloody rebellions."[95] The second theme emphasized by the collection was the role of black soldiers in the Civil War, drawing attention to the courage and heroism of African Americans—and not just whites—who played a crucial role in the Union victory.

Integral to arguments that called on the CWCC to recognize the role of black soldiers in the Civil War were claims that African Americans contributed to their own liberation. Meyer, for instance, portrayed the Emancipation Proclamation as "the culmination of a historical process" that "included the work of the abolitionist movement over the years."[96] He asserted that,

> America must face shame in the fact that when the promise of Emancipation of 1863 was made a mockery from 1877 to 1954, it was not merely the withholding

> of a freedom that had been offered on a silver platter to a helpless people. It was the theft of a freedom that had been hard and nobly won by men in arms who, in fighting for their own freedom had also helped to save their country—from a treasonable attempt of slaveholders to overthrow the government to protect their property.[97]

This passage contained an argument similar to that mobilized by John Hope Franklin. American citizens must face the harsh and shameful realities of their past. However, it also highlighted the other half of the story, wherein blacks were not just the passive recipients of freedom. Rather, they were primary players who fought heroically for their own emancipation. As Meyer claimed,

> [T]housands of pages and hundreds of thousands of words… written about the Civil War Centennial, without any reference to Lincoln's statement about the loyal black regiments: "Take two hundred thousand men from our side and put them in the battlefield or cornfield against us, and we would be compelled to abandon the war in three weeks."[98]

In this passage, Meyer highlighted what he considered to be an important, yet overlooked historical fact. Lincoln himself recognized the heroism and bravery of black soldiers. Therefore, the CWCC should, too.

Ultimately, civil rights activists' emphasis on re-remembering Civil War and American history positioned historiography as important not only within the context of Civil War commemoration but also as a fundamental tool for advancing black equality and promoting justice. Meyer's claim makes this point clear: "We need white freedom teachers and freedom writers to help make possible the speeding up of the integration that

the freedom riders have helped along."[99] The centennial offered a kairotic opportunity for the civil rights movement to advocate these historiographic efforts on the national stage.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have established that several competing voices interacted throughout the period in which the nation celebrated the Civil War's centennial. The conservative commemorators of the CWCC promoted national unity, while still acknowledging the mythologies and beliefs that resonated with Southerners. Their commemorative narratives dominated the centennial in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but they were not unchallenged. Halsey's speech exemplified how vernacular memories were capable of unsettling the unification narratives. By engaging in an embittered rhetoric, lauding personal experiences over common ideals, and invoking romantic Southern mythologies, Halsey mobilized a politics of resentment that unsettled the CWCC's unity theme. In the end, however, this disruption was managed easily. Liberal commemorators such as Donald Flamm of the New Jersey Centennial Commission and CWCC historian Bell Wiley condemned Halsey's vernacular memory of the war, but they argued, also, that the memory of the war should remain apolitical.

The fourth prominent voice of the Civil War centennial period was that of civil rights movement advocates. My analysis of several prominent rhetorical arguments mobilized by these individuals demonstrates how the movement used the Centennial as a "repertoire of contention," or a form of resource mobilization.[100] There is a large body of literature by communication scholars who have examined how social movements affect

change through rhetorical tactics such as legal arguments, social protests, and negotiation. What this chapter begins to explore is how social movements can engage in already established practices of commemoration to advance their cause. In the case of the civil rights movement, this chapter has shown that activists used the centennial as an opportunity to re-envision the duties of citizenship. Howard Meyer and A. Philip Randolph used conspiracy arguments to posit that good citizens are not complacent but question authority. John Hope Franklin and Martin Luther King, Jr. contended that being a citizen necessitates a willingness to confront and learn from the ugly truths of the past. And, E. Pauline Myers, Howard Meyer, and the NAACP depicted citizens as being willing to reconfigure how history is produced so that it can recognize the contributions and experiences of African Americans. Over the course of this dissertation, I continue to explore the rhetorical tactics that civil rights movement leaders used and the challenges they faced in their effort to co-opt the Civil War centennial to advance their cause, as well as the advantages and problems these tactics and challenges posed.

As the centennial progressed, Martin Luther King, Jr. became the most prominent civil rights activist to co-opt the commemorative moment as a rhetorical resource for the movement. This chapter has demonstrated that Howard Meyer and E. Pauline Myers attempted to change dominant commemorative politics by appealing to the CWCC and by publishing in journals with predominantly black or liberal audiences. John Hope Franklin worked to insert black history and the realities of America's history of slavery and white supremacy into an official commemorative effort in his work with the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. A. Philip Randolph spoke directly to the president through private correspondence. In contrast, as the next chapter will explore, King went beyond

these efforts, using his high profile in the civil rights movement to speak directly to power by launching a public campaign aimed at persuading President John F. Kennedy to issue a second emancipation proclamation.

Notes

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[39] "Speech by Mr. Ashley Halsey, Jr.," 6.

[40] "Speech by Mr. Ashley Halsey, Jr.," 7.

[41] "Speech by Mr. Ashley Halsey, Jr.," 7.

[42] "Speech by Mr. Ashley Halsey, Jr.," 3.

[43] "Speech by Mr. Ashley Halsey, Jr.," 3.

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[47] "Statement by Donald Flamm," April 12, 1961.

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[94] National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, "Forward," in *Negro Heroes of Emancipation* (New York), February 1964.

[95] National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, "Heroes of Rebellion" in *Negro Heroes of Emancipation* (New York), February 1964.

[96] "Ladies Auxiliary," *The Black Worker*, April 1963, 8, folder "The Black Worker,' organ," Box 2, Series: Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Papers of A. Philip Randolph, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., accessed September 12, 2015, http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms005004.

[97] "Ladies Auxiliary," 8.

[98] "Ladies Auxiliary," 8.

[99] "Ladies Auxiliary," 8.

[100] See, for example, Charles Tilly, *Regimes and Repertoires* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Chapter 3

The Second Emancipation Proclamation: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Appeal for Moral Leadership

On May 17, 1962, the eighth anniversary of the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Martin Luther King, Jr. personally delivered a hefty, leather-bound document to the White House. The sixty-four-page tome called on President John F. Kennedy to issue a "second emancipation proclamation." The document's full title clarified the symbolic and practical components of such a presidential act: "An Appeal to the Honorable John F. Kennedy, President of The United States, for National Rededication to the Principles of the Emancipation Proclamation and for an Executive Order Prohibiting Segregation in the United States of America."[1] King and his volunteer lawyers, Clarence Jones, Theodore Kheel, Harry Wachtel, and Stanley Levinson, had spent more than six months crafting the "Appeal," which drew on an array of evidence for support, citing hundreds of legal precedents, iconic American texts, the rhetoric and actions of past presidents, and even Kennedy's own words.[2]

It was, at least from the perspective of King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), a rhetorical masterpiece and the key to a civil rights strategy that invited President Kennedy to take center stage. If Kennedy embraced the "Appeal," it had the potential to "shake American politics and reverberate throughout the world," asserts historian Taylor Branch.[3] In a speech delivered the same day, King characterized the document as "a landmark contribution to the struggle for civil rights."[4]

He was so optimistic that his call for a second emancipation proclamation would persuade Kennedy to take the recommended steps, that, almost a year in advance, King asked the Secretary of the Interior to reserve the Lincoln Memorial for a ceremony to begin at 11:00 p.m. on New Year's Eve, marking the Emancipation Proclamation's 1963 centennial and celebrating the issuance of a second emancipation proclamation.[5]

The genesis for this initiative had transpired approximately a year before King delivered the "Appeal" to Kennedy. In June of 1961, King held a formal press conference in which he called for a second emancipation proclamation that would put a stop to "meaningless delays" and "crippling gradualism."[6] This public call was the first of many that he would make from 1961 through 1963, as part of a rhetorical campaign to generate public interest in the idea that the federal government, through a presidential proclamation, should create an "emancipation moment" similar to the event created by Abraham Lincoln in the midst of the Civil War.[7] King received a considerable amount of media attention as a result of this campaign. The *New York Times*, for instance, noted that "this was the first time a leading Negro spokesman for the integration movement had called for an immediate end to all segregation laws."[8] The *Pittsburgh Courier* described King's Appeal as "what may well be the most important document of the 20th Century—race wise."[9]

Despite the historical significance of the "Appeal" and the immediate media attention it received, King's call for a second emancipation proclamation went unanswered by Kennedy, who never even acknowledged receipt of the document. Perhaps because of this, or maybe because it has been overshadowed by King's more iconic and stylistically rich texts such as his "I Have a Dream" speech or "Letter from

Birmingham Jail," the public and most scholars do not place the "Appeal" among the corpus of King's iconic works. Over time, a few scholars have mentioned briefly the "Appeal" in their larger works on King.[10] Within the last decade leading up to the Emancipation Proclamation's sesquicentennial, the media and a few historians[11] have returned to this document, mostly to reflect on what historian David Blight has described as its "remarkable" and "little-discussed" nature.[12] These parties also have considered Kennedy's curious lack of response, attributing his silence to contextual factors such as the Cuban missile crisis, the fear of inflaming sectional tension, a fear that he might lose the congressional support of Southern Democrats, and, ultimately, the President's untimely death. Yet the efforts that King put into advocating for a second emancipation proclamation—the time spent drafting the "Appeal," the thorough nature of the document itself, and the extensive public campaign surrounding the "Appeal"—demonstrate the extreme importance that at least King placed upon the idea.

In this chapter I continue to examine rhetorical tactics mobilized by civil rights activists to co-opt the Civil War centennial. I argue that King used the commemorative moment of the Emancipation Proclamation centennial as an opportunity to push Kennedy toward a role of moral, political leadership. King called on the President to eliminate segregation and discrimination through rhetoric and executive power, and, in the process, he challenged Kennedy to act as a "twentieth century Abraham Lincoln." I begin by arguing that King's public rhetorical campaign for a second emancipation proclamation functioned to pressure Kennedy to take executive action against segregation. In the subsequent two sections, I examine the text the "Appeal" to consider exactly how King invited Kennedy to be a twentieth-century Lincoln.[13] In the conclusion, I reflect on the

enduring legacy of King's call for a second emancipation proclamation and how it transformed the power of the presidency.

Pressuring Presidential Leadership: King's Public Campaign

From 1961 through 1963, King frequently spoke about the idea that the president should issue another emancipation proclamation to address the problem of twentieth-century "slavery." In so doing, he engaged in a rhetorical campaign to pressure Kennedy into this symbolic and political act. Throughout this campaign, King invoked two narratives, both of which used Kennedy's own words and actions to persuade the President to act: Kennedy's "stroke of the pen" promise made during the 1960 presidential campaign and his so-called request for a second emancipation proclamation made during a private meeting held with King in the White House.

Although he did so unknowingly, Kennedy planted the seeds of King's call for a second emancipation proclamation on October 7, 1960. During his second presidential debate with Richard Nixon, Kennedy critiqued Eisenhower's reluctance to protect black civil rights and particularly his failure to sign an executive order prohibiting segregation in the areas of federal employment and housing. Making a commitment to do more, Kennedy stated that equality in these fields could be achieved "by a stroke of the President's pen."[14] The phrase "stroke of the pen" has come to be "virtually synonymous with executive prerogative" and is frequently used to signify "the president's ability to make policy via executive order," notes political scientist Kenneth Mayer.[15] This single claim soon became a powerful, persuasive resource for civil rights leaders, who called on

Kennedy to fulfill his "stroke of the pen" promise almost as soon as he entered the office. To illustrate their demand, they sent him "pens by the thousands."[16]

King joined his activist colleagues in prompting Kennedy to action, often referencing the President's promise in his public rhetoric. "It is no exaggeration that the President could give segregation its death blow through a stroke of the pen. The power inherent in Executive orders has never been exploited; its use in recent years has been microscopic in scope and timid in conception," King wrote in an article published by the *Nation* less than a month after Kennedy assumed office.[17] King strategically began to conflate the "stroke of the pen" promise with the idea of a second emancipation proclamation in public talks delivered across the country. In June of 1961, he kicked off this public campaign in a news conference at the Sheraton-Atlantic Hotel in New York City, calling on Kennedy to issue a second emancipation proclamation. "The time has now come," he stated, "for the President of the United States to issue a firm Executive Order declaring all forms of racial segregation illegal."[18] In calling for a "firm Executive Order," King harkened back to Kennedy's "stroke of the pen" promise, using it as an exigence for his call for action. This news conference was merely the first of many direct calls King made for an executive proclamation. He would continue to mention the need and utility of such an act to various news outlets in the following months. He also integrated the call into public talks that he delivered throughout the same period.[19]

King's campaign for a second emancipation proclamation generated a considerable amount of public support and media coverage. As early as July of 1961, the NAACP adopted a resolution at their fifty-second annual convention in Philadelphia, calling on Kennedy "to emphasize his moral leadership through a new and timely

Emancipation Proclamation" that would "signal a rededication to 'Freedom by 1963.'"[20] This resolution reflected the slogan that the NAACP had adopted a decade prior; but more than that, it established the contrast that was inherent in the call for a second emancipation moment—black Americans lived in slavery but deserved freedom. This basic contrast between freedom and slavery would remain at the heart of King's call throughout the campaign. While the NAACP's "Free by '63" slogan was a powerful expression of the organization's mission, King would argue that, just like Lincoln, Kennedy had an important role to play in the process of "freeing" the black community.

A few months after his first press conference, King had the opportunity to mention the idea of a second emancipation proclamation to the President in person. In October 1961, King was "summoned" to Washington, D.C. by the Kennedy administration for a meeting at the Justice Department. There, "officials insisted that one of [King's] advisers was a dangerous communist subversive and that King had to get rid of him."[21] Most likely the Justice Department was expressing a concern about Stanley Levinson, just one of several King advisors that the federal government was watching closely. After this unexpected warning, King met with the President for an "off-the-record" lunch meeting, held in the White House residence rather than the West Wing to set a "social" rather than political tone. From 1961 through 1962, Kennedy was still very reluctant to become involved with the issue of civil rights. He did not want to alienate Southern Democrats in Congress, which is why—at least in part—he attempted to keep his meeting with King low-key. King did, however, broach the subject when he saw a copy of the original Emancipation Proclamation on the wall of the Lincoln Room. Taylor Branch notes that the image "provided an excuse for [King] to bring up politics in a

positive way—to talk about the historic glow of Lincoln's decision," and to suggest that Kennedy might consider issuing a second emancipation proclamation on the document's centennial.[22]

There is no written transcript of this interaction. However, according to King's account, Kennedy's response was something to the effect of: "That's an interesting idea. Why don't you draft something?"[23] Later, when pressed to reveal exactly what Kennedy had promised, King's answer was more qualified. He admitted: "the president listened very sympathetically and said that he would certainly take all of these things under consideration. But you would have to speak to him concerning the possibilities of this actually becoming a reality."[24] Whatever Kennedy did or did not say, King interpreted the exchange as an invitation. That is, despite any uncertainty, over the next six months King worked with his volunteer lawyers to draft the "Appeal" document calling for a second emancipation proclamation. King followed up with Kennedy on December 18, 1961—along with fellow civil rights leaders W. G. Anderson and Ralph D. Abernathy—through a telegram that implored, "We urge you issue at once by executive order a second emancipation proclamation to free all negroes from second class citizenship."[25] Furthermore, King continued to generate expectations around his "Appeal" publicly. He was not shy to mention the President's invitation to draft a proposal for his consideration.

Although Kennedy may have preferred to minimize the publicity of his meeting with King, the civil rights leader had other goals. King exposed their private conversation before public audiences, mobilizing his "Lincoln Room narrative" to induce action. He frequently referenced the conversation in his public speeches, and, at King's prompting, black journalists did the same. The *Baltimore Afro-American*, for example, divulged that

King and the President had met and discussed a second emancipation proclamation to end "all racial segregation in the country."[26] The paper later reported that in a public talk delivered in Toronto, Canada, King "revealed" that "he had been invited by President Kennedy to submit for his signature a second Emancipation Proclamation" when he met with the President in the White House.[27] This account offered a strategic framing of power and agency, as the notion of providing a document for the President's signature implied that Kennedy would simply have signed what King prepared. The *Pittsburgh Courier* also publicized the proposal that King was drafting. They proclaimed in one article title: "Dr. King's Magna Charta Is Far-Reaching Document."[28] This lengthy article included a robust summary of the "Appeal's" purported content and pictures of King and Kennedy with captions—"preparing proclamation" and "requested race document," respectively—that further conveyed the notion that Kennedy was waiting eagerly for a proclamation to sign.[29] The details of what exactly Kennedy had requested—if anything—vary across the news accounts. Despite this variance, it is clear that King mobilized his private conversation with Kennedy as a public tool for persuading the President to act.

King delivered the promised document to Kennedy on May 17, 1962. Ultimately, it was not a proclamation ready for the President's signature but rather a lengthy, sixty-four page request for Kennedy to issue an executive order that would fulfill his promise of ending segregation and discrimination "with the stroke of a pen." Notably, the "Appeal" continues the rhetorical tactic of using Kennedy's own words and actions to pressure the President to take a public stand on civil rights. Fifteen percent of the document's footnotes reference Kennedy's own words or ideas articulated in other

contexts, such as his speech accepting the nomination for president, presidential campaign speeches, news conferences, the 1960 Democratic Party platform, and other official statements made as president. These allusions to Kennedy's own words permeate the document, which is structured into four distinct sections: (1) A five-page "Preamble," which provides an overview of the document's exigencies, purposes, and goals; (2) a section that examines major legal and judicial advancements protecting civil rights in the realms of education, housing, and transportation since *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896); (3) a portion that demonstrates how current legislation and judicial decisions ineffectively protect civil rights; and (4) a final section in which King explores the subject explicitly described by the section's title: "Duty and power of the president to secure the constitutional and civil rights in America." This section also makes a final call for Kennedy to issue an executive order—a second emancipation proclamation that would enforce the legal and judicial declarations already in existence, and eliminate segregation and discrimination in America "with the stroke of a pen."

As I stated earlier, however, Kennedy never responded to King's call for a second emancipation proclamation, either publicly or through private correspondence. Despite this, the mere act of submitting the "Appeal" became its own rhetorical event; it drew considerable media and public attention, especially within the black community. Furthermore, Kennedy's lack of response did not immediately deter King from continuing to advocate for an executive order. In fact, King and the SCLC used the delivery of the "Appeal" as an opportunity to generate additional public support for a second emancipation proclamation. For instance, a week before King delivered the "Appeal" to the White House, the SCLC distributed a news release reporting that

Executive Director Wyatt Tee Walker had claimed that Kennedy would be given 45 days to read the "Appeal," after which the President and King would "possibly" arrange a conference at the White House to "discuss a date for action."[30] By publicly declaring this time limit, Walker portrayed King as possessing greater agency in the situation than he likely had.

A week later, on the day King delivered the "Appeal," the SCLC distributed a second release detailing their nation-wide petition for a second emancipation proclamation, which they kicked off at their annual board meeting in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Files at the King archives in Atlanta reveal that the SCLC articulated lofty goals for this petition, which they claimed was "aimed at getting 5 million signers."[31] It is hard to know whether or not the SCLC really believed this goal to be feasible or whether citing this number was yet another attempt to pressure Kennedy to act, or if it functioned to show the President that he would have substantial public support if he did act. The same day that he delivered the "Appeal" to Kennedy, King also gave a speech at the founding of the Gandhi Society for Human Rights in the Sheraton-Carlton Hotel in New York City.[32] At the heart of this speech was an impassioned account of the promise embodied by the "Appeal" document, filled with allusions to Kennedy's "stroke of the pen" promise and parallels between 1863 and 1963. Archival documents also show that King and the SCLC worked privately to distribute copies of the "Appeal" to key leaders in the civil rights movement, both by proactively contacting individuals like A. Philip Randolph and by responding to requests from organizations to receive a copy of the document.[33]

King's campaign also effectively rallied the support of the lay public, who began to bombard Kennedy with letters in support of King's second emancipation proclamation. "The idea of a Second Emancipation Proclamation is a vitally important one," wrote one citizen in a letter to the President in March of 1962.[34] When this letter was forwarded to the White House, a member of the Kennedy administration responded, "As far as I know there is no commitment to Martin Luther King that a Second Emancipation Proclamation will be issued" and "steps are being taken to end discrimination and that such steps are bringing us closer to the day of full equality whether or not a Second Emancipation Proclamation is actually issued."[35] Despite Kennedy's lack of response, King continued to request such an Executive Order through 1963. Some historians have even argued that King's "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered on August 28, 1963, should be viewed as part of his campaign for a second emancipation proclamation.[36]

The extensive nature of King's rhetorical campaign for a second emancipation proclamation as well as the nuanced content of his "Appeal" document provide significant exigencies for deeper inquiry into King's rhetoric. To understand King's conception of a second emancipation proclamation, it is necessary to analyze the "Appeal" document itself.

Defining Moral Leadership

King's most extensive mapping of what a second emancipation proclamation should entail was provided in the "Appeal" document that he submitted to Kennedy in May 1962. In inviting Kennedy to be the twentieth-century Abraham Lincoln, King

recognized that Lincoln took a tremendous risk in issuing the Emancipation Proclamation—a risk he was only willing to take after many years of cautious attempts against slavery and of evolving his own views on the issue. In the "Appeal" document, King encouraged Kennedy to follow the same course as Lincoln by moving from slow, moderate efforts for civil rights to firm executive action. By paralleling the political and social climates of 1863 and 1963 and by portraying the Emancipation Proclamation's promise as unfulfilled, King crafted exigencies for Kennedy to follow in Lincoln's footsteps by enacting moral leadership through a second emancipation proclamation.

King's "Appeal" invoked, both explicitly and implicitly, Lincoln's "Great Emancipator" legacy as a model for the type of creative moral leadership that Kennedy should enact. Yet, in mobilizing this legacy, King drew on a much more nuanced understanding of Lincoln's role as the "Great Emancipator" than public memory typically acknowledges. Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation one hundred years earlier, in 1863. However, this proclamation was the end result of years of Lincoln's evolving views on slavery and repeated attempts to carefully navigate barriers to black freedom. Lincoln had expressed his disdain for slavery publicly since at least 1854.[37] And after assuming office, over the first nineteen months of his presidency, he attempted to navigate legal and societal barriers through multiple tepid responses to slavery before finally issuing an Executive Order for emancipation.

For instance, at the start of his presidency, Lincoln made attempts against slavery with proposals for colonization and compensated emancipation, through which slave owners would free their slaves in exchange for monetary payment. Lincoln first tested such a proposal in November of 1861, when he drafted two bills for gradual compensated

emancipation in Delaware, a so-called border state—with relatively few slaves—that had never seceded from the Union. When these bills failed to pass, Lincoln made a proposal to Congress for national, compensated emancipation in March of 1862. The following month, he signed the D.C. Compensated Emancipation Act, which immediately ended slavery in the District of Columbia and provided monetary compensation to former slave owners who were loyal to the Union. On July 17, 1862, Congress passed the Second Confiscation Act, allowing the seizure of Rebel slaves as contraband. Five days later, on July 22, 1862, Lincoln read a draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to his Cabinet. At this point, as Allen C. Guelzo notes, "Lincoln was no longer entertaining recommendations about *whether* he should emancipate, or even about *how*, but only about the technicalities of doing so."[38] At the suggestion of Secretary of State William H. Seward, he held off on issuing the preliminary proclamation, waiting for the occasion of a Union victory so that it would not come off as an act of desperation. In the meantime, on August 14, 1862, Lincoln offered comments that significantly complicate his image as the "Great Emancipator." He met with a delegation of African Americans at the White House and suggested to them that colonization to Central America was a viable solution for slavery.[39] In that meeting, Lincoln expressed the opinion that African Americans might never be treated as the equal of whites if they remained.

