

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

THE FIRST CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE EQUAL RIGHTS LEAGUE IN MOVEMENT CULTURE

AMANDA MARIE FELLMETH

Spring 2011

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for a baccalaureate degree
in History and International Politics
with honors in History

Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Dr. William Blair
Liberal Arts Professor of American History
Director, Richards Civil War Center
Editor, The Journal of the Civil War Era
Thesis Supervisor

Dr. Catherine Wanner
Professor of History and Religious Studies
Honors Adviser, Department of History and Religious Studies

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

Abstract

This work examines the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League, a political organization active between 1864 and the late 1870s. Affiliated with the National Equal Rights League, it was the most active of all of its chapters. Modern scholarship tends to begin its study of the Civil Rights movement only as early as the turn of the 20th century. This project extends that study to the middle of the Civil War and through the drama of Reconstruction. The Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League was a politically savvy, self-aware, and sophisticatedly organized group that, so far, has only been studied in terms of recording its historical facts. Work has yet to be done on how it functioned and the tools it employed. This study uses methodology from political science to understand how the group fought for its cause. I apply a political framework to the group that studies the way it operated in terms of several factors used to study political and social movements.

This thesis employs three factors to analyze the League: issue framing, resource mobilization, and political opportunity. When examining the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League through these lenses, it becomes clear that it was far more politically sophisticated than any previous historical literature has given it credit for. The league presented Congress with petitions, held mass demonstrations and rallies, and interacted with key politicians. They actively created an image that they knew would be most sympathetic to the leading politicians of the day. They employed public media, such as newspapers, to expose as many people as possible to their message, and they had a hierarchical, centralized structure that created a support and resource base that allowed them to accomplish many goals.

Upon a quick examination of the league's activity, one could easily recognize strong parallels between this first Civil Rights movement and such groups as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the 1950s. Both movements engaged in some of the same tactics. However, such fundamental differences between the two groups that disallow simply considering the modern Civil Rights movement a simple continuation of the work done by the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League.

Table of Contents

| | | |
|-------|--|----|
| I. | Introduction | 1 |
| | a. Overview of Social Movement Structure | 2 |
| II. | Chapter 1: Background | 5 |
| III. | Chapter 2: Issue Framing | 16 |
| IV. | Chapter 3: Resource Mobilization | 34 |
| V. | Chapter 4: Political Opportunities | 51 |
| VI. | Chapter 5: The Modern Movement in Comparison | 65 |
| VII. | Conclusion | 81 |
| VIII. | End Matter | 83 |

Introduction

Imagine you see a group of people, they are black, and they are holding a rally in a Philadelphia public park. They discuss the right to legal protection and the end to segregation in public places, such as schools, hotels, restaurants, and public transportation. There is a man speaking at a podium, a large crowd that applauds almost continuously. Men and women wave banners with patriotic slogans and angry ones that point out injustices. Supporters are mingling in the crowd, talking with attendees and handing out flyers. Could you guess what year this is? What decade? Would you guess 1964?

It is 1864.

The group that is protesting is the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League, and it is fighting for the right to vote for black Americans. On February 3, 1870, the 15th Amendment to the United States Constitution was officially ratified. Now, “the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”¹ Universal male suffrage became a reality, but it was a far from stable one. The struggle for racial equality in America, which came to a head in the Civil War, was long from over in 1870. There were, at that time, several groups that tried to forge a more equal nation; a nation that granted and honored freedoms regardless of color. One such group, a remarkable group that used sophisticated political maneuvering, was the Equal Rights League.

¹ US Constitution, US Constitution Online, <http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html#Am13>, January 24, 2011.

Historical studies of the struggle of black Americans to gain the franchise has largely focused on the movements of the early and middle 20th Century, which is usually referred to as the civil rights movement, and which I will call the modern civil rights movement. What is so unique about the Equal Rights League, and the Pennsylvania chapter of that league, is that the organization attacked the same issues as the modern movement much earlier than commonly studied civil rights groups, such as the NAACP, and in a savvy, smart, and self-aware manner. There are some surprising parallels between the civil rights movements of the 1860s -1870s and the more modern civil rights movement. While there are striking similarities, however, there are even more striking differences, in terms of political maneuvering, ideological framing, and resource mobilization. This thesis differs from prior scholarship by providing a study of a very understudied group, the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League (PSERL) through the methodology of social movement framework practiced in political science. I end by making comparisons between this group and groups active in the 1950s and 1960s, such as the NAACP and SNCC, and show that these movements were not a mere continuation of the PSERL, but a vastly different social-political movement, that simply had similar goals.