After the Battle of Antietam, Lincoln saw an opportunity to issue the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which he did on September 22, 1862. As Kirt H. Wilson has acknowledged, the preliminary proclamation was a "rhetorical device" aimed at persuading the South to cease their rebellion.[40] Lincoln's proclamation stated that the Confederacy had 100 days to cease rebellion, after which he would issue an

Emancipation Proclamation that would free only slaves in states still in rebellion against the Union. Even after issuing the preliminary proclamation, however, Lincoln continued to pose other solutions to the problem of slavery. For instance, in his "Annual Message to Congress," delivered on December 1, 1862, Lincoln again proposed compensated emancipation and colonization as options. However, he was more committed to the final Emancipation Proclamation at this point than these alternative proposals might suggest. As David Zarefsky has argued, in his annual message Lincoln "subtly subverted" his appeals for compensated emancipation and colonization to create "rhetorical space for considering emancipation."[41] Finally, on January 1, 1863, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

One way to interpret Lincoln's progression toward issuing the Emancipation Proclamation is to view it as an evolution "from a stance of moral indifference and ignorance about emancipation at the time of his election in 1860, toward deep conviction about African-American freedom by the time of the Emancipation Proclamation less than two years later."[42] At the heart of this interpretation is the idea that Lincoln was, as *New-York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley once stated, a "growing man" who had to go through a creative process of moral and political development before he was willing to take the risk of issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, the act that Wilson has called Lincoln's "greatest moment of rhetorical leadership."[43] Lincoln himself described the proclamation as "the central act" of his administration.[44] Yet, as Guelzo has argued, the proclamation was also "one of the biggest political gambles in American history."[45] When Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation he took substantial risks—of acting unconstitutionality, of displeasing the South, and of jeopardizing his legacy and

reputation—in order to act as a moral leader. And even when he acted as a moral leader, Lincoln did so through the language of legal wartime expediency. The Emancipation Proclamation was not a stirring statement of principle. Nevertheless, these facts do not diminish either the risks or the creativity that Lincoln demonstrated in its issuance. Rather, they reveal the complexity of the moment that Lincoln faced and, ultimately, resolved.

One hundred years later, when Martin Luther King Jr. called upon President Kennedy to issue a second emancipation proclamation, he crafted a text that defined presidential moral leadership in terms that aligned with Lincoln's actions during the Civil War. For instance, King's "Appeal" articulated a two-fold exigence for a second emancipation proclamation: similarities between 1863 and 1963 and the unfulfilled nature of the original Emancipation Proclamation. First, King drew a parallel between the institution of slavery in the nineteenth century and segregation of the 1960s. For instance, he asserted: "Shortly after 1877 a new form of slavery arose to replace the old. In the form of legislation, euphemistically called the 'Black Codes,' segregation was introduced for the purpose of reinstituting the essence of slavery."[46] In this portrayal, America never eliminated slavery; the system continued to thrive by evolving over time into new, but equally problematic, forms of oppression. King wrote to the President, "segregation is but a new form of slavery—an enslavement of the human spirit and dignity rather than of the body."[47] This framing of segregation was rhetorically powerful, as it encouraged Kennedy to view it as a problem equal in kind and magnitude to that of slavery. Similarly, King drew a parallel between the Civil War and the civil rights movement, positioning both events as part of the long struggle for black equality:

> The struggle for freedom, Mr. President, of which our Civil War was but a bloody chapter, continues throughout our land today. The courage and heroism of Negro citizens at Montgomery, Little Rock, New Orleans, Prince Edward County, and Jackson, Mississippi is only a further effort to affirm that democratic heritage so painfully won, in part, upon the grassy battlefields of Antietam, Lookout Mountain, and Gettysburg.[48]

In this passage King strategically framed the cause of the Civil War and that of the civil rights movement as one in the same, and it portrayed Civil War soldiers and civil rights movement participants on the same side of history. Through this reframed narrative of the struggle for black equality, King called on Kennedy to consider his role in the civil rights movement and to realize that segregation of the 1960s required executive action comparable to what Lincoln once mobilized to abolish slavery.

By paralleling the politics of the Civil War with those of the civil rights movement, King also created a space to argue that the promise of the Emancipation Proclamation was unfulfilled. In fact, he made this argument explicitly when he stated that segregation and discrimination of the 1960s were "inconsistent with the letter and spirit of the Proclamation of Emancipation and contrary to the legislative purpose of the Thirteenth Amendment."[49] King's use of the word "spirit" here was transformative for two reasons. First, it changed the Emancipation Proclamation from a historical document with a single immediate purpose to a symbol of abstract values not unlike the Declaration of Independence. The Emancipation Proclamation despite its procedural language was an expression of equality and freedom. This portrayal positioned the Proclamation as legally and symbolically potent not only in the context of historical commemoration, but also in

the political and social contexts of the 1960s. Second, the term “spirit” shifted the debate from a question of slavery’s economic or institutional materiality to a spiritual or principled expression. The spirit of the Emancipation Proclamation was not to end the institution of slavery but to end the oppression, the absence of freedom, which slavery enforced. In this context, the Proclamation possessed even loftier goals than the emancipation of slaves. The Emancipation Proclamation was now a call for total equality, a promise that discrimination in all its forms, including segregation, would end.

King’s framing of the “unfulfilled promise” positioned the Emancipation Proclamation’s centennial as a kairotic moment for rededication and political action. For King, the centennial highlighted the long history of racial oppression in the U.S., and emphasized the need for Kennedy to take a strong moral stand on civil rights. As King stated,

> It is precisely because race relations in America today are so deeply rooted, historically, in the socio-political conditions of Slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, the ‘Black Codes,’ and their aftermath that we believe the time has come for Presidential leadership to be vigorously exerted to remove, once and for all time, the festering cancer of segregation and discrimination from American society.[50]

More than one hundred years prior, in 1854, Lincoln had compared slavery to cancer.[51] In the passage above, King invoked this same metaphor to express in vivid terms the dire need for executive action.

King’s call for moral leadership from the President also offered a significant challenge to the dominant trend of Civil War commemoration at the time. To that point,

much of the commemoration involving the Proclamation had emphasized the progress that America had made, downplaying the work left to be done.[52] King asserted, "1963, in the United States of America, Mr. President, must be the year of living reality, not only for some nineteen million Negroes, but for all America."[53] This passage was important for at least two reasons. First, the phrase "living reality" conveyed a particular notion of commemoration as an active, political process. The signing of a second emancipation proclamation "would not be limited to hollow words," as emphasized by King in a speech at the founding of the Gandhi Society for Human Rights, delivered on the same day that he presented the "Appeal" to Kennedy.[54] Second, the notion of making 1963 a "living reality" for all Americans drew attention to a disjunction between America's founding ideals and racial inequality of the 1960s. King's "Appeal" called for a process of national rededication, and Kennedy's moral political leadership would be the catalyst.

King made this case more explicitly when he defined moral political leadership as exemplified by Lincoln's creative, audacious leadership in 1863. King, stated: "The full panoply of Presidential power must now again, as in 1863, be exerted in behalf of civil rights" and that Kennedy was obliged to "let those dawn-like rays of freedom, first glimpsed in 1863, fill the heavens with the noonday sunlight of complete human dignity."[55] In each of these instances, King implied that Kennedy should take the risk of exerting executive action, just as Lincoln did with the Emancipation Proclamation. Drawing on Kennedy's own words, King asserted: "On several occasions you have said the times we live in demand *bold imaginative and courageous action* by all our people… The conscience of America looks now, again, some one hundred years after the abolition of chattel slavery, to the President of the United States [emphasis added]."[56] This

statement carefully linked the historical moment of 1863 to modern-day politics, while also encouraging Kennedy to mobilize his imagination as a tool for locating useful resources in the past to deal with modern-day problems. Throughout the "Appeal," King repeatedly asked for "creative and firm Executive action"[57] and "bold imaginative Executive leadership,"[58] and he called on Kennedy to "creatively use the authority and moral prestige"[59] of his office. In these instances, King seemingly invoked the memory of how Lincoln, after initially attempting tepid, safe responses to slavery, eventually took the risk of issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, enacting what James Jasinski has called "audacious prudence."[60] In a similar vein, King encouraged Kennedy to recognize that slow, cautious progress in advancing civil rights was no longer acceptable. The time had come for strong, moral presidential leadership.

King's "Appeal" document thus offered a nuanced idea of a second emancipation proclamation. King mobilized Lincoln's memory to persuade Kennedy to think creatively and to act audaciously, just as Lincoln had amid the Civil War. In issuing a second emancipation proclamation, Kennedy would follow in Lincoln's footsteps and, one might assume, to similar glory. This type of leadership, in King's framing, would fulfill the promise of the Emancipation Proclamation by effectively quashing segregation and discrimination in the 1960s.

Creating a Space for Executive Action

King recognized, however, that the constitutionality of a second emancipation proclamation was not assured. This fact is rather interesting, considering that Lincoln,

too, worried about the constitutionality of his Emancipation Proclamation. In fact, this concern was the very reason that Lincoln crafted the proclamation in such a dry, legalistic style—"entirely unlike Lincoln's other famous writings"—that Richard Hofstadter controversially criticized as possessing "all the moral grandeur of a bill of lading."[61] Perhaps invoking the rhetorical style of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, King wrote his "Appeal" document in a similarly dry and legalistic manner. The body of the "Appeal" was thirty-four pages in length, permeated by ninety-three foot-noted citations. It began with a "Preamble" in the style of U.S. founding documents. This choice rhetorically placed King's "Appeal" among some of the nation's most iconic texts, such as the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, and framed the document as a formal, democratic, and legally-binding statement. The "Preamble" was followed by three additional sections, each with a title that described the section's contents. Adding to the legal aesthetic, these titles were printed in all capital letters and numbered with Roman Numerals. Many of the pages were dominated by substantial footnotes consisting of legal decisions, the words of notable figures from American history, passages from hearing transcripts, etc. The thirty-four page "Appeal" body was followed by an additional twenty-five pages of appendices, including nineteen foot-noted citations, complete with a title page that detailed the contents of these additions. Ultimately, the stylistic features of King's document gave it the appearance and ethos of a lengthy legal brief. Yet focusing only on the aesthetics of this legalistic style misses its rhetorical function. King made a compelling case for Kennedy to assume moral leadership by first articulating the *limits of law* to achieve social change and justice. Second, he pointed out that although the laws that existed in the 1960s warranted *moral leadership* in the form of

a second emancipation proclamation, he argued further that such executive action was ultimately more powerful than the law. Third, King insisted that Kennedy had both the constitutional authority and executive responsibility to issue a second emancipation proclamation.

King's legal discourse demonstrated that legal decisions and actions for civil rights were insufficient without moral political leadership. He extensively mapped major legal and judicial advancements protecting civil rights in the realms of education, housing, and transportation since *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). Through this account, King highlighted the "plethora of law entitling Negroes to protection against discriminatory treatment because of their race and color," the "numerous signposts designated by our highest court along the road to full equality and equal opportunity in the field of public education," and "all the judicial and legislative declarations of the rights of Negroes" through which "guarantees of human decency and fair play" were "patiently won."[62] He repetitively contrasted the existence of law with realities such as the "growing impatience with the 'one (1) percent (%) a year rate of desegregation' in the South" and the fact that "there still remains, overall, state sanctioned and enforced resistance to the decisions of the Court."[63] King's thorough account of legal decisions and actions for civil rights thus functioned to highlight what he refers to as a "dilemma":

> On the one hand, Mr. President, nearly twenty million citizens find themselves constitutionally, legislatively and judicially entitled to the immediate discontinuance of the inequities and injustices of racial segregation and discrimination. On the other hand, however, these same persons find that practically, in real life, statutory imposed racial segregation and discrimination is

> still enforced by many of the states in this country. This is the dilemma in which Negro Americans find themselves.[64]

King cited the numerous legal and judicial decisions that entitled blacks to equality in America and he juxtaposed this with the continued existence of segregation and discrimination. This allowed him to demonstrate the impotence of the law to protect and provide civil rights. King implied, further, that continuing to rely on national legislation alone was not enough.

King argued that the law was not a satisfactory substitute for "the clarion voice of dynamic, forceful Presidential leadership."[65] But while the law was insufficient to achieve the freedom King sought, he contended that it was a sufficient ground on which Kennedy could enact the type of leadership that would end the slavery of segregation. King asserted: "there is a direct relationship between the hardened resistance of [Southern state public officials] to comply with the judicial and legislative declarations of our civil and constitutional rights and the absence of forceful Presidential leadership publicly committed to a policy of forthwith compliance."[66] In this passage, he positioned moral leadership as the necessary and essential counterpart of the law. In short, without Kennedy's leadership, the law was impotent. With Kennedy's leadership, however, the law served its proper function. King emphasized this idea when he stated:

> You may wonder why, Mr. President, we mention so many court decisions… These decisions, in conjunction with the legislation enacted over the years, make it amply clear that Negroes are legally and constitutionally entitled to exercise these rights we now seek to have secured by Presidential leadership.[67]

In this framing, King lays rhetorical groundwork for Kennedy by arguing that the past's legal decisions provided the necessary authority for the President to exercise moral leadership, as he would only be reinforcing the dictates of established laws.

King's legal discourse also provided political cover for Kennedy to embrace moral leadership by taking the question of the potential unconstitutionality of a proclamation off the table. King argued: "Mr. President, we are firmly convinced that there exist sufficient constitutional and statutory sources of power to enable you to creatively use the authority and moral prestige of your office to dramatically advance human rights in America."[68] The Constitution, according to King, made the President directly responsible for the implementation of laws. By drawing on this source of authority, King made the case that issuing a second emancipation proclamation was not only a moral move, but also a constitutional duty of the president.

In a different sense, King portrayed the president as authorized to act when the Constitution or the law had been violated. He stated, "The mandate from Congress is clear. The President has statutory authority to use the militia, armed forces, or 'ANY OTHER MEANS' to suppress a conspiracy or unlawful combination if it deprives a class of person of the equal protection of the laws of the United States."[69] Compared to a request for use of the militia or armed forces, King's call for moral leadership—which clearly falls into the category of "other means"—appeared modest and prudent. King even made this point himself by drawing a connection between moral leadership and his doctrine of nonviolence when he claimed, "we are urging bold imaginative Executive leadership precisely because we are so deeply committed to a firm but peaceful nonviolent achievement of human dignity for 18 million Americans."[70] Moral executive

leadership was, in other words, the counterpart of nonviolent protest. Strong moral leadership in the form of a proclamation offered a constitutional, peaceful, and prudent manner by which massive change could be achieved. Nonviolent protest would prove powerful at the local level by ensuring that the nation stayed focused on the goals that Kennedy proposed.

King also framed moral leadership, in the form of an executive order, as the most simple, powerful solution for segregation: "The simplicity of this Constitutional command pierces through the complexities and legalisms surrounding human rights. Direct and open state action to compel segregation is forbidden."[71] The image of the equal protection clause "piercing" through the messiness of America's multi-faceted civil rights legal terrain was a powerful one. One can imagine that King saw Kennedy's moral leadership in a similar light. With the backing of the Constitution, a presidential statement of moral rhetorical leadership could instigate significant change. As King described it, Kennedy could usher in "<u>a glorious new state in the history of human rights in America</u>" by declaring through an Executive Order that:

> <u>the continued enforcement of State laws requiring segregation and discrimination, in your best judgment, is contrary to the Constitution and laws of the United States; and that the existence of State laws requiring discrimination because of race or color is inimical to the best interests of the United States at home and abroad; and that, consequently, the full powers of your office will be employed to bring about forthwith compliance with the Constitution and laws of the United States</u> [underline in the original].[72]

Through claims like these, Dr. King revealed what he believed to be one of the defining powers of the Office of the Presidency—the ability to transform the very social fabric of America through moral, rhetorical leadership that would symbolize America's intolerance of racial discrimination.

Finally, King used Kennedy's own actions and words as evidence that the Constitution and the law both required and enabled the President to engage in moral leadership. For instance, King referenced Kennedy's recent use of an executive order to regulate prices in the steel industry. King also cited Kennedy's own words from a campaign speech delivered on September 9, 1960 in Los Angeles:

> If the President does not himself wage the struggle for equal rights-if he stands above the battle-then the battle will inevitably be lost…. He cannot wait for others to act… He himself must draft the programs, transmit them to Congress and fight for their enactment, taking his case to the people if Congress is slow.[73]

King drew the above quotation from a *New York Times* article published in January of 1961. The same article asserted that Kennedy's "delay in signing his long-promised Executive Order forbidding racial discrimination in Federally Aided housing stems from the belief that he should not get too far ahead of public opinion in pressing for civil rights."[74] One could speculate, then, that at least one goal of King's "Appeal" was to press back against this idea or, at the very least, to provide Kennedy with a motivation *to lead rather than follow* public opinion. The "Appeal" demonstrated that the law supported civil rights and Executive Action to protect these rights, effectively trumping any notion that the law should be constrained by public opinion. By laying out the

extensive statutory and constitutional support for Kennedy to act, King showed Kennedy that he should feel free to fulfill the promise he made in his campaign speech.

The legal style and content of King's "Appeal" thus operated to quell any concerns that Kennedy or the U.S. public might have had about the legality or constitutionality of a second emancipation proclamation. The document's exhaustive tracing of the history of civil rights legislation portrayed the law as an insufficient vehicle for prompting equality. It also invited Kennedy to reflect on the long process that Lincoln had gone through one hundred years earlier when first trying to attack slavery through legal and voluntary modes. By showing Kennedy that the law and the Constitution would sufficiently enable him to enact an executive order, King invited the President to take a bold—yet prudent—step toward eradicating segregation once and for all.

Conclusion

While Kennedy never responded to King's call for a second emancipation proclamation, he did enact a few of his own efforts to commemorate the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation. For instance, on December 28, 1962, just four days shy of the one-hundredth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, John F. Kennedy released a proclamation to commemorate the centennial. It celebrated the Emancipation Proclamation for abolishing slavery and for advancing the principle of equality. Importantly, Kennedy's proclamation did connect the centennial with the efforts of the civil rights movement when he stated, "I request the United States Commission on Civil Rights to plan and participate in appropriate commemorative activities recognizing the

centennial of the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation; and I also request the Commission on Civil Rights and other Federal agencies to cooperate fully with State and local governments during 1963 in commemorating these events."[75] By and large, however, Kennedy's proclamation was epideictic in tone. And, it certainly was not the strong act of moral leadership for which King had campaigned. One month prior, on November 20, 1962, Kennedy had issued Executive Order 11063, which mandated an end to housing discrimination. Whether or not King's "Appeal" influenced the President to issue this order is unknown, but it may have been a contributing factor. King responded to Kennedy's executive action, stating that it represented the "fulfillment" of Kennedy's "stroke of the pen" campaign pledge, but that it did "not go far enough."[76] Not only was the Executive Order not a second emancipation proclamation; it did not even go as far in the area of housing as King had envisioned in his "Appeal."

Kennedy attempted to sidestep further political action with an event celebrating Lincoln's birthday, hosted at the White House on February 12, 1963. He invited between 800 and 1,000 prominent civil rights leaders to attend this party.[77] A six-page spread of photographs in *Ebony* magazine reported that the NAACP's Roy Wilkins, CORE's James Farmer, the National Urban League's Whitney Young, *Ebony* and *Jet* magazine publisher John Johnson, and Sammy Davis Jr. were among the guests.[78] King was notably absent, perhaps because the party was exactly the type of empty gesture that he so desperately advocated against through his campaign for a second emancipation proclamation.[79] In fact, the event was strategically framed as a "strictly non-political affair."[80] Yet the extensive coverage in *Ebony* magazine and the largely positive event reviews printed by the black press reveal that there were, in fact, political consequences to the birthday

event—it highlighted progress in civil rights and deflected attention from advocates like King who wanted more immediate, radical action.

The White House event on Lincoln's birthday also coincided with the release of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission's *Freedom to the Free* report, the document drafted by John Hope Franklin. As discussed in Chapter 2, Franklin's draft of this document attempted to account for the realities of America's racist past. However, perhaps as a result of the criticisms voiced by the white Commission members and historians, the 264-page final document ended up with a tone that celebrated civil rights *progress* since the Emancipation Proclamation.[81] Like King's "Appeal" document, a portion of the report tracked major legal advancements in the area of civil rights over time. But, unlike King's account, the report concluded that, "segregation is a dead letter in every area of activity."[82] In the *Freedom to the Free*, slavery was truly dead. Kennedy's proclamation commemorating the Emancipation Proclamation's centennial, his party celebrating Lincoln's birth, and the *Freedom to the Free* report thus all had at least a few things in common: they commemorated through a strictly celebratory approach, they focused on civil rights progress instead of the work left to be done, and they served as pale substitutes for the political act of commemorating the Emancipation Proclamation through issuing a second emancipation proclamation.

This lack of substantive response did not come as a surprise to King or to other civil rights leaders. About a month after King delivered his "Appeal" to Kennedy, Jackie Robinson wrote an op-ed on the topic that was published in several prominent African American newspapers. In his piece, Robinson asserted, "We do not believe… that President Kennedy will sign such an executive order… Dr. King knows, as the whole

country knows, that Mr. Kennedy's real reason for evading this issue is that he is afraid of offending Southern politicians."[83] What Robinson's critique highlights is that a presidential response to King's call for a second emancipation proclamation risked signaling something new: A *moral* stance on the part of President Kennedy, which would be extremely unpopular with white Southerners, especially Southern Democrats. Arguably, then, Kennedy actually could *not* respond to King's campaign, because to respond would legitimize King's call for moral leadership. It was far safer for Kennedy to remain silent throughout King's campaign, to avoid assuming responsibility for shaping America's social and moral values related to racial politics.

What we oftentimes fail to remember about Kennedy is that he was very reluctant to discuss black civil rights for most of his presidency, before delivering his civil rights address in June of 1963. Instead, he took a very procedural approach, insisting that the issue of civil rights was a matter for the states. Kennedy would intervene in situations like the integration of the University of Mississippi for legal—not moral—reasons. So, what King attempted through his campaign was to persuade Kennedy to change his position on civil rights and to engage in a moral rhetoric. The most significant consequence of King's campaign, then, was a new vision of the role of the president. King's campaign escalated the significance of the civil rights movement from a small regional and local problem to a national issue on par with the Civil War and its significance. And, he attempted to make Kennedy directly responsible for the outcome of civil rights conflicts in the South, such as the direct action campaigns for desegregation in Albany, Georgia, led by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Ultimately, then, King's campaign

transformed the power of the presidency by arguing that it was Kennedy's job to shift the moral and social fabric of American society—regardless of the political risks and consequences.