Overview of Social Movement Structure

Most social movements that are studied by political scientists are examined through the lens of movement culture analysis. In analyzing any social movement, from any point in time, there are several factors that help define a movement, and its success. Those factors include issue framing, resource mobilization, and political opportunities.² The PSERL has never been

² Banaszak, Lee Ann, "Introduction to the U.S. Women's Movement in Global Perspective," *The U.S. Women's Movement in Global Perspective*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, New York, 2006, p 17.

studied as it relates to these three factors. Each of the following chapters will apply one of these factors of social movement study to the PSERL.

Issue Framing, sometimes referred to as ideological framing, packaging, or simply framing, is the way in which a group presents its demands to several different audiences. How did the PSERL frame its concerns and demands? In other words, how did it package its message to the public and to the politicians it was trying to influence. The answer, of course depends on the targeted audience. Did it use different language or methods when reaching out to the public than when addressing Congress? Were its frames similar when addressing different audiences? What about its arguments, did those vary? These are all questions that fall under issue-framing in social movement studies.

Resource Mobilization refers to how groups use the resources that they have available to them. These include physical and human resources. What types of physical space could they use? How much money did they have at their disposal? How and where did they meet, and get to those meeting places? What did they use to spread their message? The personnel resources of any group are its heart and soul. They are the people who dedicate their time and energy to serving the cause. Human beings, however, are not normally moved to action simply by the existence of a group. "Potential actors must be convinced of the legitimacy of participation. They must be persuaded to act."³ There are many ways groups persuade people to join their ranks. Besides recruitment practices, resource mobilization also refers to the study of the standout figures in the group and their influence. How does the group recognize and interact

³ Robnett, Belinda, "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965: Gender, Leadership, and Micromobilization," *The American Journal of Sociology*, 101(6) (May, 1996), p 1663.

with its leaders? How do the leaders represent and work for the group? What is the effect of outstanding personalities or cult of personalities within the organization?

Political opportunities refer to the political and social atmosphere in which a group is working. What laws exist that either help or hinder the group? What societal tendencies or mores must the group combat or awaken? How does the group “play the game” of politics, and use political actors, or not? What types or examples of opportunities change during the organizations period of activity? In terms of the PSERL, political opportunities include all the laws and constitutional amendments that kept them from voting and otherwise discriminated against them as well as societal characteristics such as racism and anti-Confederate opinions.

An organization, however, is as much a function of the people who are active within it, as it is of the actions it takes. Knowing the racial and gender make-up of any group is crucial to understanding it and how it operated. The place of women within social movements is significant and can shed light on them. Racially, the PSERL was composed entirely of black citizens, although they did work with key white political actors. Women seemed to have taken an active role in the PSERL. The PSERL also benefited from the talents of exceptional leaders, including James Forten, Jacob White, and Octavius Catto.

The following chapters begin with a short discussion of the history of the PSERL and its make-up. A study then follows of the facets of social movement functioning; issue framing, resource mobilization, and political opportunities. Each characteristic is applied to the PSERL and analyzed. The last chapter of the work focuses on a comparison between the PSERL and the modern civil rights movement.

Chapter 1: Background and Framework

Founded in October 1864 by charter at the National Convention for Colored Men, the National Equal Rights League formed for the express purpose of, “prosecuting such means as are likely to aid in annulling all laws and usages discriminating against people on account of their color.”⁴ The first President of the national league was John M. Langston,⁵ a leader and innovator in the black community. He pioneered black involvement in politics, including serving as the first black elected official, as a township clerk in Ohio, and one of the first black United States Representatives, elected in 1888. He was also instrumental in founding Howard University.⁶ The National league soon endowed various state and local auxiliaries with the same mission as the national organization, with suffrage for African Americans as the top priority.

The PSERL was founded in a way that most social and protest movements in general were not. It was chartered. This all-black organization was created from above, with a national structure that founded and controlled, albeit loosely, state and local level chapters, to help promote the interests of black Americans. This group’s approach to the problem of legal racial prejudice was uniquely mainstream, in terms of political participation and traditional political activities, like petition signing. Blacks Americans at this time existed in a world where they were largely excluded from the political process. Many, including those in Pennsylvania, had lost the

⁴ Nesbit, William, “Suggestions of the President of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League, to the Colored People of Pennsylvania.” The Leon Gardiner Collection of American Negro Historical Society records, Collection # 008, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP).

⁵ “The National Equal Rights League,” *The Christian Recorder*,. 10 December 1864.

⁶ “John Langston,” Heroes of the Republican Party, http://www.gop.com/index.php/issues/heroes/john_langston/ January 21, 2011.

right to vote and could not use the ballot as a means to change their situations. Yet the National Equal Rights League, with seemingly no legitimate political resources, decided to work within the established order to change it.