King's call for a second emancipation proclamation may not have resulted in the immediate statement of presidential moral leadership that he desired. However, with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 King began to see his call for a second emancipation proclamation answered. This act, King asserted in his 1964 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech "came as a bright interlude in the long and sometimes turbulent struggle for civil rights: *the beginning of a second emancipation proclamation* providing a comprehensive legal basis for equality of opportunity" [emphasis added].[84] Furthermore, in July of 1965, King wrote in a letter to Johnson:

> No president has more eloquently and sincerely articulated the aspirations of oppressed people as you have… While Lincoln went down in history as the first Emancipator of the Negro people, I am convinced that you will go down as the president who issued the second and final Emancipation Proclamation, thereby making Emancipation more than a Proclamation but a real and meaningful fact of life.[85]

Both King's "Nobel Lecture" and his letter to Johnson reveal what King was truly seeking when he called for a second emancipation proclamation. It was not the issuance of an actual proclamation, but rather a new type of presidential leadership guided by the moral necessity of social justice. It was by tapping into national interest in the Civil War centennial that King was able to intervene in dominant public memories and to

strategically repurpose those memories to prod the president toward a more moral position.

Yet as the centennial progressed, it was not always possible for the civil rights movement to maintain a hold on the Civil War commemorative stake. In fact, as the civil rights movement grew in national prominence, official entities pressed back against the movement's co-optation of the centennial by appropriating the long struggle for black equality as a tool of promoting American patriotism and the nation's role in the Cold War. In the next chapter, I explore this phenomenon of re-appropriation by examining the CWCC's September 1962 national commemoration of the Emancipation Proclamation centennial.

Notes

[1] For the sake of clarity, henceforth I refer to this document as the "Appeal."

[2] Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1988), 590.

[3] Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 590.

[4] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Address for the formation of the Gandhi Society for Human Rights," May 17, 1962, folder "5/17/62 "Emancipation Proclamation" Sheraton-Carlton Hotel New York City, NY," Box 3, Series III: Speeches, Sermons, Etc., Papers of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., The King Center Library & Archive, Atlanta, GA.

[5] An exchange of three letters occurred through which King requested use of the Lincoln Memorial and Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall granted approval. See, Martin Luther King, Jr. to Stewart Udall, February 22, 1962, folder 17, Box 24, Series I: Primary Correspondence and Administrative Records 1955-1968, Papers of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., The King Center Library & Archive, Atlanta, GA; Stewart Udall to Martin Luther King, Jr., March, 14 1962, folder 17, Box 24, Series I: Primary Correspondence and Administrative Records 1955-1968, Papers of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., The King Center Library & Archive, Atlanta, GA; Martin Luther King, Jr. to Stewart Udall, March 23, 1962, folder 17, Box 24, Series I: Primary Correspondence and Administrative Records 1955-1968, Papers of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., The King Center Library & Archive, Atlanta, GA.

[6] As quoted in "President Urged to End Race Laws: King Wants Proclamation for a 2d 'Emancipation,'" *New York Times*, June 6, 1961, 29.

[7] David Brion Davis, "The Emancipation Moment," in *Lincoln, the War President: The Gettysburg Lectures*, ed. Gabor S. Boritt (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 63-88.

[8] "President Urged to End Race Laws," 29.

[9] Trezzvant W. Anderson, "Requested by JFK: Dr. King's Magna Charta Is Far-reaching Document," *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 4, 1961, A2.

[10] For example, brief mentions of King's call for a Second Emancipation Proclamation appear in Robert Cook, *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961*-1965 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 186-190; Eric Sundquist, *King's Dream: The Legacy of Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" Speech* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 34; Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh, *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 248-*25*0; Robert Cook, "From Shiloh to Selma: The Impact of the Civil War Centennial on the Black Freedom Struggle in the United States, 1961-65," in *The Making of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement*, eds. Brian Ward and Tony Badger (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 140-142.

[11] See, for example, Taylor Branch and Haley Sweetland Edwards, "A Second Emancipation," *Washington Monthly*, January/February 2013, accessed January 1, 2016, http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/january_february_2013/features/a_second_emancipation042039.php?page=all; David W. Blight and Allison Scharfstein, "King's Forgotten Manifesto," *New York Times*, May 16, 2016, accessed January 1, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/17/opinion/kings-forgotten-manifesto.html?_r=3;

Karen Grigsby Bates, "1963 Emancipation Proclamation Party Lacked A Key Guest," *National Public Radio*, February 12, 2013, accessed January 1, 2016, http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/02/12/171815620/1963-Emancipation-Proclamation-Party-Lacked-A-Key-Guest.

[12] David Blight, *American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 17-18.

[13] Throughout this essay, I refer to the "Appeal" as King's document, despite the fact that there were many involved with the process of writing and promoting this text. I do this not to obscure the contributions of others, but rather for the sake of writing clarity. This decision also aligns with Clarence B. Jones's account of the second emancipation proclamation document as one of the many pieces of rhetoric that he and Stanley Levinson "considered to be the sole work product of [King]," despite the fact that they had aided in the editorial process. He asserts that he and Levinson provided assistance "out of our love, respect and devotion to Martin and his extraordinary leadership." Clarence B. Jones and Stuart Connelly, *Behind the Dream: The Making of the Speech that Transformed a Nation* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 197-198.

[14] Commission on Presidential Debates, "October 7, 1960 Debate Transcript: The Second Kennedy-Nixon Presidential Debate," accessed June 1, 2016, http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=october-7-1960-debate-transcript.

[15] Kenneth R. Mayer, *With the Stroke of a Pen: Executive Orders and Presidential Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 8.

[16] Mayer, *With the Stroke of a Pen*, 8.

[17] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Equality Now: The President Has the Power," *The Nation*, February 4, 1961, 93.

[18] As quoted in "President Urged to End Race Laws," 29.

[19] For example, newspapers reported that King called for a second emancipation proclamation before an audience of 25,000 in Los Angeles in July 1961; at Columbia University on October 27, 1961; at Eau Claire State in Wisconsin on April 2, 1962; and before an audience of 5,000 at the Washington Tabernacle Baptist Church in St. Louis, MO in Spring 1963. Dan Burley, "How is Dr. Martin L. King Able to Stay Out of Jail," *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 18, 1961, 4; "Dr. King Asks New Laws: Urges Kennedy to Initiate Civil Rights Measures," *New York Times*, October 28, 1961, 45; "King Asks JFK Sign Second Emancipation," *Chicago Defender*, June 1, 1963, 4; "King Gives JFK Emancipation Proclamation," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 19, 1962, 1.

[20] "NAACP 52nd Annual Convention Resolutions," July 15, 1961, folder 17, Box 134, Series II: Secondary Correspondence 1958-1962, Papers of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., The King Center Library & Archive, Atlanta, GA

[21] Branch and Edwards, "A Second Emancipation."

[22] Branch and Edwards, "A Second Emancipation;" "MLK/JFK on Abolition of Segregation," October 16, 1961, folder "10/16/61 Statement re Emancipation Proclamation Anniversary Washington, DC", Box 2, Series III: Speeches, Sermons, Articles, and Statements, Papers of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., The King Center Library & Archive, Atlanta, GA

[23] Blight and Scharfstein, “King’s Forgotten Manifesto;” Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 518.

[24] “MLK/JFK on Abolition of Segregation.”

[25] Martin Luther King, Jr., W. G. Anderson, and Ralph D. Abernathy to John F. Kennedy, December 18, 1961, White House Central Name Files, “King, Martin Luther” folder, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

[26] “3 major southern railroads desegregate all facilities,” *The Baltimore Afro-American*, October 28, 1961, 17.

[27] “3 major southern railroads desegregate all facilities,” 17.

[28] Anderson, “Requested by JFK.”

[29] Anderson, “Requested by JFK.”

[30] “King to Present Emancipation Document to JFK,” May 10, 1962, folder 8, Box 120, Series IX: Publications 1958-69: Speeches, Sermons, Articles, and Statements, Papers of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, The King Center Library & Archive, Atlanta, GA.

[31] Gould Maynard, “SCLC Kicks off National Petition Campaign,” May 17, 1962, folder 8, Box 120, Series IX: Publications 1958-69: Speeches, Sermons, Articles, and Statements, Papers of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, The King Center Library & Archive, Atlanta, GA.

[32] King “Address for the formation of the Gandhi Society for Human Rights.”

[33] Maurice Fagan to Martin Luther King, Jr., June 18, 1962, folder 11, Box 33, Series I: Correspondence 1958-68, Papers of the Southern Christian Leadership

Conference, The King Center Library & Archive, Atlanta, GA; B. Tartt Bell, Executive Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee, to Wyatt Walker, September 20, 1962, folder 15, Box 33, Series I: Correspondence 1958-68, Papers of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, The King Center Library & Archive, Atlanta, GA; Martin Luther King, Jr. to A. Philip Randolph, June 29, 1962, folder 54, Box 19, Series I: Correspondence 1958-68, Papers of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, The King Center Library & Archive, Atlanta, GA

[34] Herschel Lymon to James Roosevelt, March 20, 1962, folder "HR 2: 1 March 62-31 July," Box 360, The White House Central Files, Subject Files, The Papers of John F. Kennedy, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

[35] Bill Taylor to Larry O'Brien, memorandum, April 2, 1962, folder "HR 2: 1 March 62-31 July," Box 360, The White House Central Files, Subject Files, The Papers of John F. Kennedy, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

[36] Taylor Branch, for example, writes, "King would have liked to stamp the moment with his cry for a Second Emancipation Proclamation, but he knew he would reap confusion or worse by introducing a strange alternative to the civil rights bill. Instead he conjured up the safer notion that Lincoln and the Founding Fathers had issued all Americans a 'promissory note' guaranteeing basic democratic freedoms." Branch, *Parting the Waters,* 875.

[37] Abraham Lincoln, "The Repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the Propriety of its Restoration: Speech at Peoria, Illinois, in Reply to Senator Douglas, October 16,

1854," in *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, ed. Roy P. Basler (Cleveland, OH: Da Capo Press, 1942), 283-325.

[38] Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 136.

[39] Abraham Lincoln, "Address on Colonization to a Deputation of Negroes," in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 5, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 370-375.

[40] Kirt H. Wilson, "The Paradox of Lincoln's Rhetorical Leadership," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 3 (2000): 20.

[41] David Zarefsky, "Lincoln's 1862 Annual Message: A Paradigm of Rhetorical Leadership," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 3 (2000): 5.

[42] Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 5-6.

[43] Wilson, "The Paradox of Lincoln's Rhetorical Leadership," 16.

[44] Douglas L. Wilson, *Lincoln's Sword: The Presidency and the Power of Words* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 105.

[45] Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 7.

[46] Martin Luther King, Jr., "An Appeal To The Honorable John F. Kennedy President of the United States," 27, folder 5, Box 27, Series I: Correspondence 1958-69, Papers of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, The King Center Library & Archive, Atlanta, GA.

[47] King, "An Appeal," 6.

[48] King, "An Appeal," 3.

[49] King, "An Appeal," 27.

[50] King, "An Appeal," 3.

[51] In Lincoln's first public articulation of his views on slavery, presented in Peoria, IL in October 1854, he described human bondage as a physical malady, stating: "…the thing is hid away, in the constitution, just as an afflicted man hides away a wen or a cancer, which he dares not cut out at once, lest he bleed to death; with the promise, nevertheless, that the cutting may begin at the end of a given time." See, Lincoln, "The Repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the Propriety of its Restoration," 313.

[52] The Kennedy administration, for instance, tasked the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights to draft a report tracing the progress made in America in the century since Lincoln issued his Proclamation, entitled *Freedom to the Free*. As discussed in the introduction of this dissertation, controversy arose over the report's original draft produced by the African American historian John Hope Franklin in 1962. Members of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, as well as other white historians who were asked to review the draft, concluded that it was too negative in tone and not celebratory enough of the *progress* made in the realm of civil rights to date. This conflict aptly reflected the tension that emerged at the Emancipation Proclamation's centennial: there was an eagerness to celebrate progress while deflecting attention away from the continued existence of white supremacy and racial inequality.

[53] King, "An Appeal," 26.

[54] King "Address for the formation of the Gandhi Society for Human Rights," 2.

[55] King, "An Appeal," 31, 4.

[56] King, "An Appeal," 4.

[57] King, "An Appeal," 4.

[58] King, "An Appeal," 34.

[59] King, "An Appeal," 34.

[60] James Jasinski, "Idioms of Prudence in Three Antebellum Controversies: Revolution, Constitution, and Slavery," in *Prudence: Classical Virtue, Postmodern Practice*, ed. Robert Hariman (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 2003), 145-188.

[61] Wilson, *Lincoln's Sword*, 105; Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 131.

[62] King, "An Appeal," 21, 10, 22.

[63] King, "An Appeal," 12, 10.

[64] King, "An Appeal," 21-22.

[65] King, "An Appeal," 13.

[66] King, "An Appeal," 22.

[67] King, "An Appeal," 21.

[68] King, "An Appeal," 34.

[69] King, "An Appeal," 33.

[70] King, "An Appeal," 7.

[71] King, "An Appeal," 7.

[72] King, "An Appeal," 12.

[73] King, "An Appeal," 31.

[74] "Mr. Kennedy on Civil Rights," *New York Times*, January 17, 1962, 30.

[75] John F. Kennedy, "Emancipation Proclamation Centennial," December 28, 1962, folder "Emancipation Proclamation Centennial Planning Committee Materials 1961-1963 Part 1," Box 5, White House Files, Papers of Berl I. Bernhard, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

[76] Martin Luther King, Jr., "J.F.K's Executive Order in Housing," December 13, 1962, folder "JFK's Executive Order New Amsterdam News," Box 3, Series III: Speeches, Sermons, Etc., Papers of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., The King Center Library & Archive, Atlanta, GA.

[77] Accounts vary wildly, ranging from 800 to 1,000 invitees and from 400 to 1,000 attendees. See, Simeon Booker and Carol McCabe Booker, *Shocking the Conscience: A Reporter's Account of the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013); "Biggest Reception Ever: President Kennedy entertains 1,000 Negroes at White House," *Ebony*, May 1963, 89-94; Regis D. Bobonis, "Negro Progress in 100 Years Assessed at the White House," February 16, 1963, *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1.

[78] "Biggest Reception Ever, 89-94.

[79] Bates, "1963 Emancipation Proclamation Party Lacked A Key Guest."

[80] Booker and Booker, *Shocking the Conscience*, 219.

[81] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Freedom to the Free: Century of Emancipation* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963).

[82] Quoted in, Marjorie Hunter "Civil Rights Fight Shifting to North: Report to President Cites Menial Status of Negro and Curbs on Housing," *New York Times*, February 13, 1963, 6.

[83] Jackie Robinson, "Kennedy is No Lincoln," *New York Amsterdam* News, May 26, 1962; Jackie Robinson, "Pres. Kennedy Is a Fine Man, But Abraham Lincoln, He Ain't!," *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 29, 1962, 4; Jackie Robinson, "Jackie Robinson says: Kennedy Not Another Lincoln," *The Chicago Defender*, June 9, 1962, 8.

[84] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Nobel Lecture," December 1, 1964, *The King Center Digital Archives*, accessed January 1, 2016, http://www.thekingcenter.org/archive/document/nobel-lecture-mlk.

[85] Martin Luther King, Jr. to Lyndon B. Johnson, July 16, 1965, folder 7, Box 13, Primary Correspondence 1955-1968, Papers of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., The King Center Library & Archive, Atlanta, GA.

Chapter 4

The Emancipation Proclamation Centennial Commemoration: Cold War Appropriations of the Civil Rights Movement

On September 22, 1962, a relatively small crowd of 3,000 individuals gathered at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. to commemorate the impending one-hundredth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. An additional 20 million Americans tuned in at home to watch political celebrities such as Adlai Stevenson, Nelson Rockefeller, and Thurgood Marshall deliver addresses to commemorate the occasion. President John F. Kennedy even addressed the audience through a video, recorded prior to the event in the Roosevelt Room of the White House. The event featured poet Archibald MacLeish who recited his poem, "At the Lincoln Memorial: A Poem for the Centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation," Mahalia Jackson, who sang the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "The Star Spangled Banner," and the U.S. Marine Band's performance of African American composer Ulysses Key's original composition, "Forever Free: A Lincoln Chronicle."

The event was significant not only because of its famous participants and national audience, but also because it was the first commemoration sponsored and planned by the federal Civil War Centennial Commission (CWCC). Prior to this point, the CWCC had played only a supervisory role in promoting Civil War centennial commemorations. Almost as soon as plans began to commemorate the Emancipation Proclamation, the

affair became embroiled in controversy. CWCC members from the South critiqued event organizers for planning a commemoration that they called "political" in nature and sympathetic to the civil rights movement. It would seem that they viewed any recognition of the Emancipation Proclamation as "political." Southern members also expressed anxiety that the federal CWCC had overstepped its bounds by planning this event instead of delegating the task to state organizations. Not coincidently, this critique mimicked common states' rights arguments used to attack federally sanctioned advancements in the area of civil rights policy. The CWCC ultimately compromised, adding several local co-sponsors to the event program and promising a focus on international issues rather than the domestic concerns of civil rights.

Yet these measures did not stave off additional controversy from another corner. The week of the program several prominent civil rights organization leaders publicly censured the event for its failure to include adequate black representation on the program and encouraged blacks across the country to boycott the event. The CWCC was taken by surprise. It appeared that the Commission believed that mere public recognition of the Emancipation Proclamation centennial, as well as the inclusion of Mahalia Jackson and an original composition written by black composer Ulysses Kay, was sufficient to communicate the Commission's acknowledgment of African American interests. Despite their surprise, however, the CWCC ultimately took steps to appease the movement leaders. Thurgood Marshall was invited to participate in the event only *after* the commission was critiqued for a lack of black representation.

Historians like David Blight and Robert Cook recognize this event as one of the most important national commemorations of the Civil War's centennial, noting its

entanglement in Cold War and civil rights movement politics. However, despite the extensive rhetoric that surrounded the commemoration, as well as the rich texts that composed it, scholars have yet to examine it as a *discursive* event. This chapter thus draws on speech texts, private letters, and other materials recovered through archival research conducted at The National Archives and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library to offer a rhetorical analysis of both the pre-event controversy and the rhetoric of the commemoration itself. My analysis exposes the commemoration event as a conciliatory product of the controversies which surrounded its planning. Event speakers catered to multiple audiences by remembering the Emancipation Proclamation in terms that nodded to the civil rights movement, while simultaneously deflecting attention from domestic matters and toward an international issue around which the nation could unite—America's leadership role in the Cold War.

In this chapter, I begin with an analysis of the pre-event controversy. I then examine the speeches delivered by Rev. Frederick Brown Harris, who delivered the invocation, keynote speaker Adlai Stevenson, Thurgood Marshall, Nelson Rockefeller, and John F. Kennedy. My analysis of these speeches recovers two key argumentative themes that speakers mobilized to advance the Cold War cause, while still attempting to appease civil rights advocates. First, speakers Harris, Stevenson, Marshall, and Rockefeller transformed the Emancipation Proclamation from a historical document with a specific function to a symbol of abstract values like freedom, human rights, and spirituality that could be applied to the immediate conflict of the Cold War. Second, Kennedy's speech framed the Emancipation Proclamation in celebratory terms and lauded the efforts that African Americans made to achieve their own salvation. However,

the President's epideictic rhetoric also appropriated the achievements of the civil rights movement as American accomplishments. Ultimately, these two argumentative themes demonstrate how this commemorative event, taken as a whole, transformed the civil rights movement into an instrument of American power in the fight against communism.

In the final section of this chapter, I examine what I assert is the single countervailing text of the day, Archibald MacLeish's poem "At The Lincoln Memorial." MacLeish used two personified entities as sources of mnemonic authority—the Potomac River and the marble monument of Abraham Lincoln—each of which he framed as witnesses to the Civil War and its social and political context. By creating a dialogue with these two personified entities, MacLeish linked Civil War history to the modern struggle for black freedom and condemned America for its failure to live up to the promise and dream of equality.

Planning the Commemorative Event: Navigating the Demands of Southern Conservative Commemorators and of the Civil Rights Movement

In fall of 1961, the CWCC underwent a transition in leadership. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Executive Director Karl S. Betts was forced to resign after widespread criticism of his commemoration agenda. Chairperson Ulysses S. Grant, III resigned in sympathy with Betts. In addition to the controversy that had emerged after Ashley Halsey had given his intemperate speech in Charleston, the media criticized Betts for the over-commercialization of commemorative events planned under his leadership. While the critiques were numerous and varied, historian Robert Cook argues that Betts's "Achilles'

heel was his inability to recognize the increasing salience of civil rights issues and to understand that the federal commission could not continue its cozy association with southern agencies dominated by white supremacists."[1]

With Betts and Grant gone, the CWCC began anew with leadership that attempted to give the commemorative events a more objective, yet liberal tone. The CWCC appointed James I. Robertson, Jr., editor of *Civil War History*, as their new Executive Director. Allan Nevins, who was working on his notable multivolume history of the Civil War period, was selected to replace Grant as the Commission's chairperson. Robertson and Nevins immediately sought to promote more dignified, historical commemorations of the war. Their first decision was to sponsor three new initiatives during the winter of 1961-1962 to "signal the adoption of a more scholarly and inclusive centennial program."[2] One of these initiatives was a national event to commemorate the Emancipation Proclamation centennial.

To that point, the centennial commemorative events had been planned and executed by state commissions, with the federal CWCC playing an advisory role. And, in fact, the Emancipation Proclamation ceremony would be one of only two events planned by the federal CWCC across the entire centennial. The other was a national commemoration of the Gettysburg Address, held in 1964 and discussed in the next chapter. Thus, the CWCC's decision to organize the Emancipation Proclamation commemoration itself added distinction and significance to the event. An internal CWCC memo written in the nascent planning stages of the Emancipation Proclamation centennial event noted how this decision might incite controversy: "Proceed with utmost care—at any time, commemoration of Emancipation would require sensitive and

judicious action. In 1962 and 1963 this will be no less than imperative for the Proclamation's Centennial may be highly charged and potentially explosive."[3] Only two months later, this prediction became a reality. Controversy erupted over the centennial plans, and the event incited disputes until mere days before the actual ceremony.

Southern commissions were the first to take issue with the CWCC's plans for commemorating the Emancipation Proclamation centennial. As early as December 1961, members of Southern CWCC organizations voiced concerns about the CWCC's decisions and its shift in direction. One major concern hinged on a purported distinction between "historical" and "political" commemoration. Southern commission members stressed a need for "historical" commemoration, expressing anxiety that the CWCC would sponsor a politically-motivated commemoration event. Namely, Southern CWCCs were concerned that the federal Commission would align itself with the civil rights movement. In December of 1961, South Carolina CWCC Chairperson John A. May wrote Nevins with a demand to know if the CWCC was "going to use the Emancipation Proclamation as a vehicle to promote so called Civil Rights."[4] "We in the South," he asserted, "will vigorously oppose any effort to turn the Commemoration of the Civil War into a political issue of any kind."[5] Historian Robert Cook asserts that May was tipped off about the upcoming commemoration by the Commission's ex-chair, Betts, who, "still smarting over his dismissal," attempted to persuade May that the CWCC intended to promote civil rights at the upcoming ceremony.[6] Betts apparently succeeded, because on February 1, 1962, at the joint meeting of the federal CWCC and state commissions in Washington, D.C. May introduced a resolution passed by the Confederate States Centennial Conference. The resolution declared that "it would be a mistake for the National Civil

War Commission to engage in any activity, or to promote in any way any program that could, or would, be considered by any section of our nation as propaganda for any cause that would tend to reopen the wounds of the war."[7] This statement was the public expression of the Confederate States Centennial Conference. A private letter to James I. Robertson, CWCC Executive Director, from A.B. Moore, Executive Director of the Alabama CWCC, established exactly what May meant by propaganda: "To read present notions about the race question and projected solutions into the thinking upon the question at the time the Proclamation was issued would be a distortion of historical perspective."[8] Moore additionally claimed: "Incidentally, President Lincoln's views as to the Negro race do not comport with much of the thinking of today."[9] Commemoration is "political" or "propagandistic," according to Moore, when it acknowledges race in any way. He wanted to see all issues of race and of black freedom removed from the commemorative program because he viewed them as irrelevant to the present context. Issues of race in 1962, according to Moore, had nothing to do with the racial politics of 1862.