People throughout history who are put into this situation usually resort to non-mainstream methods to express their desires. They work from outside the political system to change it. Some groups resort to violence to achieve their protest goals, and others simply act loudly and publicly to draw attention to their agenda. Many Civil Rights groups throughout history have chosen this path. Black Americans in Alabama and other southern states organized sit-ins in restaurants or women went on hunger strikes. The Black Panthers advocated a more militant approach to equality. These methods are not part of the regular political process in the United States. The PSERL, however, did the opposite. Its members confronted this system, which had legally blocked them, head-on and through legitimately recognized means. It played the political game in ways neither its contemporaries nor its decedents did. It used the Republican Party and various Republican politicians as allies to push for initiatives in the legislative arena. It developed lobbying bodies and used the mass media to garner support from its soon to be constituent base.

After 1864, the National body soon formed state chapters that were hierarchically integrated bodies, with some areas of autonomy. The most active and powerful of these state leagues was the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League (PSERL). It was also formed in October 1864 and its members elected John Peck as their first president, and William Nesbit, Rev. Elisha Weaver, and three others as vice presidents. Jacob C. White Jr., Octavius V. Catto, and George

B. Vashon were elected as secretaries for the PSERL.⁷ White, Catto, Vashon, and Nesbit represented the three main areas of Pennsylvania and ensured that all parts of the state were represented in the decision making process, at least ceremoniously. Catto and White were from Philadelphia, Vashon was a Pittsburgh native, and Nesbit represented Altoona, in central Pennsylvania.

These were prominent men from their communities with careers mostly in the intellectual fields. Vashon was a writer with a law degree who was also the President of both Avery and Oberlin Colleges before and directly after the Civil War. He spent the later part of the 19th century teaching at the all-black Alcorn University, which was founded in Mississippi during Reconstruction.⁸ Similarly, Jacob C. White was raised in a wealthy black home that summered and socialized with whites in Philadelphia and New Jersey. He was educated at the Institute for Colored Youth, a training college for future black schoolteachers. He rose through the ranks of the Philadelphia public school system and was principle of the Roberts Vaux Consolidated School from 1864-1896. He was a well-respected leader in the school system. W. E. B. DuBois even requested White's advice and opinions of his book, *The Philadelphia Negro*.⁹ Less is known of William Nesbit, except that he was a native of Altoona and that he was well educated. He was adamantly opposed to the colonization movement, which would have created large-scale resettlement of blacks in Liberia. He lived for a time in Liberia and published a paper, "Four

⁷ Davis, Hugh, "The Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League and the Northern Black Struggle for Legal Equality, 1864-1877," *The Pennsylvania Magazine for History and Biography*, Vol. 126, No. 4 (2002), p 613.

⁸ Hanchett, Catherine M, "George Boyer Vashon, 1824-1878: Black Educator, Poet, Fighter for Equal Rights," *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, 68(4) pp 333-349, pp 335-7.

⁹ Silcox, Harry C, "Philadelphia Negro Educator: Jacob C. White, Jr 1837-1902," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 97(1) pp 75-98, pp 75-78.

Months in Liberia,” about his reasons for opposing colonization.¹⁰ Catto was a high-profile political activist and staunch Lincoln supporter. He also attended the Institute for Colored Youth, although later than White.¹¹

The League within Pennsylvania also created auxiliary branches¹² in counties across the state. These branches were connected chapters that communicated with each other and the state league. Some of the branches were named simply by their county of origin, and others, particularly the chapters in counties such as Philadelphia with more than one branch, named their branches after famous blacks or abolitionists, such as the Lincoln Equal Rights League in the First District of Philadelphia¹³ and the John Brown League, which occupied the 5th District.¹⁴ Other branches continued to form from 1865 through 1867. The Altoona League was founded in June 1865, and the Bethlehem Equal Rights League was founded in April, 1866.¹⁵ It is difficult to determine exactly how many chapters existed, but we do know that thirty-five counties were represented with members and their own chapters.¹⁶

¹⁰ “William Nesbit Replies,” Afrolumens Project Online http://www.afrolumens.org/rising_free/colonization03.html January 23, 2011.

¹¹ Smith, V. Chapman, “The Triumph and Tragedy of Octavius V. Catto,” US History Online. <http://www.ushistory.org/people/catto.htm> January 23, 2011.

¹² Correspondence, Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), box 26, folders 4-6, HSP.

¹³ Petition, RG 46, box SEN 40A-H10.2, folder 2, The National Archives.

¹⁴ Letter, 6 February 1865, Leon Gardiner Collection, 0008. Box 26, folder 6, HSP.

¹⁵ Ibid, 12 June, 1865; Ibid, 3 April 1866.

¹⁶ Nesbit, William. “Petition to Congress,” December 1, 1868. RG 46, Box SEN 40A-H10.2, folder 3, The National Archives.

In order to maintain contact among chapters, plan strategies, and enforce discipline, the PSERL held several annual conferences. Delegates from all the county branches attended these conferences and produced minutes and plans of action for the upcoming year. These conferences usually lasted for several days and divided delegates into sub-committees, much like committees in Congress, to brainstorm and address specific issues. The attendees discussed plans for upcoming events, ways to increase membership, and how to raise funds and structure the budget.¹⁷ The fact that the league's conferences were not merely propaganda events or large rallies with one or two main speakers highlights the efficiency of its meetings. The members identified main areas of concern, decided each delegate's talents and placed each person in the appropriate sub-committee so they could fashion realistic ideas for reaching goals. It took an incredible amount of oversight at the state level to make sure that each committee's ideas were put into action by the various county chapters.

The various levels of the league maintained a semi-autonomous relationship with the national entity. The Constitution of the National Equal Rights League gave the state branches the power to, "at their discretion, employ agents and issue such documents as they may deem conducive," and to form, "such subordinate organizations as they deem proper."¹⁸ The county branches in Pennsylvania had similar latitude, although they were required to send quarterly dues to the state organization.¹⁹ These dues ranged from \$2 to \$7 per chapter per year based

¹⁷ "Proceedings of the Second Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League," Minutes, The Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 12, folder 4, HSP.

¹⁸ "The National League, Executive Board National Equal Rights League, Philadelphia," *The Christian Recorder*, 7 January 1865.

¹⁹ Letters, The Leon Gardiner Collection, HSP.

on the size of the county chapter. Because most county chapters had about fifteen to seventy members, the dues were almost symbolic in nature and would not have prevented participation on an economic level. These dues were sent annually with a letter to the state body that contained the names of the elected officers for that year. The county chapters also determined what issues to tackle by what was decided at the statewide conventions.

In this hierarchical structure, directions on policies and political strategies came from above and were then carried out by the local entities. One example, in particular, highlights the nature of this working relationship. In 1868, William Nesbit, president of the PSERL, wrote to the group's leading secretary, Jacob C. White, about the importance of using petitions to gain leverage in Congress. He wrote that it was, "of the utmost importance that we should have petitions ready, circulated, signed, and in the hands of friendly Congressmen on the first day of the upcoming session."²⁰ These instructions were followed closely, resulting in dozens of petitions from the PSERL to the Congress. The PSERL had a clear system for identifying goals and implementing plans for their realization. This letter reveals yet another aspect of the inner-workings of this group. The president did not directly involve himself with persuading the Board to adopt measures. He would suggest, encourage, or demand something be done. This message was relayed to the secretaries, whose responsibility it was to see whatever measure through to completion.

The structure of an organization is not the only important factor to be studied: the types of people who make up both the leadership and rank-and-file provide insights into a group. For

²⁰ Ibid, Box 26, Folder 6, 25 November, 1868.

the PSERL, its racial makeup and the level of female activity provided key characteristics for the organization. Although the PSERL technically did not restrict membership to black citizens, the membership consisted predominantly of African Americans. For example, in public calls to the citizenry to attend rallies and conventions held by the PSERL, the common opening line was, “to this session the League cordially invites every lover of legal equality, every lover of complete enfranchisement, and everyone who desires to see the rights of the citizen exercised equally in all the States of the Union. The League makes no discrimination.”²¹ While this sentiment was true, and the PSERL would probably have welcomed any member, regardless of race, its targeted audience was the black population. The circulars, the broadsides, and most of the printed and published material of the PSERL were addressed, “To the Colored People,” of the state, or of Pennsylvania, or of the nation, etc.²² According to one scholar, this may have resulted from a sentiment common in many black organizations during that time that, “societies organized and managed by blacks were necessary as instruments for protection, pride, unity, and control over their own destiny in a hostile environment.”²³ In practice, both the leaders and the members of the organization were entirely black, although they did reach out to and work with key white political figures occasionally, which will be discussed later.

In the discussion of the history of the struggle for enfranchisement, in particular, it is always necessary to think in terms not only of race but also of gender. It is necessary, therefore, to study the PSERL in terms of its work, if any, for women’s right to vote and its practice of

²¹ “To the Colored People of Pennsylvania,” Circular, from the Bureau of Penn’a State E.R. League, 25 June 1868, Leon Gardiner Collection, (0008), box 16, folder 4, HSP.

²² Ibid.; Letters, Leon Gardiner Collection, HSP.

²³ Davis, “The Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League,” p. 618.

including women in the group in decision-making roles. The PSERL had an excellent track record of including women in leadership roles; however, just as in most white political organizations, except of course expressly feminist groups, women's right to vote was not included in the league's main objectives.