This concern—anxiety over the "historical accuracy" of the Emancipation Proclamation centennial event—reflected a common argument among Southern entities. Ironically, providing a historically oriented, scholarly appraisal of the past was precisely what the new leaders of the CWCC said they were doing. Yet among Southern commissioners, the claim that commemoration must be "historically accurate" became a code for the argument that issues of race had nothing to do with Civil War memorialization. For example, in that same letter to Robertson, Moore pleaded that the commemorations of the CWCC "adhere strictly to historical facts" and to an "objective"

account of the Civil War.[10] Additional passages from Moore's letter exposed exactly what aspects of the commemorative ceremony concerned him. For instance, Moore stated: "There seems to be a general impression that the Emancipation Proclamation freed all slaves. It would be deplorable if this impression should tend to be perpetuated by the commemoration of the Proclamation."[11] It is historically accurate that Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was a qualified document that did not free all slaves in all states immediately. However, Moore's plea for "objectivity" on this issue signaled a deeper anxiety about whether the CWCC's national celebration would *laud* the Emancipation Proclamation. After all, the fact that the Emancipation Proclamation did not free all the slaves might be interpreted as a critique of the document, a position that historian Lerone Bennett would publish in *Ebony* magazine in 1968.[12] Moore's concern for historical accuracy had more to do with disrupting Southern narratives that downplayed slavery's relevance to the Civil War than about the limits of Lincoln's proclamation.

By encouraging the CWCC not to exaggerate the proclamation's impact, Moore also diminished the role of this document in Civil War history. Moore stated,

> The Proclamation was clearly a war measure of limited scope and, it might be added, doubtful legality. During the previous July President Lincoln had referred to slavery as the 'lever' of the Union forces, so in the Proclamation he applied the 'lever.' He hoped the Proclamation would promote sympathy for the Union cause in Western Europe, especially in England and France; placate the Radical Abolitionists to some extent at least; create confusion in the Confederacy; and possibly he thought it would lay a plausible basis for the use of Negroes as

> soldiers. The Proclamation did not apply to the Border States, or to Tennessee and parts of Louisiana and Virginia that had set up reconstruction governments. Moreover, Mr. Lincoln understood that his Proclamation would be effective only in areas controlled by the Union armies and that it would have no legal status after the war.[13]

This lengthy passage questioned the Emancipation Proclamation, its legality, whether it reflected Lincoln's moral convictions or merely acted as a tool of war, and the extent of its impact. Indeed, these were precisely the points that Bennett used in 1968 to declare that Abraham Lincoln was a racist who operated only to sustain white supremacy in America. These "facts" also became the basis for his 2000 book, *Forced into Glory*.[14] Rhetorical scholars such as Kirt H. Wilson and historians like Allen C. Guelzo have examined these issues at length, concluding that the historical "truth" of Lincoln's position always has been open to multiple interpretations.[15] To criticize or to celebrate Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation is to engage in the politics of interpretation, and this was precisely the kind of politics that Moore wanted the CWCC to avoid.

In addition to expressing concerns about the historical accuracy of the Emancipation Proclamation commemoration and its political mission, Southerners took issue with the fact that this event was organized by the *federal* CWCC. Of the Southern states' resolution introduced at the joint meeting of the CWCC and the state commissions, Moore argued that it was intended to critique the federal CWCC's "departure from its well established policy of leaving the development of Centennial commemoration programs to the State Centennial Commissions."[16] He expressed anxiety about the situation, asking, "If the National Centennial Commission takes over the

commemoration of the Emancipation Proclamation, where will it stop?"[17] Opponents of civil rights frequently argued that federal government interventions into issues of civil rights assaulted states' rights. Perhaps seeing the Emancipation Proclamation commemoration as an extension of civil rights movement's efforts, Moore mobilized a similar line of argument against the event. He asserted that federal planning of this event was an infringement on states' rights.

The South bombarded the CWCC with complaints, prompting the Commission to fear that the Southern bloc would follow through on their threat to "secede" from national efforts to commemorate the Civil War. CWCC historian Bell I. Wiley, however, argued that backing out of the commemoration would be unwise. He argued,

> I am opposed to our tucking tail and running just because a few deep South extremists, who have not yet recognized the equality of Negroes before the law, register a portest [sic]. I think that it is unbecoming of us to back out, and I do not believe that John May and his kind will respect us if we do. Suppose such action did appease the deep South extremists – what of our responsibilities and our standing with respect to other Americans, and especially the seventeen million Negro Americans who far outnumber the champions of white supremacy?[18]

This quotation is significant because it displays the voice of liberalism and inclusion, discussed in Chapter 2. Here Wiley reveals that liberal commemorators were concerned with advancing a more objective, inclusive commemorative program, at least in part, because of black citizens' investment in the centennial commemoration.

Ultimately, the CWCC did not curtail plans for the Emancipation Proclamation centennial and instead made a few concessions. Most explicitly, they added co-sponsors

to their event: the District of Columbia CWCC, the Lincoln Group of the District of Columbia, and the National Park Service. In a letter to CWCC historian Bell I. Wiley, CWCC Executive Director James I. Robertson expressed that with the addition of these co-sponsors, "nothing of major scope has changed. On the other hand, our asking local groups to assist us has not only pleased them but, at the same time, should quiet our Dixiecrat friends. That we still plan to hold such a program is proof enough that we are not bending to any special group."[19]

Yet archival documents, namely private letters and memos, reveal that the looming fear of Southern backlash likely influenced the Emancipation Proclamation centennial commemorative event in ways beyond just the addition of cosponsors. In private correspondence, commission members assured the Southern block that they would "divorce all current problems" from the ceremonies.[20] What they meant by *all* current problems, however, was actually just domestic issues of civil rights. Ultimately, the controversy over whether the civil rights movement was, somehow, connected to the Emancipation Proclamation led the CWCC to frame the memorial event as a commemoration for what the Emancipation Proclamation meant to the world.

The CWCC wrote a letter to United Nations Ambassador Adlai Stevenson, in which they revealed their goals for maintaining an international focus. The letter stated, "We wish to add to this program a short speech by one foreign representative of the United Nations; and we need your counsel on the proper person to invite. He would be expected to deal for five to ten minutes with the general themes of brotherhood of man and the advance of freedom in the world."[21] When they were unable to secure the participation of their first choice, U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations, the

Commission ultimately invited Stevenson to join the program. Thus, months in advance of the ceremony, scheduled for September 22, 1962, the CWCC had settled on a lineup that they anticipated would "have international as well as national importance."[22] Stevenson would be the event's keynote speaker. He would be joined by New York Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller who would present a draft of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, penned in Lincoln's own hand. The draft, a prized possession of the state of New York, was to be displayed in a special exhibit at the Library of Congress following the ceremony.

In addition to Stevenson and Rockefeller, the CWCC had requested that President John F. Kennedy appear at the event. The president's address, however, was the object of controversy in August when the CWCC received word from the White House that Kennedy would not attend their commemorative event due to another conflicting obligation. The CWCC was dumbfounded, as they previously had received confirmation from the White House that Kennedy planned to attend and was eager to participate. In a letter to Kenneth O'Donnell, Special Assistant to the President, Congressman Fred Schwengel implored,

> This is a splendid opportunity to strengthen national and international unity. The full impact may be lost if the President fails to participate in this program… I invite you to reconsider the gravity and opportunity that this situation presents for the President to serve the cause of freedom by helping to arrange his schedule so he can accept this invitation.[23]

While Kennedy did not rearrange his schedule, he did provide a prerecorded address that was played at the commemoration ceremony. This video satisfied the CWCC, eliminating their concerns about the President's presence at the event.

At this point the CWCC was certain that they had arranged a program that would please all stakeholders. As Allan Nevins stated in a letter to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.,

> We believe we now have completely in hand a program for September 22 of the highest distinction, which will impress the whole country, which can be used most effectively by the USIA, and which will stand as an adequate interpretation of the national and international significance of the Emancipation Proclamation issued by Lincoln one hundred years ago.[24]

As this quotation reflects, the CWCC believed that their commemorative program would have mass appeal for both domestic and international audiences.

Given this it is no surprise, then, that the CWCC was taken aback when leaders of the civil rights movement announced a boycott of the commemoration only days before the event. The *Washington Afro-American* reported that Bishop Smallwood E. Williams, president of the Washington, D.C. branch of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), called for the boycott. Labeling the commemorative event "an affront to America and the long and arduous path of racial progress over the past 100 years," Williams protested the ceremony for its lack of inclusiveness.[25] The paper reported that Williams had many supporters. Julius Hobson, President of the Washington, D.C. branch of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), asserted that blacks "should not have been ignored," but that CORE would not picket the event due to a previous demonstration scheduled at the White House.[26] Reverend E. Franklin Jackson, head of

the D.C. branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) "stated the organization will support the observance because colored performers are scheduled to appear but will register with the Civil War Centennial Commission, one of the sponsoring groups, our desire for closer cooperation with local non-white leadership in future planning."[27] On the same day that the *Washington Afro-American* published the article about Williams's boycott, it printed an editorial that expressed support for Williams and "strongly urged" readers to join the boycott. The paper even added an additional argument in support of the boycott, Adlai Stevenson's prominent role in the event. Calling Stevenson a "tired 'liberal,'" the paper asserted that he "has no civil rights record of any consequence" and his appearance on the program "is a gross insult to 18½ million colored Americans" and "an affront to the memory of a great American statesman," by which the paper meant Abraham Lincoln.[28]

In a letter to May, Robertson fumed about an editorial printed in the *Washington Afro-American*, stating: "the editorial… brands me a reincarnated Simon Legree. Frankly, I consider this piece of trash somewhat of an honor."[29] The "personal insult" that prompted Robertson's allusion to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* resulted from the editorial's statement that "James I. Robertson Jr., executive director of the Commission, asserted that non-white community was 'well represented' by Roy Davenport, the only colored member of the Commissioner [*sic*.]."[30] More than anything, this criticism and Robertson's dramatic reaction highlight that the CWCC had no idea that their lineup for the centennial would be perceived as an affront to advocates of civil rights. If anything, many of the commissioners considered themselves "liberal" on the issue. Robertson described himself in that manner in a letter to Allan Nevins. In reference to an

informational brochure on the Emancipation Proclamation written to accompany the commemoration he wrote,

> I would hope that in a short introduction you might be able to emphasize the historical aspects of the material contained therein rather than any association the data might have toward modern-day problems. I am certain you will do this, but simply felt compelled to mention it in the eleventh hour before meeting with Sam Dickinson of Arkansas, Stanley Horn of Tennessee, and others who do not possess our—shall I say—liberal thinking on historical facts.[31]

In this quotation we witness an important tension. While Robertson described himself as someone of "liberal thinking" on historical facts, he also instructed Nevins to *not* make explicit associations between the past and "modern-day" problems. Arguably, Robertson believed that the mere commemoration of the Emancipation Proclamation, an important document in black history, was sufficient to demonstrate his "liberal thinking." In comparison to his Southern colleagues, perhaps this assumption was warranted. However, from the perspective of those who were fighting for basic civil rights, Robertson was too influenced by the pressures of these Southern entities. In fact, they suspected, rightly, that Robertson wanted to de-emphasize his "liberal thinking" for this conservative audience by positioning the commemorative event as based in historical facts.

These self-labeled "liberals" were shocked by the objection and proposed boycott by leaders of the civil rights movement. Private correspondences of CWCC members and public news accounts framed these civil rights movement protests as petty and unnecessary. Multiple letters referred to the protests as an "unfortunate and unnecessary

crisis," "a disgusting spectacle," "a bloody battle," an "unseemly tempest," and a "nasty little crisis."[32] A WTOP radio editorial asserted, "the bickering over who is to do what during the ceremony is hardly in keeping with the tradition of Lincoln or what he achieved by the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln was a man of wisdom who refused to be diverted by trifles, either real or imagined."[33] The same broadcast also claimed that "considering the occasion, those responsible for that crisis would have done better to express their views more softly and without resort to ultimatums."[34] Yet despite the criticism, the boycott was successful in getting the event's organizers to make a change. The CWCC decided at the last moment to add Judge Thurgood Marshall to the program as an additional speaker.

The Emancipation Proclamation: A Symbol of Abstract Values

"Like all title deeds of human progress, the Proclamation of Emancipation meant more than it said," argued keynote speaker Adlai Stevenson.[35] This notion was arguably the one consistent theme that ran throughout all of the speeches delivered at the national commemorative event. In what follows, I examine the speeches delivered by Adlai Stevenson, Thurgood Marshall, Nelson Rockefeller, and John F. Kennedy, as well as the invocation of Reverend Frederick Brown Harris, Chaplain of the U.S. Senate. Taken together, these speeches advanced narratives that transformed the Emancipation Proclamation from a document with specific, concrete ends to a symbol of abstract values—namely freedom, human rights, and spirituality—that could be applied to present-day international politics of the Cold War. This rhetorical move of abstraction

wrested the Proclamation away from the long struggle for black freedom. The Proclamation was no longer a promise of equality for black Americans. Instead, it was a symbol of America's devotion to grand ideals and a license for the nation to advance its international Cold War goals.

A Symbol of Freedom

Across the commemorative program, speakers framed the Emancipation Proclamation as an embodiment of America's commitment to freedom. A short quotation from Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, "…thenceforward, and forever free," featured prominently on the final page of the event program.[36] This powerful extract made clear the single idea that the CWCC viewed as central to the event. As scholars such as historian Allen C. Guelzo note, the Emancipation Proclamation, a legal document, is not remembered for its eloquence.[37] In the actual proclamation, the potent snippet featured in the event program is sandwiched in the middle of a sentence that on paper looks more like a paragraph due to its length and complexity. In divorcing these words from their original context, the CWCC highlighted the idea of "freedom" embodied by the proclamation, while downplaying the real context in which this idea was mobilized. Lincoln's proclamation actually read,

> [A]ll persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebelling against the United States, shall be then, *thenceforward, and forever free*; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and

> maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom (emphasis added).[38]

In this original context, "thenceforward, and forever free" was much more bounded and qualified and less abstract.

Yet it is the abstract notion of freedom that was propagated at the 1962 commemorative event. The speakers of the day crafted public memories in which the proclamation symbolized freedom. The invocation, led by Chaplain Reverend Frederick Brown Harris, immediately set this tone when Harris began the event by imploring, "O Thou God who guided Lincoln and Who are our Hope and Help in these tense and tangled days, gird us, we pray with his vision and courage as this land he loved publishes new emancipation proclamations to break the shackles of thralldom enslaving the bodies and minds of Thy children anywhere in all the world."[39] This prayer was interesting on multiple levels. In it, Harris posited a special connection between God and America—one that existed at the time of Lincoln and that continued through the present. This type of argument is not new. In making this connection, Harris drew on the myth of American exceptionalism, mobilizing this narrative in the service of Cold War politics to portray America's actions on the world stage as righteous. Harris also, however, portrayed the Emancipation Proclamation as a powerful, yet nonspecific document—one that could be mobilized in multiple contexts without discretion. Its only consistent quality across these contexts, according to this passage, was its ability to promote freedom. Harris's invocation was followed by Mahalia Jackson's singing of "The National Anthem," during which the audience had the opportunity to ponder America's status as "the land of the

free and the home of the brave," or, at the very least, to feel the emotional resonance of the idea of "freedom," stirred by Jackson's moving rendition of the patriotic anthem.

Like Harris, Stevenson's speech also linked the Emancipation Proclamation's purported embodiment of freedom to international politics. He began his speech by narrating the end of the Civil War from the vantage point of how it made America look on the world stage. Shifting audience attention from the domestic impact of the war to an international context, Stevenson asserted that toward the end of the war, "In Europe, leaders pondered intervention; some ready to take harsh advantage of the New World's agony; some like Gladstone racked with anxiety to stop the slaughter."[40] Within this scene, Stevenson portrayed the Emancipation Proclamation as a reflection of U.S. autonomy—the document allowed America to solve its own problems, an idea that he enforced through a claim regarding the announcement of emancipation. In Stevenson's words, "Within days every slave had heard the news. Within weeks people all over the world were hailing the redemption of young America's promise."[41] The Emancipation Proclamation, in this portrayal, was significant in the historical context of 1863 because of the ethos it afforded America across the globe.

Stevenson's use of the term "promise" was important. Civil rights advocates argued frequently that the Emancipation Proclamation was a "failed promise," a document that symbolized America's commitment to racial equality, which was never fully granted even one hundred years later. Stevenson's interpretation of the "promise" was different. His usage implied that the Emancipation Proclamation "marked a beginning, not an end; it was a call to a new battle—a battle which rages around us in every part of the world in this new time of testing."[42] This passage moved the idea of the

Emancipation Proclamation's promise from domestic to international concerns. Stevenson appropriated the Emancipation Proclamation from the history of the long struggle for black equality, and used it as a license for America's fight against communism. This rhetorical move also deflected attention from the contemporary struggle for black civil rights. America's "promise," in this sense, was not about black freedom on a domestic level. The Emancipation Proclamation, Stevenson argued, "gave freedom a mighty impulse *throughout the globe*" (emphasis added).[43] Asserting that "a panoply of larger freedoms was bound up in" the Emancipation Proclamation, Stevenson argued that this document was the "first small step" in a process by which "the Proclamation touched not the fate of Americans alone; it gave courage to the oppressed from the Thames to the Ganges; it inaugurated a new age of world wide reforms."[44] Thus in multiple ways throughout his speech, Stevenson framed the Emancipation Proclamation as a symbol of freedom and an expression of America's promise to promulgate freedom in an international context. This interpretation was crucial to how the United States understood its role at the height of Cold War.

Stevenson faced advantages and challenges when mobilizing this reframed memory of the Emancipation Proclamation. Most notably, this rhetorical strategy shifted attention from the Civil War and slavery to America's interests overseas. That is, it turned a domestically controversial situation into an opportunity to discuss American exceptionalism and the nation's moral superiority to communism. But, at the same time, this narrative faced at least one significant barrier. Amidst the Cold War, the Soviet Union and its allies often critiqued the U.S. for its treatment of African Americans. Hypocrisy was a common allegation in communist propaganda. One distinct way that

Stevenson dealt with this problem was through a strategically framed account of Lincoln's memory that legitimized present political action on the world stage.

A significant portion of Stevenson's speech advanced such a memory. For instance, he plainly asserted that "the concern and dedication" that America had for "the freedom of all mankind," allowed the nation to "claim to be Lincoln's heirs in the unfinished work of emancipation."[45] Yet he also complicated this notion when he asked questions such as, "Are we the pure-souled defenders of freedom when Negro citizens are anywhere denied the right to vote, or to equal education, or to equal opportunity? Can we be surprised if, abroad, friends with sadness and enemies with delight observe the inequalities and injustices which still mar our American image?"[46] Taken out of context, these questions might indicate that Stevenson wished to advance the cause of the civil rights movement at home. However, he offered a narrative of Lincoln's memory that demonstrated otherwise.

Stevenson crafted a memory of Lincoln that highlighted the former president's moral leadership and encouraged audience members to view him as a model for present political action. Stevenson argued,

> If the issue between North and South sometimes seemed ambiguous to Lincoln… if, as in the Second Inaugural, he recognized the equal complicity of Northerners organizing the slave trade and Southerners profiting by the results… It is therefore worth while recalling that Lincoln's sense of the complexity of all great historical issues did not hold him back for one hour from 'doing the right' as God gave him to see the right, or deter him from emancipating the slaves and fighting a great

> war to its finish to ensure that the Union would be preserved and the Emancipation honored.[47]

Here Stevenson invited a comparison between past and present, centered on Lincoln's moral character. Importantly, he highlighted Lincoln's moral compass, arguing that he acted according to what he saw as right, or righteous, without letting the North's complicity in the slave trade stop him. Enthymematically, the audience was allowed to fill in the missing premise: so, too, is it morally right for the U.S. to pursue freedom abroad, despite the continued presence of inequality at home. In fact, Stevenson made this claim explicitly when he stated,

> So today, our sense of our own failures and weaknesses in the struggle for freedom does not mean, for one instant, any faltering in the sacrifices which are necessary to ensure that the Western democracies and the unaligned peoples of the world have the shield against aggression that they need, and the aid necessary to uphold it… Our defence [*sic.*] of freedom will be all the stronger for being based not on illusions but upon the truth about ourselves and our world. Freedom must be rooted in reality or it will crumble as errors are revealed and faith is shaken. Only the truth can make us free.[48]

The sentiment "only the truth can make us free" was laudable, but ultimately it did not necessitate that the audience take active steps to change the social conditions revealed by that truth. Stevenson acknowledged that the United States had fallen short of its ideals expressed within the Emancipation Proclamation; nevertheless, he also affirmed that these shortcomings should not and would not get in the way of the country's role as the leader of freedom. By framing the Emancipation Proclamation as a symbol of freedom

that evinced the country's true character, Stevenson transformed it into a document without a clear link to the history of slavery or the continued problem of racial oppression. Indeed, portraying it as a grander ideal allowed Stevenson to mobilize its legacy in an international context, to promote U.S. involvement in the Cold War, and generally, to foster patriotism.

Bestowing Human Rights

Federal Judge Thurgood Marshall made a similar move of abstraction by framing the Emancipation Proclamation as a document that bestowed human rights. He argued that while the proclamation granted rights, the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments codified these rights. Marshall was the only speaker on the docket who dealt with some of the historical nuances of the Emancipation Proclamation and the fact that it was the "13th, 14th and 15th amendments that" transformed the protection of human rights specified by the Emancipation Proclamation into "enforceable constitutional law."[49] However, like other speakers, he still focused on the grander ideals that the proclamation embodied.

Taken as a whole, Marshall's speech situated the Emancipation Proclamation within the ranks of other iconic texts, namely the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. The speech left the audience with a sense that these documents all propagated the same end: the protection of human rights. In one respect, conflating founding documents with the Emancipation Proclamation elevated the importance of the proclamation in public memory. This conflation, however, also risked portraying the

Emancipation Proclamation as only an extension of documents like the Declaration of Independence; it dissociated the proclamation from its historical roots as a first step in ending black slavery. Marshall, for instance, asserted that “the important purpose of the Declaration of Independence was carried forward by the Emancipation Proclamation.”[50] The consequence of assertions like this was that it advanced a public memory in which the proclamation lost its contextual significance. Instead, the document was plucked from black history to become yet another vehicle for propagating American values and principles that had existed intact from the moment of the country’s origin.

An Embodiment of Judeo-Christianity

Event speakers also framed the Emancipation Proclamation as embodying a Judeo-Christian ethic. Cold War rhetoric commonly portrayed America as a Christian nation, while associating communism with atheism. Thus, situating the Emancipation Proclamation within America’s purported Judeo-Christian heritage further served to reinforce the international framing of the Emancipation Proclamation centennial advanced by speakers such as Stevenson and Marshall. Nelson Rockefeller, Reverend Frederick Brown Harris, Thurgood Marshall, and John F. Kennedy all appropriated the Emancipation Proclamation, and used it as a testament of America’s Judeo-Christian tradition.

For instance, Nelson Rockefeller framed the scene into which the commemorative event at the Lincoln Memorial entered, stating,

> Here in this hallowed place, we meet today in the spirit of our founding fathers who in this great nation created man's supreme expression of the Judeo-Christian heritage dedicated to the worth and dignity of each and every individual. How fortunate we are as Americans to live in a nation blessed with this spiritual heritage![51]

Instead of beginning his speech with discussion of the Emancipation Proclamation, Rockefeller instead drew audience attention to the place where the commemorative event was being held, the Lincoln Memorial in the nation's capital. In his invocation, Chaplain Reverend Frederick Brown Harris depicted the Lincoln Memorial as a spiritual space, and a place of pilgrimage. He said,

> In this temple, emblazoned with his immortal words, as he called on Thee to save, we are grateful for his sculptured form, where pilgrims from all the earth pay homage to the fame of the kindly, earnest, brave, foreseeing man, sagacious, dreading praise, not blame, who even when maligned and ridiculed [*sic.*], opened not his mouth, and kept his soul in patience.[52]

Positioning the Lincoln Memorial as a religious space set a scene in which it was easy to conjure, as Rockefeller did, a narrative of America's "Judeo-Christian heritage…dedicated to the worth and dignity of each and every individual." In this narrative, the Emancipation Proclamation took on a spiritual meaning. Rockefeller stated,

> For this nation lives by a concept that is not racist, not nationalistic, but universal, and dedicated to the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God. Abraham Lincoln gave meaning to this spiritual concept in the Emancipation Proclamation

> whose 100th anniversary we celebrate here today. It is an historic milestone along the road to the ultimate fulfillment of this spiritual heritage.[53]

By situating the proclamation within a narrative of America's Judeo-Christian heritage, labeling it "an historic milestone along the ultimate fulfillment of this heritage," Rockefeller made a move of conflation. He folded the Emancipation Proclamation neatly into a narrative of a long and vague spiritual quest. Viewed in this way, Americans were not asked to consider the real, historical significance of the proclamation, and they certainly were not encouraged to consider its relevance to the modern civil rights movement. Instead, they were asked to see it as another American achievement, a testimony of the nation's Christian ethic. Thurgood Marshall, too, portrayed the proclamation in these terms, stating that the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments "have been termed efforts toward codification of the Judeo-Christian ethic" and that the Emancipation Proclamation was "the clearest expression of this doctrine."[54]

Speakers also mobilized the memory of Lincoln in Christian terms to set a framework for interpreting the significance of the Emancipation Proclamation. Harris, for instance, ended his invocation with the plea: "We ask it in that Name, which to the emancipator, was above every Name, as he re-echoed the ancient word 'The judgments of the Lord are True and Righteous, altogether.'"[55] In this call, Harris repeated a Biblical allusion made by Lincoln in his Second Inaugural Address. In its original rhetorical context, however, Lincoln used this Biblical passage to support his conviction that through the Civil War, the North and the South were paying for the sin of slavery. Harris, in contrast, alluded to Lincoln's use of this passage to make a different point. The "it" that Harris asked for is revealed in other places throughout his invocation. Namely, he

argued that God would guide the U.S. in their international fight against communism. Harris, then, tied the Emancipation Proclamation to America's Cold War crusade for freedom by positing a common Christian faith and a reliance on God's will that bridged the two time periods.

Treating the Emancipation Proclamation as a part of the nation's Judeo-Christian heritage also allowed speakers to portray the proclamation as atonement for the sin of slavery. Kennedy referred to the proclamation as the document that "began the process which brought a final end to the evil of human slavery, which wiped out from our nation what John Quincy Adams called the great stain upon the North American union."[56] Stevenson and Harris echoed this sentiment, asserting that the proclamation "freed the republic from the darkest stain upon its record" and allowed "the blot of human slavery [to be] erased form its escutcheon," respectively.[57] Each speaker not only asserted that the proclamation ended slavery, but encouraged collective forgetting in the process. Words like "wiped out," " freed," and "erased" encouraged Americans to view the proclamation as a document that expunged human bondage from the nation's history. Consequently, these words and their symbolic meaning worked against any reflection on slavery's enduring consequences. For civil rights leaders who sometimes referred to segregation and other forms of discrimination as another form of slavery, this disjuncture was problematic. The commemorative memory provided by the event's speakers worked against any association that the slavery of the 1800s was related to racism and inequality of the 1900s.

Kennedy's Speech:

Celebrating the Civil Rights Movement as an American Achievement

In contrast to other speakers of the day, President Kennedy's pre-recorded speech dealt most directly with issues pertinent to the civil rights movement. Specifically, Kennedy advanced a white liberal narrative centered on progress. This narrative credited African Americans with working for their own salvation, and acknowledged that there was progress still left to be made. However, this epideictic narrative also appropriated the accomplishments of civil rights activists over time and claimed that progress as an American accomplishment.

Importantly, instead of linking the Emancipation Proclamation to the modern day Cold War, Kennedy directly linked this document to the 1960s struggle for civil rights. He did this most explicitly when he stated at the start of the speech, "But the Emancipation Proclamation was not an end. It was a beginning. The century since has seen the struggle to convert freedom from rhetoric to reality. It has been in many respects a somber story. For many years progress toward the realization of equal rights was very slow."[58] Like the other speakers of the day, Kennedy tied the Emancipation Proclamation to the idea of "freedom." But, unlike the other speakers, he equated freedom in this passage to "the realization of equal rights." This was important because Kennedy's notion of "freedom" was much more specific and concrete. It also sought to locate connections between the emancipation of slaves and progress made in the realm of domestic racial equality over the past century. It did not, for instance, shift attention from the domestic to the international sphere as did the other speeches of the event.

Kennedy's speech also dealt more specifically with issues bound up in the struggle for equality, but he frequently spoke of these issues in terms that confined them to America's past. He admitted that segregation and racial inequality were issues with which America has struggled. He stated, "A structure of segregation divided the Negro from his fellow American citizen. He was denied equal opportunity in education and employment. In many places he could not vote. For a long time he was exposed to violence and to terror. *These were bitter years of humiliation and deprivation"* (emphasis added).[59] This and similar passages were clearly directed at the history of oppression that blacks had faced. Yet, at the same time, the final line of the passage just quoted, "these *were* bitter years of humiliation and deprivation," exemplifies the tension that existed even in Kennedy's attempt to address these issues. The President repeatedly confined destructive forms of segregation and racism to America's past. Kennedy's reference to "a structure of segregation" in this passage was interesting because through this reference, he referred to legal barriers to equality and claimed that they no longer existed. Or, at least, they did not exist to the same extent that they once did. In this way, Kennedy shifted the burden of fostering equality from the federal government to American citizens.

Kennedy also deflected attention away from the government's role in protecting and promoting equality by framing civil rights progress as a product of blacks who, over time, worked and fought for their own rights. He placed practically all of the burden of action onto African Americans. "The essential effort, the sustained struggle was borne by the Negro alone with steadfast dignity and faith. And in due course the effort had its results," claimed Kennedy.[60] On the one hand, this statement recognized the agency of

the black community, but in doing so it both placed that agency in the past—"the sustained struggle *was* borne by the Negro alone"—and it absolved his administration from any need for present action. Ironically, while Kennedy did not shoulder any burden for civil rights, he did claim that the efforts of African Americans reflected well on America, when he stated,

> There is no more impressive chapter in our history than the one in which our Negro fellow citizens sought better education for themselves and their children, built better schools and better housing, carved out their own economic opportunity, enlarged their press, fostered their arts, and clarified and strengthened their purpose as a people.[61]

This passage once again focused on progress instead of on work left to be done. By using the word "chapter," Kennedy also implied that this period of struggle was closed. To be fair, he did assert at the end of his speech that "much remains to be done to eradicate the vestiges of discrimination and segregation to make equal rights a reality for all our people."[62] But even in this admission his use of the word "vestiges" minimized the extent to which racial inequality and white supremacy continued to thrive in the 1960s. In fact, he emphasized this point by highlighting progress made in the past quarter of a century. Kennedy stated,

> The last generation has seen a belated, but still spectacular, quickening of the pace of full emancipation. Twenty-five years ago the nation would have been unbelieving at the progress to be made by the time of this centennial, progress in education, in employment, in the even-handed administration of justice, in access

> to the ballot in the assumption of places and responsibility in leadership, in public and private life.[63]

Kennedy's speech recognized a long history for the civil rights movement, including more work to be done; nevertheless, his framing of this history deflected his own responsibilities and the extent of inequality in the status quo. As a result, Kennedy's speech does not displace the international framing of the event, propagated by other event speakers, with a more domestic frame. It does, however, continue the theme of appropriating the civil rights movement as an American accomplishment.

"The Blind Remembrance!": The Countervailing Voice

One week after the commemorative event, on September 29, 1962, riots broke out on the campus of the University of Mississippi in protest of the enrollment of black U.S. military veteran James Meredith. "Among the millions of horrified Americans who watched the scene and its tense aftermath on national television was Archibald MacLeish (1892-1982), a three-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize (twice for poetry, one for drama) and America's most prominent poet-statesman since James Russell Lowell," state journalists Robert Vare and Daniel B. Smith.[64] Responding to the riots in the *Atlantic Monthly*, MacLeish published "Must We Hate?," "an impassioned indictment of [Mississippi Governor Ross] Barnett and his followers" and a reflection of his belief that "the riots at Ole Miss represented the most egregious example of America's failure to live up to the democratic ideals set forth in the Declaration of Independence."[65] As Vare and Smith note, although MacLeish began his career as a modernist poet, "studiously

avoiding political and social issues," both "the Great Depression and the rise of the Third Reich politicized him," prompting a life-long career as a writer and public official.[66] MacLeish served under President Franklin Roosevelt as Librarian of Congress, director of the Office of Facts and Figures, and assistant secretary of state for cultural and public affairs.[67] Over the course of his career, he explored "the great dichotomy he found between word and deed in America life and the threats he perceived to his hallowed notion of 'the American idea.'"[68] Of particular note to this chapter is that MacLeish explored this dichotomy, especially in the context of the civil rights movement, in a poem he delivered at the Emancipation Proclamation Centennial event.

MacLeish's poem, "At the Lincoln Memorial," was a harsh critique of the commemorative event and of all official efforts to commemorate the Civil War centennial to date. It reflected a similar concern with America's failure to live up to its democratic principles that he voiced weeks later in "Must We Hate?" In this section, I assert that MacLeish stood as the single countervailing voice of the commemorative ceremony, because his poem unabashedly critiqued the Emancipation Proclamation event and Civil War centennial remembrance more broadly. His poem did this by using two personified entities as sources of mnemonic authority—the Potomac River and the marble monument of Abraham Lincoln, each of which he framed as witnesses of the Civil War and its social and political contexts. As I have established, other speakers such as Stevenson, Marshall, and Rockefeller crafted memories of the Emancipation Proclamation that transformed the proclamation from a concrete legal document with domestic importance to an abstract symbol of freedom and spirituality that would resonate internationally. MacLeish, in contrast, personified the Potomac River and Lincoln monument to link Civil War history

to the modern-day struggle for black equality and to condemn this long history for its failure to live up to the founding ideal of equality.

In correspondence with the CWCC, MacLeish had requested that the live broadcast of his poem during the commemorative event include images of the river and the Lincoln Memorial: "It would be a wonderful thing, I think, if the televizing of the reading (if, again, it takes place) could leave me, as reader, to turn to the river and Lincoln's face—particularly the latter..."[69] MacLeish explained this request in a different letter when he stated:

> I should like the poem to be read on the part of the program which is televised… My interest in this is not personal but is related to the poem itself. The poem uses its two principal symbols the Potomac River and the figure of Lincoln in the Memorial. It had been my hope that the telecast might use those two symbols which are present at the Memorial in such a way as to illuminate the poem itself.[70]

Although MacLeish's poem ultimately was cut from the portion of the program that was televised, due to time constraints,[71] the words of the poem itself still managed to convey vivid images of both the Potomac River and the Lincoln Memorial.

MacLeish portrayed the Potomac River as a living entity that witnessed the Civil War and that actively carried this memory into the present. It read, in part,

> We bring the past down with us as you bring your
> Sodden branches,
> Froth on your yellow eddies and a few
> Blind flowers floating like a dead bird's wing:
> All that defiling refuse of old wrong,

Of long injustice, of the mastered man,

Of man (far worse! far worse!) made master[72]

This excerpt portrayed America's traumatic past as embedded in the detritus carried by the river's current in the present. MacLeish's use of the word *defiling* was crucial to his argument. Unlike Kennedy, whose narrative of the civil rights movement focused on progress, MacLeish posited that the Civil War did not solve the nation's racial problems and that inequality persisted and continued to defile the nation.

Following this passage, MacLeish reflected on the enduring consequences of slavery, stating:

Hatred, the dry bitter thong

That binds these two together at the last;

Fear that feeds the hatred with its stale imposture;

Spoiled, corrupted tramplings of the grapes of wrath…[73]

As Eric Sundquist, a scholar of African American literature, has argued, in this passage MacLeish portrayed "past and present, South and North, black and white bound together not by forgiveness and justice but by the 'dry bitter thong' of racial hatred," thereby reflecting on "the price paid for reunion."[74] The "spoiled, corrupted tramplings of the grapes of wrath" is a Biblical allusion. More importantly, perhaps, it is also an allusion to the lyrics of Julia Ward Howe's "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," originally "John Brown's Body," a popular Civil War marching song about the abolitionist. This allusion must have been important to MacLeish, who requested in a letter to the CWCC that his poem should be read right before or after Mahalia Jackson's singing of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."[75] The CWCC ultimately did not place him in this location on the

program. He ended up between Jackson's singing of the "National Anthem" and the U.S. Marine Band's performance of Ulysses Kay's "Forever Free: A Lincoln Chronicle." This place on the program cast MacLeish as part of the artistic talent of the event, meant to be consumed as entertainment rather than engaged critically by viewers.

In MacLeish's poem, the figure of Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial also was cast as a vehicle of remembrance, but not in the traditional sense. MacLeish did not portray the Lincoln memorial as a site of pilgrimage as Harris did in his invocation or as a hallowed place of remembrance, as Rockefeller had characterized it. Instead, MacLeish asked his audience to view the figure of Lincoln within the monument in personified terms—as a living, brooding, reflective person both in the context of the Civil War and within the modern-day struggle for civil rights. Both stanzas four and five of MacLeish's poem were dedicated to the statue of Lincoln. In stanza four, MacLeish asked his audience to picture Lincoln amid the Civil War, when he wrote:

> Within that door
>
> A man sits or the image of a man
>
> Staring at stillness on a marble floor…
>
> The trumpet's breath,
>
> The drummer's tune –
>
> Can drum and trumpet save the Union?
>
> What made the Union – held it in its origins together?[76]

Here MacLeish, instead of lauding Lincoln's memory, transformed the marble figure to an active contemplative state in the thick of the Civil War. Within this scene, MacLeish cited Lincoln's words as a description of his line of thought at the time,

"As to the policy 'I seem to be pursuing'…

I would save the Union…

My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union…"[77]

These words are quoted directly from Lincoln's open letter published on August 23, 1862 in the *Daily National Intelligencer*. In this letter, Lincoln replied to *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley's "The Prayer of Twenty Million," published as an open letter in the *New York Tribune* three days prior to Lincoln's reply. Greeley's letter critiqued Lincoln's "reluctance to enforce the Confiscation Acts of 1861 and 1862," arguing that the "Union cause… has suffered from a mistaken deference to Rebel slavery."[78] Lincoln's response, Guelzo has argued, made the president "sound so perfectly evenhanded that it has deceived more than a few in later times who forgot evenhandedness was exactly what the 'mighty giant' of the 'proslavery spirit' raged against."[79]

It is this evenhandedness that MacLeish captured in stanza four of his poem, by including words straight from Lincoln's letter. As Eric Sundquist has aptly noted, in this section of the poem MacLeish was "true to the president for whom black freedom, because it conflicted with his constitutional powers, had initially to be couched in an act of military necessity."[80] On the one hand, MacLeish applauded Lincoln for his evenhanded approach by arguing that saving the Union would also allow the U.S. to renew the promise of liberty and equality to all Americans. He articulated this by quoting a passage of Lincoln's February 22, 1861 speech delivered in Independence Hall, in which he reflected on the promises on which the nation was built—liberty and equality. Saving the Union would "renew that promise and that hope again," asserted MacLeish.[81]

Yet in stanza five, MacLeish also critiqued Lincoln by pointing to the cost of these actions,

> Within that door
>
> A man sits or the image of a man
>
> Remembering the time before.
>
> He hears beneath the river in its chocking channel
>
> A deeper river rushing on the stone,
>
> Sits there in his doubt alone,
>
> Discerns the Principle,
>
> The guns begin,
>
> Emancipates – but not the slaves,
>
> The Union – not from servitude but shame:
>
> Emancipates the Union from the monstrous name
>
> Whose infamy dishonored Even the Founders in their graves…
>
> He saves the Union and the dream goes on.[82]

More than a year before Martin Luther King, Jr. mobilized the "dream" trope—first in his speech delivered at The Walk to Freedom in Detroit, and then more iconically in his "I Have A Dream" speech at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom—MacLeish used the idea of a "dream" to refer to the American ideal of equality, established at the nation's founding. This stanza began with a structure that mirrored that of the fourth stanza. However, the tone of this portion of his poem was very different in nature. Instead of a Lincoln who acted to save the Union in alignment with America's founding principles, the Lincoln of stanza five heard a "deeper river rushing on the stone," a river

that likely represented racial injustice and the struggle for black equality. By pointing to this unfulfilled dream, MacLeish's mobilization of Lincoln's memory differed from those of the other speakers. MacLeish used Lincoln's memory to point to contradictions in American actions and principles and, further, to condemn that contradiction.

It is significant that MacLeish personified the Lincoln Memorial and the Potomac River, because they embodied both the past and the present. MacLeish crafted a poem that highlighted how this simultaneous past/presence should serve as an enduring reminder of the link between America's troubled racial past and inequality of the 1960s. Importantly, the poem was narrated in a style that created a dialogue between America (noted in instances where MacLeish used the pronoun "we") and the personified river and Lincoln statue. This style asked MacLeish's audience to interact directly with the river, a witness of the horrors of war and of human slavery and to gain perspective in doing so. It also prompted Americans to rethink their practices of remembrance by reflecting on the consequences of what MacLeish pointedly labeled "blind remembrance." The second half of the final stanza makes both of these moves:

> And you,
> Within there in our love, renew
> The rushing of that deeper flood
> To scour the hate clean and the rusted blood,
> The blind remembrance!
> O renew once more,
> Staring at stillness on that silent floor,
> The proud, lost promise of the sea –

Renew the holy dream we were to be![83]

Here MacLeish spoke directly to the river ("you") and to the figure of Lincoln, asking for assistance to "renew the holy dream" of equality. Notably, to make this happen MacLeish called for a renewal of "that deeper flood," a call for equality. It is a revival of this stream—a commitment to promoting black equality in America—according to MacLeish, that would be the remedy to the "blind remembrance" that ran so rampantly throughout the centennial commemorations of the Civil War.

Conclusion

For the most part, the tone of this commemorative event was consistent. All of the speeches delivered by Stevenson, Rockefeller, Marshall, and Kennedy were epideictic, celebrating the Emancipation Proclamation while downplaying the enduring problem of racial inequality. Stevenson, Marshall, and Rockefeller spoke in praise of lofty American ideals. President Kennedy lauded the historic efforts of African Americans to gain equality in the past century. These celebratory speeches co-opted the civil rights movement—its rhetoric and accomplishments—claiming them as American achievements, and mobilizing them both explicitly and implicitly to promote the Cold War cause.

While also epideictic, MacLeish's poem had deliberative ends, and was also sharply critical. Less than one year after the event, civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. would deliver his iconic "I Have a Dream" speech from the very same spot, putting into prose the same ideas that MacLeish had expressed in poetry, namely, that the

promise of equality embedded in the Emancipation Proclamation was not simply an idea to be celebrated, but a real, concrete goal to strive for through political and social action.

This civil rights interpretation of the Civil War did eventually make it into official commemorative discourses. Most notably, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson delivered a speech commemorating Abraham Lincoln's iconic Gettysburg Address on Memorial Day in May 1963. This remarkable address will be the focus of Chapter 5.

Notes

[1] Robert Cook, *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961-1965* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 134.

[2] Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 148.

[3] Edmund C. Gass to Honorable Fred Schwengel, "Suggestions about Marking Centennial of Emancipation Proclamation," October 5, 1961, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63," Box 80, Subject Files 1957-1966: Historical Societies-Invitations (Accepted), Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[4] As quoted in Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 149-150.

[5] As quoted in Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 149-150.

[6] Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 150.

[7] As quoted in Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 151.

[8] A. B. Moore, Executive Director of the Alabama Civil War Centennial Commission, to James I. Robertson, Executive Director of the National Civil War Centennial Commission, March 6, 1962, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63," Box 80, Subject Files 1957-1966: Historical Societies-Invitations (Accepted), Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[9] Moore to Robertson, March 6, 1962.

[10] Moore to Robertson, March 6, 1962.

[11] Moore to Robertson, March 6, 1962.

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[12] Lerone Bennett, Jr., "Was Abe Lincoln a White Supremacist?" February 1968, *Ebony*, 35-42.

[13] Moore to Robertson, March 6, 1962.

[14] Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Forced into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream* (Chicago, IL: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 2000).

[15] Kirt H. Wilson, "Debating the Great Emancipator: Abraham Lincoln and our Public Memory," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 13 (2010): 455-479; Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

[16] Moore to Robertson, March 6, 1962.

[17] Moore to Robertson, March 6, 1962.

[18] James I. Robertson to Bell I. Wiley, February 23, 1962, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63" folder, Box 80, Subject Files 1957-1966: Historical Societies-Invitations (Accepted), Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[19] Bell I. Wiley to Allan Nevins, February 21, 1962, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63" folder, Box 80, Subject Files 1957-1966: Historical Societies-Invitations (Accepted), Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[20] James I. Robertson to A. B. Moore, March 12, 1962, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63" folder, Box 80, Subject Files 1957-1966: Historical Societies-

Invitations (Accepted), Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[21] Allan Nevins to Adlai Stevenson, April 17, 1965, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63" folder, Box 80, Subject Files 1957-1966: Historical Societies-Invitations (Accepted), Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[22] Allan Nevins to Dr. L. Quincy Mumford, June 7, 1962, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63" folder, Box 80, Subject Files 1957-1966: Historical Societies-Invitations (Accepted), Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[23] Fred Schwengel to Kenneth O'Donnell, August 24, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63" folder, Box 80, Subject Files 1957-1966: Historical Societies-Invitations (Accepted), Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[24] Allan Nevins to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., September 5, 1962, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63" folder, Box 80, Subject Files 1957-1966: Historical Societies-Invitations (Accepted), Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[25] "Bishop Williams asks for boycott of event on Sat.," *Washington Afro-American*, September 18, 1962, 1-2.

[26] "Bishop Williams asks for boycott," 1-2.

[27] "Bishop Williams asks for boycott," 1-2.