Nevertheless, women had a strong presence in the PSERL. Several branches had women officers and many had women among its working ranks. The Catto League elected Mary Burlez as Recording Secretary. Its members also appointed two solicitors, one of whom was Mary Harris, and a three-person advising committee, including Harriet Duvaul and Anna Fry.²⁴ It was not the only branch with women in leadership positions. The Altoona League elected Eliza May Nesbit as Recording Secretary and Sarah Nesbit and Maria Alexander as members of the Board of Control, which was a body responsible for vetting speakers and events prior to their happening.²⁵ The county chapter that had the best representation of women, however, was the Garnett league, based in Harrisburg, which had, "four vice presidents... Mrs. Annie E. Amos, and Miss L.C. Williams, and treasurer, Miss Mary Williams, a lady of rare musical taste and a desirable aid in every movement that advances the cause of her people."²⁶

That women served at all on the boards indicates that the PSERL was at least open to women's involvement in more than a membership capacity. These women held positions that wielded actual power, and so their perspectives and ideas were sure to be heard by the chapters as a whole. Women served in such influential positions as members of the advising

²⁴ Annual Report of the Catto League. The Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 26, folder 1. HSP.

²⁵ Ibid. Annual Report of the Altoona League. 12 June, 1865. HSP.

²⁶ "Letter from Harrisburg" *The Christian Recorder*. October 7, 1865.

committee and solicitors, which required them to go out into the community to garner support. Furthermore, these women's positions were undoubtedly influential, as these board positions included the right to vote on all league matters.²⁷ Women also constituted a significant presence in the rank and file of the branches. Many of the petitions that were submitted to Congress were signed by many women. One such petition, from the Franklin League in Philadelphia, which asks specifically for, "equal exercise of the elective franchise," includes signers such as Mary Schetcafe, Emily Wright, Mary Potts, Annie Smith, Mary Smith, and Harriet Harris, and dozens of other women.²⁸ Another petition, from the Lincoln League of Philadelphia, asks for the, "removal of all legislation which is anti-republican in character to members of any race," has signers such as Elizabeth Backwood, Eliza Davis, Isabel Howard, and other women. The signers of this particular petition, in fact, were roughly fifty percent women.²⁹ The different capacities that women held within the PSERL testified to their influence. Women served as regular members, as elected officials, and as appointees. Women's involvement seems to be a natural and unforced facet of the league. They were both elected and appointed leaders, indicating that both the leaders and the general membership supported their involvement.

However, the league limited its support of women's rights: it never did come out directly in favor of granting women the right to vote in national or local political races. It is difficult to determine a concrete reason why women's rights were excluded from the agenda,

²⁷ *Constitution and By-Laws of the Pennsylvania State Chapter of the National Equal Rights League*, October 1864, The Leon Gardiner Collection, HSP.

²⁸ Petition, RG233, Box HR40A-H10.3, folder 2, The National Archives.

²⁹ Petition, RG 46, SEN40A-H10.2, folder 2, The National Archives.

but several hypotheses do stand out. The PSERL may have seen women's political participation and voting as something that would naturally occur with the passage of the 15th Amendment, which would account for the lack of specific language aimed at women's enfranchisement. Perhaps, however, women simply helped out in hopes they would be included, or because they thought any victory for black enfranchisement, even if it was only the men who could vote, was better than none at all. Supporting this second theory is the fact that after the 15th Amendment was ratified, giving only men the right to vote, the PSERL moved on and switched its focus to other political areas.

Another possible reason for the action of women is tied to the ideal of "moral uplift" in the black community. Moral uplift represented a strand of thinking that African Americans needed to raise their own standards of moral conduct to gain equality by proving they were hard working and decent people, just like whites, and would not upset the social hierarchy. Women held a particularly sensitive position in this dynamic. In this type of work, women, such as the members of a committee known as the Board of Control, would work to ensure that the league's activities were always reflective of a moral high ground. Women in this role would check into the backgrounds and other political and religious beliefs of the proposed speakers for events. "They often engaged in activism that conformed to White republican notions about the proper roles for women. It was a form of activism that was not particularly threatening to the status quo."³⁰ This idea supports the notion that women absented themselves a little more than they normally would have because they wanted to be seen as good domestic wives, just

³⁰ Alexander, Leslie, M. *African or American? Black Identity and Political Activism in New York City, 1784-1861*, Chicago; U of Illinois P, 2008, p 67.

like white women. But there were subtleties imbedded in this seeming acceptance of a secondary role. Just by asserting that they deserved the mantle of respectability afforded white women, African Americans challenged the social reality. And many of these same women did upset the status quo by going out into the communities and publicly advocating for the league's goals. In other words, defining and explaining women's roles in the PSERL is made difficult by seeming contradictions to every rule. Perhaps, there is no one answer that can capture the rationale for action held by all women.

The PSERL was a dynamic movement that challenged the established social order in a time of great change in America. Its structure was inclusive and highly organized and its methods were effective in achieving its goals. The rest of this work will delve deeper into the various aspects of social movements, issue framing, resource mobilization, and political opportunities, and the way the league carried out or used them.

Chapter 2: Issue Framing

On Monday, December 14th, 1868, snow fell as 100 members of the United States Senate sat in chambers on Capitol Hill. They discussed issues of the economy, Reconstruction, and proposed amendments to the Constitution. Charles Sumner, a Republican leader in the area of Equal Rights and a well-respected veteran in Congress, stood to give an address. He cleared his throat after being recognized by the President of the Senate and began to read aloud a petition sent to him from the Pennsylvania Equal Rights League. "We come before you asking only for rights, privileges are not in the category." As the strong and persuasive language filled this chamber, the other Senators began to take notice. They remarked at the eloquence and intelligence of these words, written by leaders of a race of people most of them had considered unintelligent and inferior. Sumner continued, "This color, which mantles our cheeks, and has subjected us to every species of outrage, but has never been sullied by covering the brow of a single traitor." Perhaps the members were moved by the league's discussion of the loyalty of African Americans in the recent war. Perhaps the moment helped feed the conviction, at least among Republican senators, that skin color did not describe a man.

Perhaps.

Certainly ending slavery was a massive social, political, and economic revolution that many in the United States resisted bitterly, even after peace was declared and the 13th Amendment was passed. Many people in the United States opposed giving black men the right to vote as well. In fact, the ability of blacks in America to vote would face a backlash later in the century that would not overcome until deep into the twentieth century. In order to gain that right to vote, enshrined in the 15th Amendment, the PSERL undertook a massive campaign to

change the minds of the men who had the power to enact the legislation. In order to accomplish this, it needed to conduct issue framing--a process by which a group presents its social demands or goals to an identified audience in a way designed to effect change. Framing goes beyond simply spreading the word about social desires or goals. "Movements function as carriers and transmitters of mobilizing beliefs and ideas, to be sure; but they are also actively engaged in the production of meaning for participants, antagonists, and observers."³¹ Simply put, movement leaders frame their ideas, goals, and agendas to define the problem and solution in ways that are meaningful for potential participants. Framing is important because it serves so many functions for both observers and participants in terms of activity and recruiting. It is this "production of meaning" that is most applicable to the PSERL, as it was involved in producing, for both white and black Americans, what it means to be a democracy in terms of inclusion in the political process.

To understand why a group frames its issues the way it does, one must know the social problems the group wished to change and the historical context in which it operated. The PSERL was chartered to combat legal and social racism in Pennsylvania and the United States. There were several main areas on which it focused the most of its energies. These issues were, in roughly chronological order, the segregation of streetcars in Philadelphia--which is discussed primarily in the chapter on political opportunities-- enfranchisement for blacks, and equal educational opportunities.

³¹ Snow, David A; Benford, Robert D. "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization." *International Social Movement Research*. Vol.1. 1988. pp 197-217. P 197

Perhaps the most difficult issue that the PSERL, the National Equal Rights League, and all black movements of the time, faced was the struggle for black enfranchisement. This fight continued until 1870, when the 15th Amendment was passed. It would continue in various forms and fashions, however, for decades to come in order to make the voting system truly equal for both black and white men. Winning the vote for black men was the issue that the PSERL was officially chartered to conquer.³² In a poignant, multi-page letter to Congress, the PSERL spelled out its demands for the strength of equality under the law that can only be granted by full participation in the voting process. The petitions had many purposes, but its main idea can be generally summed up as “We come here asking nothing but rights, favors are not in the category. It is rights founded upon truth and law that we desire, as against color which is a simple accident.”³³ They framed their right to vote as a matter of justice, of legal responsibility to citizens who paid taxes and were loyal to their country. As such, the ballot was their right.

The third issue that the league tackled, which they focused primarily on after the 15th Amendment was passed, was equality of schooling. Members of the league disagreed over many aspects of school equality. One group believed that only black teachers could properly teach black students, and that, “colored children make greater advancement under the charge of colored teachers than they do under white teachers.”³⁴ Accordingly, they favored separate

³² Davis, “The Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League,” p 612;

³³ To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives,” RG 233, Box HR 39A-14.2, folder 3, National Archives.

³⁴ “Proceedings of the State Equal Rights Convention,” February 15, 1865, The Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 14, folder 6, HSP.

schools and demanded that those schools receive the same support as white schools. Many schoolteachers themselves favored segregation, fearing the loss of their jobs if the school systems were taken over by white officials.³⁵ This position echoed social struggles going on in the former Confederacy where the freed people sought to create churches consisting of primarily African Americans.