[28] "Adlai Stevenson's presence 1 more reason why fete should be boycotted," *Washington Afro-American*, September 18, 1962, 3.

[29] James I Robertson to John A. May, September 25, 1962, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63" folder, Box 80, Subject Files 1957-1966: Historical Societies-Invitations (Accepted), Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[30] "Bishop Williams asks for boycott," 1-2.

[31] James I Robertson to Allan Nevins, April 5, 1962, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63" folder, Box 80, Subject Files 1957-1966: Historical Societies-Invitations (Accepted), Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[32] James I. Robertson to Paul J. Sedgwick, Chairman of the District of Columbia Civil War Centennial Commission, September 24, 1962, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63," Box 80, Subject Files 1957-1966: Historical Societies-Invitations (Accepted), Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD; James I. Robertson to William A. Ring, Board of Trade for Metropolitan Washington, September 24, 1962, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63," Box 80, Subject Files 1957-1966: Historical Societies-Invitations (Accepted), Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD; Robertson to May, September 25, 1962; James I. Robertson to John A. May, Chairman of the Confederate States Commission, September 20, 1962, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63," Box 80, Subject Files 1957-

1966: Historical Societies-Invitations (Accepted), Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD; WTOP Editorial, September 18, 1962, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63," Box 80, Subject Files 1957-1966: Historical Societies-Invitations (Accepted), Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[33] WTOP Editorial, September 18, 1962.

[34] WTOP Editorial, September 18, 1962.

[35] "Speech by Adlai E. Stevenson, United States Representative to the United Nations at the Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation Ceremonies," p. 1, September 22, 1962, folder 2, Box 28, Subject Files 1957-1966, Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

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[38] "The Emancipation Proclamation: A Transcript," *National Archives & Records Administration,* January 1, 1863, accessed January 1, 2015, http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/transcript.html.

[39] "Prayer Offered at the Lincoln Memorial Emancipation Proclamation Anniversary by Dr. Frederick Brown Harris, Chaplain of the United States Senate," p. 2,

September 22, 1962, folder 2, Box 28, Subject Files 1957-1966, Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[40] "Speech by Adlai E. Stevenson," 1.

[41] "Speech by Adlai E. Stevenson," 1.

[42] "Speech by Adlai E. Stevenson," 6.

[43] "Speech by Adlai E. Stevenson," 5-6.

[44] "Speech by Adlai E. Stevenson," 2.

[45] "Speech by Adlai E. Stevenson," 6.

[46] "Speech by Adlai E. Stevenson," 4.

[47] "Speech by Adlai E. Stevenson," 4.

[48] "Speech by Adlai E. Stevenson," 5.

[49] "Speech by federal judge Thurgood Marshall of New York at the Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation ceremonies," p. 1, September 22, 1962, folder 2, Box 28, Subject Files 1957-1966, Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[50] "Speech by federal judge Thurgood Marshall," 1.

[51] "Speech by Governor Nelson Rockefeller of New York at the Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation Ceremonies," 1, September 22, 1962, folder 2, Box 28, Subject Files 1957-1966, Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[52] "Prayer Offered at the Lincoln Memorial Emancipation Proclamation Anniversary by Dr. Frederick Brown Harris," 2.

[53] "Speech by Governor Nelson Rockefeller," 1.

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[59] Kennedy, "Remarks recorded for Emancipation Proclamation centennial," 1.

[60] Kennedy, "Remarks recorded for Emancipation Proclamation centennial," 2.

[61] Kennedy, "Remarks recorded for Emancipation Proclamation centennial," 2.

[62] Kennedy, "Remarks recorded for Emancipation Proclamation centennial," 3.

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[65] Vare and Smith, eds., *The American Idea*, 601.

[66] Vare and Smith, eds., *The American Idea*, 601-602

[67] Vare and Smith, eds., *The American Idea*, 601-602

[68] Vare and Smith, eds., *The American Idea*, 602.

[69] As quoted in Allan Nevins to James I. Robertson, August 2, 1962, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63," Box 80, Subject Files 1957-1966: Historical Societies-Invitations (Accepted), Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

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[72] Archibald MacLeish, "At the Lincoln Memorial: A Poem for the Centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation," 1, September 22, 1962, folder 2, Box 28, Subject Files 1957-1966, Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives, College Park, MD.

[73] MacLeish, "At the Lincoln Memorial," 1.

[74] Eric J. Sundquist, *King's Dream* (New Haven: Yale, 2009), 167.

[75] Archibald MacLeish to David Mearns, September 7, 1962, folder "Emancipation Proclamation, 1962-63," Box 80, Subject Files 1957-1966: Historical

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[76] MacLeish, "At the Lincoln Memorial," 2.

[77] MacLeish, "At the Lincoln Memorial," 2.

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[79] Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 150.

[80] Sundquist, *King's Dream*, 168.

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Chapter 5

Lyndon B. Johnson's "Gettysburg Address" for Civil Rights

"Until justice is blind to color, until education is unaware of race, until opportunity is unconcerned with the color of men's skins, emancipation will be a proclamation but not a fact."[1] Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson uttered these words less than a year after the Civil War Centennial Commission commemorated the Emancipation Proclamation's Centennial at the Lincoln Memorial in September 1962. Johnson made this claim as part of an address delivered at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on Memorial Day in 1963. He composed his address with his speechwriter, Horace Busby, in the "cadence and spirit of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address a century earlier."[2] The day after Johnson delivered his speech, it was printed prominently on the front page of the *Washington Post*. Delivered the same year as John F. Kennedy's "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s iconic "I Have a Dream," Johnson's speech has been overshadowed in the ensuing years. However, as David M. Shribman declared in *The New York Times* on the speech's fiftieth anniversary, Johnson's speech is "the one that has been all but forgotten," yet it "might have transformed the country the most."[3]

Not surprisingly, however, Johnson's speech was not the only commemoration of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address that occurred amid the Civil War centennial. Yet the narrative that he tells in his speech is remarkable when read in conversation with other commemorative moments. As such, this chapter will examine three key commemorations

of the Gettysburg Address. First, I examine speeches delivered by former president Dwight D. Eisenhower and E. Washington Rhodes, editor-publisher of the *Philadelphia Tribune* and president of the National Newspaper Publishers Association. These speeches were delivered on November 19, 1963 as part of ceremonies planned by Pennsylvania's Gettysburg Centennial Commission. These two addresses offer contrasting public memories of the Gettysburg Address, maintaining the divide between white and black memory narratives of the Civil War that had come to thrive throughout the centennial. I then examine the CWCC's national commemoration of the Gettysburg Address, to consider how the Commission attempted to strip the event of emotion by advancing a commemorative rhetoric centered on "historical accuracy."

Finally, I analyze how Johnson's Gettysburg Address defied both of these commemorative approaches. Specifically, I perform a close textual analysis of Johnson's speech text, privileging the document as a reconfiguration of the Civil War commemorative narratives propagated by the CWCC. Through this reading, I demonstrate that Johnson's speech re-envisioned the Battle of Gettysburg as deeply intertwined with the politics of the civil rights movement. On June 3, a few days after he delivered his address, Johnson had a lengthy telephone conversation with Kennedy's advisor Ted Sorensen, in which he positioned his speech at Gettysburg as an example of the type of leadership that President Kennedy should take with regard to civil rights in America. Following my initial analysis of Johnson's speech, I then analyze the transcript of the Johnson-Sorensen phone conversation, to cull from it a theory of moral rhetorical leadership, as articulated by the Vice President. I conclude my analysis by re-reading

Johnson's speech text to offer an interpretation of the speech as Johnson's enactment of moral rhetorical leadership.

Two Contrasting Commemorative Speeches: Official and Vernacular Interpretations of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

By 1963, national and state-level commemorations of the Civil War centennial started to wind down. Many of the state commissions, the entities planning and executing practically all of the commemorative events, were running out of funds. In addition, the interest and energy necessary to conduct major commemorative events had begun to wane. Some commissions, such as New York's, quit operating altogether, while "others continued in name only or with a skeleton staff." [4] Furthermore, pressing issues on the international and national stages started to take precedence over acts of commemoration. The Cold War had escalated to a new level with the construction of the Berlin Wall and the Bay of Pigs disaster, both in 1961, and the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. Domestically, the civil rights movement came to a head in 1963 with notable events such as the arrest in Birmingham of Martin Luther King, Jr. in April, the assassination of NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers in June, the March on Washington in August, and the murder of four young girls in the bombing of Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in September.

Amid this climate, Pennsylvania's Gettysburg Centennial Commission (GCC) set out to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. While the Commission "desired a high-profile event," they possessed few funds

after commemorating the centennial of the Battle of Gettysburg in July.[5] Ultimately they planned a three-day commemoration featuring speakers, roundtables, and other ceremonies. The main event was Dedication Day, held on November 19, 1963 at Gettysburg National Cemetery, the original site of Lincoln's address. This event featured a musical performance by Marian Anderson and speeches delivered by Pennsylvania Governor William W. Scranton, former president Dwight D. Eisenhower, and editor-publisher E. Washington Rhodes.

Scranton's speech was reminiscent of many of the speeches delivered at the Lincoln Memorial in commemoration of the Emancipation Proclamation centennial. He lauded Lincoln's memory and mobilized it as a justification for America's international Cold War goals.[6] He also framed Lincoln as a model president, who was eloquent and humble, who possessed great common sense, who came from humble origins, and who possessed a strong—yet citizen-centered—leadership style. He argued that "the America of today and the America of Abraham Lincoln" shared things in common, but he strategically avoided domestic racial politics.[7] Instead, his speech highlighted the commonalities between Lincoln's time and America's international role in the 1960s. For instance, he argued that, "Grape shot fired at Manassas ripped life from a man just as surely as an atomic bomb dropped at Hiroshima. What is more, the ultimate way in which a man may die does not change the ultimate way in which he must strive to live. That ultimate striving for us, as a nation, can be nothing less than eternal warfare on the forces of tyranny."[8] Claims like these were characteristic of the overall message of Scranton's address. Although Scranton held an allegiance to the state of Pennsylvania through his role as governor, his speech did not reflect on local or state-level issues. Instead, he

provided the most international interpretation of Lincoln, of all the speeches of the day. In contrast to Scranton, Eisenhower and Rhodes focused on more domestic implications of Lincoln's speech, offering two contrasting commemorative narratives.

President Eisenhower's Speech Commemorating the Gettysburg Address

Eisenhower's presence at the Gettysburg event was important for several reasons. Not only was he a former president, but he also had strong ties to the locale, owning a home just outside of Gettysburg used as a retreat during his presidency and as a place of retirement after leaving office in 1961. Eisenhower was the individual who established the Civil War Centennial Commission on September 7, 1957. Further, in a presidential proclamation issued at the start of the centennial on December 7, 1960, Eisenhower articulated a vision of Civil War remembrance that called for national unity and shared sacrifice, precisely the themes that the initial leaders of the CWCC, Karl S. Betts and Ulysses S. Grant, III, had embraced. He said, "[The Civil War] was a demonstration of heroism and sacrifice by men and women of both sides who valued principle above life itself and whose devotion to duty is a part of our Nation's noblest tradition."[9] Eisenhower's speech delivered in commemoration of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address on November 19, 1963 contained an endorsement of this same unifying memory narrative. However, the speech as a whole was more committed to articulating a value-centric reading of the Gettysburg Address. He culled from Lincoln's words a set of values that he positioned as the legacy of Lincoln's speech. Of particular interest here is the fact that

these values aligned with the principles of the civil rights movement without explicitly endorsing the politics of black rights.

Eisenhower crafted a public memory of the Gettysburg Address in which the speech acted as a reminder of the obligations of American citizens. On one hand, this focus on the duties of citizenship allowed Eisenhower to address and unify white Americans in much the same vein as dominant public memories of the Civil War offered by the conservative CWCC commemorators, such as Betts and Grant. These conservative commemorators, discussed in Chapter 2, championed public memories of the Civil War that glorified white sacrifice and heroism, downplaying divisive issues of race in order to promote unity and patriotism. Eisenhower, for instance, claimed, “Lincoln had faith that the ancient drums of Gettysburg, throbbing mutual defiance from the battle lines of the blue and the gray, would one day beat in unison, to summon a people, happily united in peace, to fulfill, generation by generation, a noble destiny.”[10] Unity between the north and the south, a unity based on an unspoken commitment to whiteness, was one of the most significant outcomes of the Civil War. Yet Eisenhower followed this claim with the following assertion, “[Lincoln’s] faith has been justified - but the unfinished work of which he spoke in 1863 is still unfinished; because of human frailty, it always will be.”[11] This claim was significant, because it implied that unity was not the sole outcome of the Civil War. Rather, the war’s legacy was something greater—a commitment to the “unfinished work” that Lincoln described in his Gettysburg Address.

But what was the unfinished work in Eisenhower’s interpretation? Over time, this phrase from Lincoln’s speech has been the subject of contestation. There are some who argue that Lincoln was referencing the strides left to be made toward national unity.

Arguably, however, Eisenhower's use of this phrase may have also invited his audience to assume an implied commitment a second interpretation—a commitment to the unfulfilled goal of black equality. By simply championing the idea of a commitment to Lincoln's "unfinished business" as an ambiguous concept, Eisenhower creates an enthymeme that caters to multiple audiences.

The former president also portrayed the Gettysburg Address as a speech with a generalizable legacy. That is, the lessons of the Gettysburg Address fit all wars, not just the Civil War. For instance, he stated that, "On this day of commemoration, Lincoln still asks of each of us, as clearly as he did of those who heard his words a century ago, to give that increased devotion to the cause for which soldiers in all our wars have given the last full measure of devotion."[12] In this claim, the actual exigencies of each war were inconsequential; rather, the ideals of these conflicts were positioned as consistent over time. Eisenhower offered an ambiguous rendering of the "cause for which soldiers" had fought, allowing the audience to fill in this missing idea. In addition, the former president crafted a public memory of the Gettysburg Address in which Lincoln spoke not as the U.S. president in the midst of the Civil War, but rather as a representative of all soldiers throughout U.S. history. He used the collective efforts of all American soldiers as leverage for his claim that American citizens are obliged to uphold the "cause" for which America's soldiers have and will continue to sacrifice their lives.

Eisenhower's framing of the legacy of the Gettysburg Address obliged Americans to uphold certain ideals, ideals that were both characteristically American and that aligned with the cause of the civil rights movement: freedom, justice, and equality. He spoke of these obligations throughout his speech, in passages such as:

> Our answer, the only worthy one we can render to the memory of the great emancipator, is ever to defend, protect and pass on unblemished, to coming generations the heritage – the trust - that Abraham Lincoln, and all the ghostly legions of patriots of the past, with unflinching faith in their God, have bequeathed to us - a nation free, with liberty, dignity, and justice for all.[13]

Here again, Eisenhower aligned Lincoln's Gettysburg Address with the broader legacy of other "patriots," transforming the legacy of the Civil War into characteristically American ideals: freedom, liberty, and justice. He further emphasized the idea that the Gettysburg Address was an expression of Lincoln's commitment to freedom, when he claimed, "Little wonder it is that, as here we sense his deep dedication to freedom, our own dedication takes added strength."[14] Delivering his speech at the Gettysburg National Cemetery, Eisenhower interpreted the place not historically, but affectively, framing the emotional resonance of the space as a sign of Lincoln's dedication to freedom.

Eisenhower also culled from Lincoln's Gettysburg Address a vision of equality as a fundamental commitment of the country,

> True to democracy's basic principle that all are created equal and endowed by the Creator with priceless human rights, the good citizen now, as always before, is called upon to defend the rights of others as he does his own; to subordinate self to the country's good; to refuse to take the easy way today that may invite national disaster tomorrow; to accept the truth that the work still to be done awaits his doing.[15]

This passage was significant for two reasons. First, as historian Jared Peatman contends, this was the first time that Eisenhower spoke of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address in terms of

equality.[16] Second, by implying that equality was not an abstract right but a responsibility of citizenship, Eisenhower spoke directly, if not explicitly, to the issues that had led King and the civil rights movement to Birmingham that same year.

For Eisenhower, this was an important shift. It signaled that he seemed to acknowledge the demands of the civil rights movement as a national rather than local or regional concern. Yet as the *New York Times* acknowledged the day after his speech, Eisenhower's comments "referred only indirectly to the Negro's struggle for civil rights."[17] This was indicative of Eisenhower's enthymematic approach. He positioned equality as the "unfinished business" of which Lincoln spoke, but he did not specify for whom the promise of equality was unfulfilled. In the same way that Hillary Clinton strategically reframed the "Black Lives Matter" campaign in 2015, contending that "*All* Lives Matter," Eisenhower championed equality for everyone, including African Americans, when he declared, "[Lincoln] foresaw a new birth of freedom, a freedom and equality for all which, under God, would restore the purpose and meaning of America, defining a goal that challenges each of us to attain his full stature of citizenship."[18] Equality, in this framing, is not something with material consequences for specific individuals or groups, but rather a characteristically American pursuit.

E. Washington Rhodes' Speech Commemorating the Gettysburg Address

Also speaking at the event was E. Washington Rhodes, editor and publisher of the *Philadelphia Tribune*, a prominent African American newspaper that gave substantive coverage of issues that affected black Americans, which greatly contrasted the

"indifferent if not hostile coverage" provided by most Philadelphia newspapers of the time.[19] Rhodes was influential in Philadelphia's African American community, particularly the "diverse black middle class," in the Republican Party, and in local Philadelphia politics.[20] He served as Pennsylvania's Assistant Attorney General in 1939, and resumed his editorship of the paper after finishing his term. At the time that he was invited to deliver a speech in commemoration of the Gettysburg Address, Rhodes was also the President of the National Newspaper Publishers Association. Rhodes' speech, in contrast to Eisenhower's, used the commemorative moment of the Gettysburg Address centennial as an opportunity to advance the cause of the civil rights movement.

He did this first by explicitly connecting the legacy of the Civil War to the ongoing struggle for black equality. Eisenhower used the affective power of the setting—the Gettysburg National Cemetery—to persuade his audience of the importance of freedom as an American value. Rhodes, in contrast, made the following claim,

> The 'March on Washington' on August 28, 1963, ended at the Lincoln Memorial – at the knees of Lincoln – at the knees of a magnificent stone image. Today, as we evoke the living, breathing presence of Abraham Lincoln here at Gettysburg, we and the entire nation should become acutely aware of his great, compassionate heart sustained by a statesmanship unparalleled in his day.[21]

By highlighting Lincoln's "compassion"—his emotional relationship to the issue of black freedom and equality—Rhodes shifted audience attention to the moral issues connected to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and to the contemporary civil rights movement.

Rhodes also shifted the focus away from the dominant commemorative emphasis on uniting North and South to a focus on promoting racial unity. He stated, "One hundred

years after the Battle of Gettysburg, one hundred years after the Gettysburg Address, the anguished expectations and hopes of Abraham Lincoln for a united nation remain unrealized, unfulfilled in American life. The present, grave Civil Rights struggle attests to this melancholy, tragic fact."[22] In this passage, Rhodes used the conflict of the Civil War to introduce the concept of disunity not among the regions of the nation but among different races. In doing so, he positioned the goals of the civil rights movement as the pressing issue of the centennial period. Rhodes went further, using Lincoln's famous quotation that "a house divided against itself cannot stand," to assert that the country faced a similar moment of either division or unity. He declared that Lincoln's assertion was "as true today as it was centuries ago."[23] Framed in this manner, Rhodes implied that while division was evident over the question of black equality or inequality, it could not continue in that fashion. Either the civil rights of America's black citizens would be recognized and protected or the country would be forced to accept the fact that it was not a nation of equal citizens. For Rhodes and for Eisenhower, inequality was not in keeping with America's true purpose.

Rhodes portrayed "statesmanship" as a means of advancing civil rights, and he offered a vision of what this statesmanship should entail. Like King's invitation to Kennedy to exercise moral leadership, as discussed in Chapter 3, Rhodes' vision of statesmanship asserted that political leadership should be moral in nature. Statesmanship "is characterized by wisdom, breadth of vision or regards for the general welfare rather than partisan interest," he claimed.[24] This envisioned leadership would deal explicitly with "racial antipathies" and "educational, social and economic inequities"—reckoning with material issues, not with championing abstract ideals.[25] Further, Rhodes made an

appeal to those who prioritized sectional unity over black rights when he claimed that statesmanship, in his conception, was the cure for sectional tensions.

Ultimately, then, what is evidenced by the speeches of both Eisenhower and Rhodes is that the place of Gettysburg and all of its emotional resonance enabled two impassioned interpretations of Lincoln's iconic address. Eisenhower spoke of lofty American ideals as the legacy of Lincoln's speech, and Rhodes gave an affective call for using the commemorative moment as an exigence for a new version of citizenship to advance civil rights. Notably, however, these two impassioned addresses continued to model the tensions of earlier commemorations—Eisenhower's speech appealed to all Americans, leaving Rhodes to represent the cause of the civil rights movement.

Liberal Commemorators and the Shift to an Objective Commemorative Stance

When Allan Nevins and James I. Robertson Jr., leaders of the Civil War Centennial Commission, learned that Pennsylvania's Gettysburg Centennial Commission (GCC) intended to plan an event commemorating the Battle of Gettysburg, they were concerned about what might transpire. These anxieties were reflected in a speech delivered by Robertson in Gettysburg, before the Adams County Shrine Club on January 9, 1963. In his speech, Robertson stressed that the town of Gettysburg had an "ominous and awesome responsibility" in commemorating the battle centennial. He said, further, "we in Washington, the national commission, are vitally concerned about what you do here."[26] He urged dignified activities and cautioned against battle reenactments and other kitschy, commercialized forms of commemoration, the style of commemoration for

which Karl S. Betts was fired from his CWCC leadership position. He also instructed the town of Gettysburg to strive for unifying commemoration efforts, stating, "The great differences of 1863 were not too great for time to heal and this centennial offers a great opportunity for cementing the bonds of unity that hold our country together."[27]

In the wake of Betts's firing, the primary challenge that Nevins and Robertson faced, according to historian Robert Cook, was "not only to restore the validity of the centennial in the eyes of a skeptical media but also to accomplish this task without alienating southern whites who hitherto… had found little reason to quarrel with" the former Commission leadership.[28] Under the new direction of Robertson and Nevins, the CWCC aimed to develop a more "scholarly and inclusive centennial program."[29] The new leadership attempted to strip remembrance of its emotional charge by propagating a more objective, historical rendering of Civil War memory.

The CWCC's scholarly symposium on Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, held in Washington on January 13, 1964, perhaps most aptly demonstrated this new, objective approach to commemoration. This event was notable because it was one of only two events planned by the federal CWCC across the centennial period (the other, of course, was the commemoration of the Emancipation Proclamation, discussed in the previous chapter). Cook notes that in planning this event, Nevins "was particularly keen… that the commission should ignore neither the role that blacks had played during the Civil War nor the relevance of Civil War themes to the burgeoning struggle for racial equality in the United States."[30] Nevins wrote in a letter to Robertson on January 2, 1963:

> The more I reflect upon the matter, the more important it seems to me that the National Commission offer some commemoration in Washington of the

> Gettysburg Address. The Battle will be amply commemorated on the field; but the Address has a broad national and international interest … We may well be criticized if we pass it over unnoticed, and we can easily arrange a modest observance.[31]

Nevins suggested that such a modest event could involve entities such as the Library of Congress, as well as notable historians, literary figures, and poets. "We would gain much from it, and lose nothing," argued Nevins, who also characterized the event as "devoid of all risk."[32] Robertson, however, was less enthusiastic about Nevins's proposal, and he said as much in reply. He wrote to Nevins that his "initial reaction was negative," because, "Lincoln's remarks were slanted for the Northern side, and thus such a program would make us appear again as if we were leaning heavily away from the South."[33] This written exchange reveals that Nevins and Robertson remained concerned about the regional tensions that had plagued the centennial. Furthermore, it suggests that despite their desire to avoid the errors of Betts and Grant, they still clung to a hope that the commemoration could proceed with an emphasis on balance and unity. Nevertheless, the new leaders of the CWCC did try to achieve this goal through a different approach. Instead of attempting to unify the nation through a celebratory tone and an emphasis on the heroic deeds of white soldiers in the face of death, the CWCC instead decided to strip their commemorations of as much emotion as possible. They called for objective, academic forms of commemoration only.