Other members maintained that only in multi-colored classrooms could black children receive the education to which they were entitled. These activists believed that separate schools could never, in fact and practice, be equal, which was, “evidenced by the many years of experience our people have had with inadequate ‘separate but equal’ institutions.”³⁶ Eventually, history would side with the anti-segregationists and most blacks would come to accept that only in desegregated schools could their children get the best education.

The league was successful in achieving school de-segregation, at least to a certain degree. Its members brought cases to court, which are discussed later, that were successful in outlawing separate but equal schools in several districts. Eventually, the league would see a bill pass through the Pennsylvania Assembly, sponsored by Senator James Still of Erie, which outlawed segregation in schools in 1881.³⁷ Unfortunately, the school issue was one that would not be decided nationally until almost 100 years later, with the landmark *Brown v. Board of*

³⁵ Edward Price Jr, “School Segregation in Nineteenth Century Pennsylvania,” *The Journal of Pennsylvania History*, pp 121-137, p 128.

³⁶ “Proceedings of the State Equal Rights Convention,” February 15, 1865, The Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 14, folder 6, HSP.

³⁷ Price, “School Segregation,” P 134.

Education case. Even in Pennsylvania, it took several trips to the State Supreme Court before the education bill of 1881 was given the teeth it needed to be enforced in reality.

The league employed sophisticated issue framing in its efforts to achieve all these goals. There are several facets of framing that help to determine how effective it can be in terms of generating support. The first factor is the completeness or thoroughness of the framing effort. The second is the position of the stated goal within the larger belief system of the target audience, both potential participants and antagonists, and the relevance it holds to their real lives. The third is the cycles of protest through which the frames revolve.³⁸ What did the group do to get its message out to the public? What media did it use? The league used several modes of communicating its ideas. Most commonly, the members presented their arguments to Congress in a series of incredibly eloquent petitions, which stressed their loyalty to the nation during the Civil War, the logic of including the black male population in the elective franchise, and the Constitutional basis for their right to vote. “What desire at your hands gentlemen, is simply Justice [sic]. We wish to be secure in our persons wherever we may go throughout this union, and we wish to be politically and legally equal with our white fellow citizens,”³⁹ proclaimed the league, in one of its petitions to Congress. Besides sending petitions to the National Congress, the league published posters that explained its positions and called for action. These posters were printed by the national league and used by most of the state

³⁸ Price, “School Segregation,” p 199

³⁹ “To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the United States,” RG 233, Box HR 39A-14.2, folder 3, National Archives.

leagues. They hung in meeting halls and churches throughout the area, were endorsed by the presidents of both levels of the league, and had clear calls for action.⁴⁰

In addition to petitions and posters, the league used newspapers. Some newspapers of the time, including the *Philadelphia Inquirer*--a white-owned, Republican Party paper supported the league and printed positive articles. The stories that the league itself created for publication, however, are most important to examine in terms of framing because the league controlled the message in these sources. For example, the *Christian Recorder* provided a forum for the PSERL. It had the benefits of wide readership among African Americans and the backing of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Here, the League published minutes of meetings, calls for conventions, petitions, instructions and locations for voting on delegates to the national conventions, and success of other league branches in other states.⁴¹ This outlet allowed league leaders to choose what information was released and how their positions were argued. The league also used demonstrations and rallies. It is difficult to know exactly what was said at these rallies, as modern recording devices did not exist, but through newspaper accounts of the events, we can learn about what was discussed and how the league presented itself to the public, especially by deploying religious rhetoric and patriotic symbols.

Besides highlighting the physical aspects of framing that the league employed, it is important to discuss the three facets of effective framing and how the PSERL carried out each one. The completeness or thoroughness of the frame is very important to its success. Frames

⁴⁰ "Call for a National Convention to the Colored Men of the United States," Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 6, HSP.

⁴¹ *The Christian Recorder*, 1865-1881, HSP.

must actively build consensus among the actors of the movement and go a step further by providing a plan of action or ideas for achieving the stated goals. It is this second step that was more important for the league. Most African Americans needed little persuasion to support the ideal of greater equality. However, they had differing views over how to achieve the goals. Three framing tasks evolve out of these two needs: a diagnosis of some aspect of life that is a problem and needs changing; a proposed solution that specifies what needs to be done; and a rationale for engaging in corrective action, or a “call to arms.”⁴² If the group’s framing efforts successfully incorporate all three of these functions, it is likely to gather support to the movement. For example, the modern civil rights movement diagnosed the social problem faced by African Americans as discrimination in public places. Leaders proposed a solution that included eradicating separate by equal accommodations, and their call to arms was the idea that the color of a person’s skin should not determine social opportunity.