The national event commemorating Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, planned by Nevins and Robertson, aptly reflects this commemorative approach. They invited Paul H. Douglas of Illinois, a liberal Democrat and proponent of civil rights legislation, to

participate in the symposium. Alongside Douglas were John Dos Passos, Arthur Lehman Goodhart, Reinhold Neibuhr, Robert Lowell, and David C. Mearns. The resulting event, as the CWCC had hoped, was an academic affair. Held in the Department of Interior auditorium, the event program was entitled plainly, "A Symposium on Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address." In arranging the event logistics, Robertson wrote in a letter to the Department of Interior, "Accoutrements will be few and simple—a lectern, a rostrum microphone, rostrum chairs for six, a United States flag (staff upright, on stage), and just enough potted ferns or other plants modestly to trim the stages"[34] In terms of attendance, the *Washington Post* described, "A hearty regiment of history buffs showed Valley Forge courage last night in turning out to hear a symposium on Lincoln's Gettysburg Address."[35] What this description reveals is the nature of the audience in attendance. The article later divulges that the "hearty regiment" consisted of around 50 people.

Although the snowstorm that coincided with the event may have had something to do with the low attendance, it is also possible that the event's emphasis on an objective retelling of the Civil War did not align with the widespread public interest. Most certainly, the event did not coincide with the emotional nature of the historical events themselves, nor with the politics of the time. The civil rights movement forced the nation to reckon with the complicated emotions bound up with Civil War memory and race in the 1960s. Within this context, the objective, historical approach of the new CWCC leadership was impotent.

Johnson's Address: (Re)memorializing a Civil War Battlefield

On May 30, 1963, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson delivered a speech that implicitly challenged the Gettysburg commemorative narratives offered by Eisenhower and the CWCC, and more closely aligned with the message of Rhodes. This address, which lasted under ten minutes, was delivered in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on Memorial Day, just over a month shy of the Battle of Gettysburg centennial. Through this speech, Johnson tapped into the emotion of Civil War memory, repurposing it to serve the cause of civil rights. He did this by strategically reframing Gettysburg as a place of remembrance. Johnson's commemoration of Gettysburg centered on the idea of "sacrifice," and the contention that this sacrifice obliged a rededication to certain ideals.

For Johnson, Memorial Day and the one-hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg were kairotic moments. These two events offered the opportunity to position sacrifice as a concept at the core of Gettysburg remembrance. While the idea of "sacrifice," in many ways, is abstract, Johnson grounded this concept through real and metaphorical use of *place*. Place was established as the dominant trope through which Johnson conveyed the significance of sacrifice in America in the very first line of the speech. In this opening line, he drew attention to the land, stating: "On this hallowed ground, heroic deeds were performed and eloquent words were spoken a century ago."[36] This framing called to mind three distinct ways in which Gettysburg became "hallowed ground:" through the soldiers' sacrificial actions during battle, through the creation of a burial ground for soldiers killed in action, and through Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

Johnson further connected place to sacrifice by calling attention to the locations where soldiers died in battle. He first reflects on the “sons who died in foreign fields.” Johnson’s use of “sons” is pathos-laden, as it prompts the audience to reflect on their family members and friends who were killed in the two world wars, the Korean War, or the Vietnam War. He next calls attention to “those who died here on their native soil,” referring to the more temporally distant Civil War.[37] Even if his audience members did not have familial ties to those who fought at Gettysburg, they could still feel emotionally connected to the sacrifices of these individuals as they stood on the “native soil” to listen to Johnson’s speech. Johnson’s attention to place—“foreign fields” and “native soil”—grounded the sacrifices in the land where lives were lost. This use of place also functioned to connect the sacrifices of soldiers across time, allowing Johnson, like Eisenhower, to discuss the interconnectedness of all wars.

The emphasis on sacrifice as embodied by physical spaces also enabled Johnson to portray the Civil War and the civil rights movement as interconnected. In this way, Johnson’s speech differed starkly from the address delivered by Eisenhower. Where Eisenhower had been indirect, Johnson was both direct and explicit. Johnson declared, “Our nation found its soul in honor on these fields of Gettysburg one hundred years ago. We must not lose that soul in dishonor now on the fields of hate.”[38] Through this passage, he linked the Civil War to the civil rights movement by strategically paralleling the physical land of Gettysburg to sites of civil rights struggle, which he metaphorically described as “fields of hate.” Place—both literally and metaphorically—became a rhetorical mechanism through which Johnson framed the sacrifices of Civil War soldiers and of civil rights movement participants as one in the same. That is, both sacrificed for

the common goal of equality. This becomes clear if we view the passage previously quoted as a deductive argument wherein the unstated warrant is something like: The sacrifices of the soldiers of Gettysburg obligate the nation to continue to fight for black equality in the present.

The same idea was embedded in Johnson's claim that: "The negro today asks [for] justice. We do not answer him—we do not answer those who lie beneath this soil—when we reply to the Negro by asking, 'Patience.'"[39] This passage demonstrated another defining feature of Johnson's conception of sacrifice, it indebted those who benefitted from the sacrifice. It also framed the place of Gettysburg as a physical reminder of the sacrifices of the past. When Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address, he asserted that "from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion" and that the living should be "dedicated to the great task remaining" before them.[40] In this way, Lincoln argued that sacrifice requires obligation, but he kept the object of this obligation intentionally vague. Johnson, in contrast, did not. He explicitly positioned black equality as the task for which Civil War soldiers fought, and as the object to which Americans of the 1960s should be dedicated. He also argued that the sacrifices of black Americans obligated American society as a whole when he made claims like, "To ask patience from the Negro is to ask him to give more of what he has already given enough."[41] Like Martin Luther King, Jr.'s call for a Second Emancipation Proclamation, Johnson's Gettysburg Address portrayed commemoration as an active process that facilitated the demands of present-day justice.

Johnson's Vision of Moral Leadership

In the week following his speech at Gettysburg, on June 3, 1963, Johnson attended a meeting regarding President Kennedy's civil rights bill with Robert Kennedy, Kenneth O'Donnell, Ted Sorensen, the president himself. During this meeting, "the President asked him if he had anything to add—and he told the President what he thought should be done about the [civil rights] legislation."[42] Kennedy then invited Johnson "to repeat his thoughts, in detail, to Ted Sorensen" during a phone conversation.[43] Johnson did so when Sorensen called him later that day. Although Johnson spoke in a disorganized, off-the-cuff manner, the transcript of this phone conversation is a rich and instructive text that sheds light on Johnson's views on civil rights as well as on his vision of presidential leadership.

In speaking to Sorensen, Johnson framed civil rights as a moral issue. In fact, he told Sorensen that it was a "moral issue," a "Christian issue," "an issue of conscience," and an issue of "the heart."[44] Johnson also positioned civil rights in an ethical framework by stating, "We're all Americans. We got a Golden Rule, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.'"[45] Interestingly, Johnson articulated the Golden Rule as a fundamentally American quality and posited that this quality requires the same treatment for all races. By moving the discussion of civil rights into the realm of morality, Johnson provided Kennedy with a different and pressing exigence for action. Positioning civil rights as a moral issue removed other considerations from the table, such as how white Southerners would react, what political risks the president would incur, etc. Instead, Kennedy's only consideration, according to Johnson, should be: what is morally right?

Johnson also framed civil rights as a moral issue by drawing attention to common humanity. For instance, at one point in his conversation with Sorensen, Johnson spoke of Mexican-American congressman Henry B. Gonzalez, stating, "I'd show them that there's not anything terrible about this business. That here, right in the heart of the southland, you've got a fellow whose father and mother were born right out of this country and he's in Congress."[46] Here Johnson offered a hypothetical example of how Kennedy could persuade white Americans that racial equality was a moral issue, instead of merely a political one. And, in this articulation, he demonstrated the morality of civil rights by showing how all races in America have similar experiences. He also engaged in *prosopopoeia*, hypothetically demonstrating how Kennedy could use the "bully pulpit" to call for civil rights. Pretending, for the moment, to be the president of the United States, Johnson argued that common humanity made certain demands of him and of the country:

> Now I'm leader of this country. When I order men into battle I order the men without regard to color. They carry our flag into foxholes. The Negro can do that, the Mexican can do it, others can do it. We've got to do the same thing when we drive down the highway at places they eat. I'm going to have to ask you all to do this thing. I'm going to have to ask the Congress to say that we'll all be treated without regard to our race.[47]

In this passage, Johnson argued that military sacrifice morally obligates America to provide the reward of enhanced civil rights for blacks. In making this argument, Johnson drew on an idea embedded within Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. As Kirt H. Wilson has noted, in his proclamation Lincoln spoke directly to enslaved African Americans to encourage them to join the armed forces. In so doing, Lincoln invited a

situation that he believed could not be easily retracted. Put differently, by freeing slaves and suggesting that they join the army, Lincoln created a scenario wherein emancipation would have to endure even after the conclusion of the war. Thus, in making an argument for expanded equality premised on military sacrifice, Johnson mobilized an historical argument first articulated by Lincoln in the Emancipation Proclamation.

Johnson also argued that the President, by nature of the office, has a civic duty to engage in moral leadership. "This aura, this thing, this halo around the President, everybody wants to believe in the President and the Commander in Chief," Johnson asserted.[48] Again speaking metaphorically, Johnson stated, "We got a little pop gun, and I want to pull out the cannon. The President is the cannon."[49] He also asked Sorensen, "do you think we have exploited that personality and that office and that man and lead him to everything he's got to give this leadership movement. I don't think we've got any of it."[50]

In a manner that reflected Johnson's own sometimes-maverick style, he implied that the lack of moral leadership that Kennedy's administration had demonstrated to that point was problematic. Without the president's leadership, civil rights might fail, he claimed. In contrast to failure, he stated multiple times in his conversation with Sorensen that if Kennedy demonstrated moral leadership, it would change the very social fabric of American society. Johnson said, for example, that upon listening to a rhetorical statement of moral leadership, a man would return home to ask his "wife, 'What's wrong with this?' and they go to searching their conscience. Every preacher starts preaching about it."[51] This same ripple effect was reiterated when Johnson asserted, "They look at him on television speaking down there right from the shoulder. They'll examine their

consciences that night."[52] Johnson thus argued that the President has a unique ability not only to affect policy, but to change the social and moral beliefs of Americans.

Not only did Johnson claim that Kennedy should enact a form a rhetorical leadership, but he also provided a number of vivid details that form a nuanced account of what that leadership should entail. Specifically, Johnson's vision of moral leadership called upon Kennedy to engage in *parrēsiastic* rhetoric or frank speech. This form of moral rhetorical leadership is uncompromising, unambiguous, committed to truth, and risky. A crucial component of Johnson's conception of moral leadership is its uncompromising nature. He makes this point repetitively throughout his conversation with Sorensen. "If I were Kennedy I wouldn't let them call my signals," he asserted.[53] And, he continued, "Now, the President has to go in there without cussing anybody or fussing at anybody with a bunch of congressmen sitting there listening to him, and be the leader of the nation and make a moral commitment to them."[54] Johnson advised Kennedy to look his opponents "straight in the face" and later, even more directly, he suggested that Kennedy "ought to look them in the eye."[55] He also made the following point twice, "I wouldn't have him go down there and meet Wallace and get in a tussle with him. I'd pick my own time and my own place."[56] Although Johnson claimed that this rhetorical style was non-confrontational, it truly was. He stated, "[Kennedy should] stick to the moral issue and he should do it without equivocation not as a demon trying to punish a child," and "[Kennedy should not] lecture to them as a father."[57] To Johnson, the idea of mobilizing non-accommodating rhetoric that does not invite debate was key. A moral leader, in Johnson's depiction, should rise above the fray.

In line with this uncompromising nature, moral leadership—in Johnson's framing—is also polarizing. For instance, Johnson offered multiple renderings of how moral rhetorical leadership has the capacity to split Americans into two camps—"decent" citizens and bigots. Mobilizing the language of war, Johnson argued that: "the President ought to get all of his troops, and he's entitled to put every Republican in there with him, every preacher in there with him, every decent southerner in there with him."[58] Through moral leadership, Kennedy would be able to "make a bigot out of nearly anybody that's against him," Johnson emphasized multiple times.[59] Moral leadership operates like a "manifesto," Johnson explained when he stated, "Every person has to sign that manifesto or he's ostracized in his own community and he's defeated."[60]

Moral rhetorical leadership, in Johnson's portrayal, is not only rooted in one's constancy and frankness, it also is rooted in a sense of truth or righteousness. Kennedy ought to "speak frankly and freely," asserted Johnson on more than one occasion.[61] And, Kennedy should feel free to engage in this type of *parrēsiastic* rhetoric, according to Johnson, because he would be acting on principles that he knew to be true. In a sense, the rhetoric of moral leadership is judicial in nature, because it is used to persuade with regard to issues of justice and injustice. Johnson advised that Kennedy should speak the "truth" about civil rights in America, "Because he's right, Ted."[62] Engaging in this type of "frank" speech would earn the President respect, argued Johnson. He romantically envisioned how blacks would respond to this type of rhetoric, stating, "And I tell you these Negroes will be whispering to each other, 'He walked right in there and he stood right up to them and he told them the facts.'"[63] Johnson believed that Kennedy had the type of ethos that would allow him to make this rhetorical move:

> And I think the South—I don't know much about it—but I think they'll respect him because here's a man of conscience. They think that they don't believe in anything that the Pope believes in. You know that. But they believe this is a sincere man and he is a Catholic because he believes that's what ought to be.[64]

Kennedy's controversial Catholicism, in Johnson's framing, strengthened the President's ethos because he was someone who had spoken frankly and freely before on issues of morality.

Yet even if Johnson believed that Kennedy had the authority to engage in moral leadership, he also portrayed it as a risky endeavor:

> I know these risks are great and it might cost us the South, but those sorts of states may be lost anyway. The difference is if your President just enforces court decrees the South will feel it's yielded to force. But if he goes down there and looks them in the eye and states the moral issue and the Christian issue, and he does it face to face, these Southerners will at least respect his courage. They feel that they're on the losing side of an issue of conscience.[65]

This quotation highlights the danger of engaging in *parrēsiastic* rhetoric. Because this type of rhetoric is uncompromising, unambiguous, and frank, it also risks alienating audience members that hold a different worldview.

Returning to Johnson's Gettysburg Address: Enacting Moral Leadership

In his phone conversation with Sorensen, Johnson asserted that Kennedy should "make a Gettysburg speech" through which he would assert his moral leadership on the

issue of civil rights.[66] Arguably, Johnson did not mean that Kennedy should use Lincoln's iconic address as a model, but rather Johnson seems to be referring to his very own speech at Gettysburg on March 30, 1963. He positioned himself as an authority on how to address the issue of civil rights through a rhetoric of moral leadership, stating, "I said some of the things I said at Gettysburg from nearly every train stop in the South. I looked them right in the eye and said [to] them… If I can do it… the president can sure do it."[67] In this framing, Johnson established his speeches and, importantly, his "memory" of the Gettysburg Address, as his paramount enactment of moral rhetorical leadership. Although he spoke at places "from Milwaukee to Chicago to New York to Los Angeles to Illinois last night, and Gettysburg and Dallas, and Johnson City, Texas" he held Gettysburg up as his most significant iteration of moral leadership.[68] Re-read in light of Johnson's conversation with Sorensen, the Vice-President's speech thus takes on new meaning. Johnson's Gettysburg Address enacted the form of moral leadership that he believed Kennedy should take with regard to the issue of civil rights.

Johnson sought to claim the mantle of Abraham Lincoln both to channel the authority of the presidency and to elevate the moral importance of the issue on which he spoke. Like Lincoln's address, Johnson's was also short at just over seven hundred words. The first person pronoun "I" was notably absent from Johnson's address, just as it was in Lincoln's. In some ways, this lack of "I" is at odds with the type of rhetorical moral leadership that Johnson embraced. When speaking to Sorensen, he spoke of an authoritative, assertive rhetoric. Yet, downplaying his own personal agency modeled Lincoln's rhetoric, and, like Lincoln, Johnson's speech invoked the first-person plural

pronoun "we" through which he took ownership for his own beliefs with regard to civil rights while he also tried to unify Americans around a common goal.

In particular, the first two sentences of Johnson's speech harkened to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. In the first line he used the same words as Lincoln did, drawing attention to the "hallowed ground." The second sentence also closely resembled the language of Lincoln's address: "We, the living, have not forgotten—and the world will never forget—the deeds or words of Gettysburg."[69] Through this line, Johnson expanded on Lincoln's claim that "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."[70] Johnson altered this claim to position Lincoln's Gettysburg Address as part of Gettysburg's lasting public memory.

Yet Johnson did not just claim the mantle of Lincoln at Gettysburg. He also invoked Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation to champion the cause of civil rights and to take a moral stand by articulating an uncompromising stance. For instance, the final lines of Johnson's speech read, "Until justice is blind to color, until education is unaware of race, until opportunity is unconcerned with the color of men's skins, emancipation will be a proclamation but not a fact."[71] This notable line from Johnson's speech was quoted by President Barack Obama in a speech delivered at Johnson's Presidential Library on April 10, 2014.[72] Like King's call for a Second Emancipation Proclamation, this rich passage tied the promise of the Emancipation Proclamation to the modern-day civil rights movement. Johnson's use of repetition drew attention to the multiple ways in which the promise of the proclamation had been unfulfilled.

One of the most compelling moments when Johnson aligned himself with the civil rights movement transpired when he said, "To the extent that the proclamation of

emancipation is not fulfilled in fact, to that extend we shall have fallen short of assuring freedom to the free."[73] What is especially remarkable about this passage is that it models the uncompromising stance that Johnson told Sorensen he believed Kennedy should adopt. He essentially argued that "it's all or nothing"—either full equality exists or the emancipation proclamation is still an unfulfilled promise. This claim was quite different than the narrative of progress that Kennedy offered at the Emancipation Proclamation Centennial in September of 1962. And, by directly quoting the passage "freedom to the free" from Lincoln's December 1862 "Annual Message to Congress," Johnson appropriated Lincoln's words to articulate an idyllic image of what affording civil rights to blacks in the 1960s could help attain.[74] (Ironically, the original meaning behind Lincoln's use of "freedom to the free" was support of his proposition for compensated emancipation and colonization, plans that never came to fruition and that were widely criticized in their time as conciliatory approaches to freeing slaves.)

Johnson's speech also enacted moral leadership by articulating clear alliances and a firm stance on the issue of civil rights. In his conversation with Sorensen, Johnson argued that, "Negroes are tired of this patient stuff and tired of this piecemeal stuff and what they want more than anything else is not an executive order or legislation, they want a moral commitment that he's behind them."[75] This same theme is articulated in Johnson's Gettysburg speech. Johnson did not propose any new laws. Rather, he made a firm moral commitment. In this way, Johnson's speech differed starkly from Eisenhower's. Whereas Eisenhower mobilized a very careful, strategic rhetoric, Johnson avoided all ambiguity both in his private conversations and in his public orations. He argued that the President should speak directly to civil rights leaders like Martin Luther

King, Jr. and James Baldwin to tell them that, "We give you a moral commitment. The government is behind you."[76] In his speech Johnson channeled words that sound as though they could have come from King himself,

> One hundred years ago, the slave was freed.
>
> One hundred years later, the Negro remains in bondage to the color of his skin.
>
> The Negro today asks justice.[77]

Johnson continued,

> We do not answer him—we do not answer those who lie beneath this soil—when we reply to the Negro by asking Patience... The solution is in our hands… Americans—white and Negro together—must be about the business of resolving the challenge which confronts us now. [78]

Passages such as this one offered compelling evidence that Johnson was influenced by how the civil rights movement had co-opted aspects of the civil war centennial by 1963. The Vice President argued that "responsible Americans"—"those who care for their country"—would support the cause of civil rights.[79] In this way, Johnson enacted his claim that asserting moral leadership will act as a manifesto of sorts—he put Americans in the position where they should feel "ostracized" if they did not support the moral cause that he championed. Further, by using the rhetorical style of figures like King, Johnson displayed a visible commitment to the movement. A little over a month earlier, King had written his Letter from Birmingham Jail in which he defended the "legitimate and unavoidable impatience" of blacks with regard to slow progress in the realm of civil rights.[80] Here, in Gettysburg, Johnson responded to King's letter, firmly aligning himself—and his vision of America—with the civil rights movement.

There is, however, one rather odd or discordant note in Johnson's Gettysburg address. Although, as I have demonstrated, Johnson expressed direct support for the goals of the civil rights movement and equal citizenship, he also seemed to reject the idea that breaking the law through street protests was the right way to achieve that equality. Johnson wrote three paragraphs dedicated to defending the law. Here is a sampling from that section of the speech:

> The law cannot save those who deny it but neither can the law serve any who do not use it. The history of injustice and inequality is a history of disuse of the law. Law has not failed—and it is not failing. We as a nation have failed ourselves by not trusting the law and by not using the law to gain sooner the ends of justice which law alone serves. If the white over-estimates what he has done for the Negro without the law, the Negro may under-estimate what he is doing and can do for himself with the law.[81]

Spoken alongside the other content of Johnson's speech, this passage's call for blacks to work within the law to achieve change seemed to work against the speech's message that Americans should support the cause of the civil rights movement. After all, the movement's successes in 1963 are, today, largely considered to be a masterstroke of nonviolent direct action against existing legal statues. Yet, even this passage seems to reflect Johnson's thinking as expressed to Sorensen.

In his private phone conversation, Johnson told Sorensen that Kennedy should tell civil rights leaders like Dr. King, "You're not going to have to do it in the streets. You can do it in the courthouses and the Congress. Now let's get ready for that."[82] For Johnson, the civil right movement was right to argue that America had not fulfilled its

promise of equality, but it was wrong to assume that that equality could be won by violating the law in social protest. The rule of law was absolute in Johnson's opinion. But, just as importantly, moral leadership from the president could provide the conditions under which the law could be used to secure the equality that protestors desired. Johnson's moral commitment to civil rights, in his view, opened up space for blacks to achieve change through legal measures instead of through grassroots efforts "in the streets."

Conclusion

As this chapter demonstrates, Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address was the object of significant commemoration in the later years of the Civil War centennial. When Eisenhower and Rhodes commemorated the address in November of 1963, they adopted two distinct approaches. Eisenhower argued that the legacy of the address was its articulation of timeless American values. Importantly, the ideals that he discussed aligned with the cause of the civil rights movement—equality, freedom, and justice—but his speech did not make any explicit reference to the movement, its goals or its leaders. In contrast, when Rhodes spoke after Eisenhower, he said that Lincoln's famous oration and the civil rights movement were connected. Rhodes argued that Lincoln had demonstrated how statesmen should act on behalf of moral principles and not on behalf of what was politically advantageous. Rhodes began his speech by claiming that he was "invited as a representative of the American Negro people." This statement acknowledged that the planning commission was beginning to feel some real pressure from black leaders;

however, perhaps because Rhodes was included, no other speaker felt obliged to address the country's race issue. Thus, the November 19 event included the vernacular commemorative discourse of the civil rights movement, but that rhetoric remained separate from the white commemorative narrative offered by Eisenhower.

Under the direction of Nevins and Robertson, the CWCC offered another commemoration of the Gettysburg Address that greatly contrasted the November 19, 1963 event. The CWCC's commemoration was held in the austere setting of a Washington D.C. auditorium, not in the hallowed Gettysburg cemetery on January 13, 1964. It featured a host of academic speakers rather than political leaders like Eisenhower and activists such as Rhodes. It also avoided the emotion associated with musical performances, such Marian Anderson's singing at the Gettysburg Address commemoration on November 19. Ultimately, then, the CWCC's commemorative stance prioritized objectivity and dignity over the emotion and politics inexorably linked to public memories of the Civil War and the civil rights movement. It was their express intention to divorce the remembrance of Lincoln's speech from the passions surrounding its legacy. Arguably, they were just as committed to the goal of unification as the earlier Betts and Grant; however, they also recognized that celebrating white common experience was no longer tenable amid the civil rights movement. Their solution was a commemoration of "historical accuracy," which, in the end, produced an unpopular and equally unprogressive commemoration as the widely-critiqued projects of the early CWCC.

Johnson's speech defied the politics of both of these preceding commemorations. As the text of his speech and his phone conversation with Sorensen reveal, Johnson's

own Gettysburg Address enacted the moral rhetorical leadership that the civil rights movement had called for across the centennial. He aligned himself—and the nation—explicitly with the cause of the civil rights movement, speaking boldly, frankly, and freely. His speech was uncompromising and defied the white, commemorative narratives of Eisenhower, the conservative CWCC commemorators, and even liberal commemorators such as Nevins and Robertson. Johnson's speech thus illustrated that the civil rights movement's rhetoric co-opting the Civil War centennial was ultimately heard and acted upon, making its way into official commemorative discourse.

Notes

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[14] Eisenhower, "Centennial of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1963," 141.

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[82] Sorensen – LBJ phone conversation, 20.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

In December of 2012, the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. opened an exhibition titled "Changing America: The Emancipation Proclamation, 1863, and the March on Washington, 1963."[1] Through placards, photographs, and artifacts, "Changing America" offered a contextualized account of the Emancipation Proclamation and the March on Washington, positioning them as complementary, landmark moments in the long struggle for black equality. The exhibit told the history of events leading up to and beyond the moment when Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. It placed particular emphasis on the strides that African Americans made in achieving their own freedom. It also offered a similarly contextualized account of the March on Washington. The exhibition provided insight into the March by discussing the Lincoln Memorial in black civil rights history, how the March was planned, details of the event itself, and the March's impact and legacy.

Visitors to the exhibition first arrived at a wall with two, opposing arrows, each pointing to a different portal: to the left, labeled "150 years ago" and to the right, labeled "50 years ago." Between the two arrows was the following passage that primed visitors for their experience by connecting the two historical time periods,

> There are moments in our nation's history when individuals unite and take courageous steps to fulfill the promise of democracy. One hundred years separate the Emancipation Proclamation and the March on Washington. Yet, these two events are profoundly linked together in a larger story of liberty and the American experience. Both were the result of people demanding justice. Both grew out of decades of bold actions, resistance, organization, and vision. In both, we take inspiration from those who marched towards freedom.[2]

This introduction immediately invited visitors to view Civil War and civil rights history as part of the same narrative, and even more importantly, as part of the American story. However, in the early 1960s, the general American public did not make this connection. The Civil War was viewed as a distant but still memorable experience, a war between the states over questions such as states' rights and the nature of the Constitution. The March on Washington was an immediate political conflict animated by black and white activists who argued for what seemed like the narrow interests of an African-American, Southern minority.

Likewise, for the federal commission tasked with commemorating the one-hundredth anniversary of the Civil War, there was little connection between the legacy of the Civil War and the contemporary struggle for black equality. The connection, as this dissertation has demonstrated, was largely unrecognized, willfully ignored, or appropriated to serve official interests that had little to do with domestic politics. In order to shift the dominant public memory away from purportedly "apolitical," unifying rhetoric, civil rights activists had to make strategic, rhetorical efforts to intervene. That is, they used powerful rhetorical arguments and narratives to construct alternative public

memories that built an association between their own struggle for social justice and Civil War history. Howard Meyer, A. Philip Randolph, E. Pauline Myers, E. Washington Rhodes, Bishop Smallwood E. Williams, John Hope Franklin, and Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as members of the black press, worked tirelessly to reshape how America understood its own past in relation to its tumultuous present. These movement leaders understood something that we frequently forget today. Social transformation is not just a function of new legislation or shifts in how the courts interpret the Constitution. Social transformation is often about small but strategic shifts in national identity. When societies begin to see themselves differently, often through a reinterpretation of a shared past, opportunities for political and social change become possible. Indeed, Abraham Lincoln understood this idea well. As Garry Wills has argued, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address reinterpreted the moment of America's origin, connecting the Civil War to an "experiment" in democracy, founded on a principle of equality.[3] This dissertation has argued that leaders of the civil rights movement were engaged in precisely that form of rhetorical invention.

One contribution of this dissertation is thus to offer a case study for considering how social movements can use established, official commemorations as rhetorical resources for affecting change. David Zarefsky has written extensively on how history can be used as a resource for public address.[4] According to Zarefsky, history is not a simple, static set of events, dates, and facts. It is a robust field of human experience that is open to different interpretations; furthermore, it is a form of evidence that rhetors use to advance their own immediate persuasive efforts. Likewise, rhetorical scholars have written extensively about the communication tactics mobilized by social movements to

advance their cause.[5] These scholars have considered how rhetorical tactics such as negotiation, legal arguments, and forms of social protest have been used by movements to affect change. What is missing, however, is any sustained consideration of commemorations of the past may sometimes intersect with the strategic aims of social movement activists. This dissertation has explored this intersection by considering how established commemorations can offer social movements another powerful, rhetorical resource.

In the case of the civil rights movement, co-opting the Civil War centennial had several key advantages. For instance, it allowed the movement to broaden the reach of its civil rights agenda by connecting it to public practices of commemoration that were larger than the movement's immediately obvious focus. Recall that in the early 1960s, most U.S. citizens understood the civil rights movement as a regional political conflict. Although the national media had covered events in Little Rock, Arkansas; Montgomery, Alabama; Birmingham, Alabama; and Greensboro, North Carolina, these news reports portrayed the civil rights movement as a Southern problem. Unless they were African American or one of the young white college-aged students who joined the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), or Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the citizens of non-Southern states did not see how the demands of the Freedom Riders or Dr. King had an impact on their lives. Eventually, of course, that would change as the March on Washington, the speeches of President Johnson, new civil rights legislation, and a focus on the experiences of black urban residents brought the civil rights movement "north."

As civil rights activists involved themselves in the commemoration of the Civil War, they escalated the significance of their demands from a regional and local set of issues to a national concern on par with the Civil War in its significance. It is no coincidence that the growth of the movement from a regional to a national issue correlates with the Civil War anniversary. It is not that the effort to reconfigure America's memory of the civil war *caused* the nationalization of the civil rights movement. Rather, the two processes—the escalation of the movement toward national relevance and the reinterpretation of America's history—reinforced one another in a manner that, though distinct, furthered the evolution of both. Civil rights advocates forced racial politics into official commemorative moments through public speeches, editorials, essays printed in publications with a national readership, private letters to entities of power, and boycotts of un-inclusive events. What these individuals did, then, was transform the centennial into a national platform for their cause. Put simply, leaders of the civil rights movement framed black civil rights as the unfinished business of the Civil War, forcing the issue onto the agenda of anyone with a stake in the war's legacy.

By intervening in dominant commemorative practices, the civil rights movement used the centennial as a kairotic opportunity to engage one of the most stable and powerful aspects of U.S. society—its public memories. While exceedingly difficult to accomplish, shifting these collective memories can reap enormous benefits for a social movement. Civil rights activists never persuaded the federal CWCC to alter its agenda significantly; however, they did reach Vice President Johnson, as Chapter 5 demonstrates. At Gettysburg, Johnson enacted the moral leadership for which Rhodes and King had called. He stressed the lack of civil rights progress to date, which Franklin

had tried to highlight in his report authored for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. He also explicitly addressed the racial politics and morality of the Civil War's history, as King, Meyer, Myers, and Randolph had urged. Johnson's speech demonstrates an uptake of "vernacular memories" by an "official" voice. The Vice President was then able to use his position of power to act as a mouthpiece for the rhetorical reconfiguration of the past that the civil rights movement needed. In the process, Johnson called the country to new, bold action.

Johnson's embrace and articulation of a collective memory that connected the Civil War to the civil rights movement was not just a new or revised version of history. It was not just about the country's "knowledge" of the past. It also was a rhetoric with specific political consequences in the present. When Johnson delivered his own Gettysburg address, he seemed very willing to embrace the immediate consequences of his commemorative speech. Historians have often puzzled over why and how a Southern, Texas Democrat became perhaps the strongest official supporter of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. There is more than enough evidence to suggest that when Johnson ascended to the presidency after Kennedy's tragic death, he viewed the civil rights movement as a political issue that distinguished his administration from Kennedy's while it also ensured his personal legacy in the eyes of history. That said, this dissertation has demonstrated that even while he was Vice President, Johnson was committed to at least some of the goals and visions of the civil rights movement. He did not like the social protests and legal violations that the movement performed, but he agreed with its leaders' supposition that the Civil War had been fought over the issue of slavery, that the Emancipation Proclamation had been intended to secure freedom for people of color, that

Lincoln had justified the war's tragic violence as an opportunity for the country to rectify past wrongs, and that after the Civil War the country had backed away from the promises and sacrifices that had given the war its meaning. For Johnson, this version of the past was not only real, it made very specific demands on the country and its political leaders. But what about President Kennedy?

In the conclusion of Chapter 3, I argued that Kennedy's proclamation commemorating the Emancipation Proclamation centennial, while not a direct response to Martin Luther King Jr.'s call for a second emancipation proclamation, did display a recognition that the centennial and the civil rights movement were connected. Six months after issuing this proclamation, Kennedy displayed a more substantial uptake of the movement's rhetoric in his June 1963 address calling for a civil rights bill. In this speech, Kennedy invoked Civil War memory and the idea that the dream of the Emancipation Proclamation was unfulfilled, stating, "One hundred years of delay have passed since President Lincoln freed the slaves, yet their heirs, their grandsons, are not fully free."[6] There were many social and political factors influencing Kennedy to push for a civil rights bill. His intervention at the University of Mississippi, the Freedom Rides, the Birmingham Campaign, and events surrounding the admission of Vivian Malone and James Hood to the University of Alabama all played a role. Arguably, however, an unrecognized and seriously important rhetorical contribution resided in the disruption of Civil War commemoration by civil rights activists. These individuals highlighted just how little progress had been made since the war ended, and they pushed Kennedy to use the centennial as an exigence for executive action. They helped Kennedy to understand

that the demands of the civil rights movement were not just the concern of Southern governors; they were the concern of the entire country.

By mobilizing rhetoric that disrupted, co-opted, and repurposed dominant Civil War memories, civil rights activists were able to shift collective memories of America's past. The speeches delivered by Johnson and Kennedy showed how institutions of power ultimately took up the Civil War memories championed by civil rights activists. In particular, Johnson's Gettysburg address displayed a moment where civil rights rhetoric and whitewashed, dominant commemorations of the Civil War were not articulated separately, as they were by Eisenhower and Rhodes at the CWCC's official Gettysburg commemoration ceremony. At the November 19, 1963 event, Eisenhower and Rhodes represented two "warring" visions of the past, and it was left to the audience to choose which they preferred. In Johnson's speech, the history of black Americans *was* part of the history of America. It was no longer a separate version of history, relevant only to black Americans and those white Americans who viewed the past as they did. By intervening in an already established commemorative moment, the civil rights movement influenced the way that American history was understood and talked about by official commemorators.

Not all social movements, however, may find commemorative practices useful. For instance, many movements lack the power, access, or organization needed to tap this resource. Chapter 2 makes this evident, in fact. Each of the civil rights activists discussed in that chapter operated in an atomized fashion. Meyer's advocacy appeared in publications such as *Commonweal* and the *Negro Digest*. He, along with Myers, also corresponded with the CWCC through private letters. Randolph used private letters to correspond directly with the President, because he already had an established relationship

with Kennedy. Certainly the correspondence of others would not have gained similar attention from the President. While the collectivity of their voices may have had an impact in the long run, their individual voices were easily managed or deflected in the moment. The letters sent by Meyer and Myers, for example, were filed by the CWCC in a folder that the Commission labeled "Colored Organizations," an indication of how their concerns were bracketed as separate from the business of commemorating the Civil War. Like Halsey's speech, in the immediate, their individual vernacular voices were easily managed.

For movements that have the opportunity to use commemoration to advance their cause, there are certain drawbacks. Movement activists must, for example, confront the fact that audiences prefer epideictic commemorations over politicized public memories that prompt deliberation. When communities gather to "celebrate" a past event, they may resent the claims that either they do not really understand what that past was or that the past requires more than just recognition, it requires present action. Rhetorical scholars have argued at length that it is not uncommon for speakers to mobilize epideictic discourse for deliberative ends. However, doing so is risky and frequently unsuccessful. As this dissertation has demonstrated, Americans were eager to *celebrate* the Civil War and the ideals of heroism, bravery, and unity that they believed the war embodied. But when leaders like King tried to leverage the memory of the Emancipation Proclamation for political action, their calls were critiqued as "inappropriate" and indecorous given the celebratory nature of the event. Recall that even John Hope Franklin's narrative of civil rights history was criticized by the very members of the CWCC who had asked him to

write it. As human beings we tend to prefer memorials that complement our own interests and understanding of history.

Another drawback to the strategy of using anniversaries to advance a social movement's agenda is the extent to which this rhetorical strategy relies on official, institutionalized sources of power. King' appeal for Kennedy to issue a second emancipation proclamation, analyzed in Chapter 3, aptly demonstrates this problem. King's campaign placed the fate of a second emancipation proclamation in the hands of Kennedy—a single, powerful, white man. Johnson's eventual uptake of civil rights rhetoric furthered this complication. Although he helped to advance the agenda of the movement, from 1964 through 1968 Johnson also took control of the certain parts of the agenda. This emphasis on the role of white, elite power to affect change ran contrary to grassroots efforts that had sustained the early years of the "short" civil right movement. Protests such as the sit-in movement and the Freedom Rides, organized and led by SNCC and CORE, did not require the approval of Kennedy or Johnson for their success. By claiming a part of the Civil War centennial for the civil rights movement, leaders of that movement gained legitimacy and a national audience, but they also had to relinquish some of their agency to others who either disagreed or sought to use their version of history for different ends.

Furthermore, tapping into established modes of commemoration has the potential to reinforce, rather than disrupt, certain aspects of dominant public memories. For example, sociologist Barry Schwartz has argued that in the mid-20th century, black activists began to challenge the "Great Emancipator" legacy of Lincoln.[7] These activists argued that emphasizing the actions of one "great man" turned the struggle for

emancipation into a form of whiteness. King's use of Lincoln's legacy to persuade Kennedy reinforced and added power to the "Great Emancipator" legacy, working against attempts to recover the role that African Americans had played in their own emancipation, complicating further the attempted shift of U.S. public memory.

Social movements that co-opt established commemorations also may find themselves susceptible to appropriation. This was precisely what happened at the CWCC's commemoration of the Emancipation Proclamation centennial, analyzed in Chapter 4. Commemorators at this event lauded the Emancipation Proclamation, and they highlighted qualities of the proclamation—equality and freedom—that aligned with the agenda of the civil rights movement. Kennedy praised African Americans for their progress and event organizers even included Thurgood Marshall in the program. Each of these efforts ostensibly supported the civil rights movement; nevertheless, as my analysis demonstrates, the speakers of the day used the memories that connected the past to the present as a rhetorical argument that advanced America's Cold War efforts. The lesson that this commemorative event seemed to communicate was that the Emancipation Proclamation demonstrated the centrality of "freedom" to America's very identity. Freedom, speakers argued, was precisely what the United States promised to the world in contrast to the Soviet Union that could only offer new forms of enslavement. In this way, civil rights activists' attempts to shift the dominant commemoration narratives were subsumed by official commemorators and used on behalf of another agenda.

This dissertation also prompts questions that extend beyond the civil rights movement and Civil War centennial. For instance, what happens when social movements engage in what David Zarefsky has called a "rhetoric of history," the process of "using

historical premises to justify current actions and beliefs"?[8] Zarefsky contends that when rhetorical scholars examine the rhetoric of history, the "so what?" question is "to ask what such research contributes to a more general understanding of how history is used."[9] Traditionally, scholarship on the "rhetoric of history" views history as a form of evidence for arguments. When social movements engage with history, however, they may do so in ways that extend beyond mere evidentiary ends, asking publics to engage with the present for the ends of justice.

The "Concerned Student 1950" protest that erupted at the University of Missouri in October 2015 aptly demonstrates the rhetorical function of history. A group of Concerned Student 1950 protesters attended the University's Homecoming Parade to protest recent acts of racism that had occurred on the campus. University President Tim Wolfe refused to speak with the protesters, and, in response, the group issued a list of demands to the University. These demands included an official public apology from Wolfe, an increase in the percentage of black faculty and staff, and adoption of race curriculum on campus.[10] The group based its name on the 1950 acceptance of the first black student, Gus T. Ridgel. Their name, they argued, "represents every Black student admitted to the University of Missouri since then and their sentiments regarding race-related affairs affecting their lives at a predominantly white institution."[11] History, then, was mobilized in this case to expand the size of the movement and to encompass more than just black students currently attending the university.

The movement's use of history became a topic of national conversation. For instance, the *New York Times* published an article on Ridgel, which stated,

> [Ridgel] speaks almost matter-of-factly of his past as a path-breaker, and remembers his time at the university, during an era when separate-but-equal was still the law of the land, as surprisingly free of conflict. He said his presence had provoked no racial epithets, like those hurled at the current student body president, who is black, or swastikas scrawled on campus buildings, like the one found in recent weeks.[12]

The accuracy of this statement or the applicability of this experience across the lives of other African Americans in the 1950s is inconsequential. Instead, the "Concerned Student 1950" slogan connected the racial politics at the University of Missouri to the historical struggle for civil rights both nationally and locally. This contextualization showed why the race problems on campus necessitated urgent change. By juxtaposing the past with the present, the organization highlighted the lack of progress over the span of 65 years, in the same way that activists of 1963 drew attention to the lack of civil rights advancement since the Emancipation Proclamation 100 years earlier.

When protest movements engage with history, then, it is possible to reactivate collective memory for hortatory purposes. This can help a movement to create its own backstory or mythos. In the case of the "Concerned Student 1950" movement, the organization's name imbued it with a sense of history that the group itself did not possess. However, by linking their goals to the purported sentiments of black students at the university across time, the contemporary protest group adopted a mythos that granted their organization greater persuasive power. The mobilization of history as a form of argument thus has both publicity and in-group identity formation functions for social movements.

The same is true of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s mobilization of Lincoln's memory to persuade Kennedy to act as a moral leader. King's interpretation of Lincoln's path toward becoming the "Great Emancipator" served both to instruct Kennedy on how to act as president, and it imbued the legacy of the presidency with a moral ethos not necessarily inherent in the office. Furthermore, Johnson's interpretation of the battle of Gettysburg, which portrayed the war as a fight for black equality, had the same effect of giving the place a new, imagined mythos. MacLeish's poem, "At The Lincoln Memorial," did the same for the Potomac River and the Lincoln Memorial. And, Howard Meyer and E. Pauline Myers encouraged moving beyond recuperation of forgotten black histories for the purpose of reenvisioning America as inexorable black and white histories. In each of these instances, civil rights advocates crafted public memories that asked their audience not merely to celebrate the past, but to strive for a more just present and future. Ultimately, then, social movements that engage in commemoration as a rhetorical tactic do so not as a form of evidence. Instead, history for social movements is a means of providing "perspective by incongruity" and of evoking emotion to inspire change.

In 2016, public memories of the Civil War are not as relevant among younger generations. It would be difficult, for example, to imagine what national commemorations might take place at the bicentennial of the Civil War if we continue to evolve as we have until this point. Perhaps we miss something important when the Civil War is no longer immediately resonant in American public memory. We will remember the civil rights movement, but as Kirt H. Wilson has argued, our memories of that movement are often devoid of the elements that could be applicable to current social and

political behavior. Perhaps one way to revive our memory of American history is to reconnect, once again, the history of the Civil War with the history of the civil rights movement. If we act, as the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History did in 2012, then perhaps we will begin to see the connections that start with slavery, move through the Civil War and Jim Crow, rise in the civil rights movement, and culminate in our current moment. This current moment is not an endpoint, but rather part of the continued struggle. We only need to "remember it" as such.

Notes

[1] The exhibition was open to the public through September 2014. It is now widely accessible as a traveling exhibit, an "online exhibition," and educational iPad application.

[2] "Changing America: The Emancipation Proclamation, 1863, and the March on Washington, 1963," The National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C., December 14, 2014 - September 7, 2014.

[3] Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).

[4] David Zarefsky, "Four Senses of Rhetorical History" in *Doing Rhetorical History: Concepts and Cases*, ed. Kathleen J. Turner (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 19-32.

[5] See, for instance Robert Asen and Daniel C. Brouwer, eds. *Counterpublics and the State* (Albany: State University of New York, 2001); Charles E. Morris, III and Stephen Howard Browne, *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest* (State College, PA: Strata Publishing, Inc., 2013); Robert Cox and Christina R. Foust, "Social Movement Rhetoric," in *The SAGE Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*, eds. Andrea A. Lunsford, Kirt H. Wilson, and Rosa A. Eberly (Washington, D.C.: SAGE, 2009), 605-627.

[6] John F. Kennedy, "Report to the American People on Civil Rights," *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*, June 11, 1963, accessed on January 15, 2016, http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/LH8F_0Mzv0e6Ro1yEm74Ng.aspx.

[7] Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era: History and Memory in Late Twentieth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[8] Zarefsky, "Four Senses of Rhetoric," 28.

[9] Zarefsky, "Four Senses of Rhetoric," 28.

[10] "Concerned Student 1-9-5-0 *presents* **List of Demands** *to* The University of Missouri," *Columbia Tribune*, October 20, 2015, accessed February 19, 2016, http://bloximages.newyork1.vip.townnews.com/columbiatribune.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/3/45/345ad844-9f05-5479-9b64-e4b362b4e155/563fd24f5a949.pdf.pdf.

[11] "Concerned Student 1-9-5-0 *presents* **List of Demands** *to* The University of Missouri."

[12] Michael Wines, "A Real Missouri 'Concerned Student 1950' Speaks, at Age 89," *New York Times*, November 10, 2015, accessed February 19, 2106, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/11/us/an-original-missouri-concerned-student-1950-speaks-at-age-89.html?_r=0.

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