Certainly the PSERL engaged in defining a social condition that was a problem, although there was hardly a need to enlist people to support greater gains in equality. This facet of the political science model of studying social movements is certainly less applicable in the case of the PSERL, as blacks needed little persuasion to act. All African Americans lived in the reality of discrimination: the league only needed to tap into those conditions and remind African Americans of the problems they faced. Black people could not vote and were prohibited from protecting their rights within the democracy. As one call for a convention of African Americans put it, “The partial or total exclusion of colored citizens from the exercise of the elective franchise and other citizen rights ... especially demands and ought to receive the continued

⁴² Snow, et al, “Ideology,” P 199

consideration of every colored man.”⁴³ The league published this argument in poster form. Voting was not the only issue for the league. They contended that their children were not receiving decent treatment in schools and that all colored people were being denied the right of access to places that should be open to them, such as streetcars and juries.⁴⁴

The proposed solution, in the PSERL’s mind, was the vote. The PSERL argued that an extension of the franchise to African American men would guarantee that they could safeguard their rights and privileges as citizens. Only through “the vote, that right that all free men have under a democratic system of government,” can they protect themselves. This was the clear, singular solution to their injustice. [And it was also a policy that intersected with stated goals of white abolitionists such as Salmon P. Chase.] While there existed solutions to their secondary problems, such as discrimination in schools, those solutions, including equal funding, could only be achieved when African American men could organize and pressure politicians as a legitimate constituent bloc. In this way, the league built consensus on action. Surely, black people needed no convincing that they lacked political equality, but the league was successful in convincing them that focusing on the right to vote was the correct solution to their problems.

The way the league framed the call for action also contained significant religious tones. The league, in its posters, called for each member to be a “missionary in his own right,” because, “God has no tendency to take the side of the oppressor.”⁴⁵ It was not simply men who

⁴³ “Call for a National Convention to the Colored Men of the United States,” Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 6, HSP.

⁴⁴ “To the Colored People of Pennsylvania,” Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 6, HSP.

⁴⁵ Nesbit, William, “Suggestions,” Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 5, HSP.

wanted colored citizens to have the right to vote, God wanted it to, as the league's framing went. The league thus framed their rationale for action in both the idea of political necessity and on the grounds of religious right. The league employed religion in its rhetorical strategy to argue that God was behind this push for equality. Its petitions and posters are also filled with lines that attributed all the league's power and ability to accomplish change to God. For example, "God grant that you will not allow this course of wrong," and, "Gentlemen, the voice of God invites you to do justice to the brave black men."⁴⁶ The league made "claim to the sympathy and aid of the Christian world in our efforts."⁴⁷ God, not men, demands political equality, as they advocated that "its not us you are listening to (or giving in to), but God." The league called on God for aid and gave due credit, if you will, to God for its victories. In the massively religious black community, this argument would have surely drawn supporters to active participation in the PSERL.

The second facet of framing vital to the success of the movement relates to how the issue fits into the worldview of the participants. The active framing needs to place the issue in a position of central importance to both the participants and those who have the power to change the desired circumstance. Black people in America knew what the problems were. They lived with them every day and felt their impact in their personal, day-to-day lives. The issue then for the league was to convince those in power that their concerns, namely voting and equality, were equally important to politicians as they were to black people. If those with the

⁴⁶ "To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, In Congress Assembled," Petition, RG 233, Box HR 39A-14.2, folder 3, The National Archives.

⁴⁷ "Appeal to the Colored People of the State of Pennsylvania," December 24, 1864, *The Christian Recorder*.

power to make changes do not see the issue as relevant in their worldview, then framing would have been unsuccessful.

The league's framing tactics were sophisticated in that they used a noticeably different tone and message when addressing white Congressmen than when addressing black adherents. When addressing black people, the league focused on persuading them of the correctness of their methods. As mentioned, the league did not have to convince blacks that injustices existed, rather that its proposed solution was the best way to address those injustices.

But the league's approach to packaging ideas shifted depending on the racial complexion of the audience. When it addressed white people who did not hold positions of political power, the league focused on black people's loyalty to the nation during the Civil War. This obviously intended to capitalize on anti-Confederate sentiment by contrasting African American support for the country—including as soldiers—as opposed to the traitors who had caused so much bloodshed. In public posters and announcements, which could be read by any person passing by it on the street or reading a newspaper, league leaders declared, "During our whole history [the league is referring to the black community's history within the United States] we have been loyal to the country and its cause,"⁴⁸ underscoring that black citizens have fought for rights and should use this as a tool to gain the franchise. Other posters reminded passersby that, "you have given 10,000 braves to fight the battle of the republic against treason Fifty thousand of our brothers sleep in death, and thousands walk about maimed and crippled in

⁴⁸ Nesbit, William, "Suggestions," (0008), HSP.

defense of our country and its flag.”⁴⁹ The league framed the issue of gaining the right to vote in terms of loyalty and patriotic action, giving the black community a point around which it could rally. The leaders agreed that the black activists “to have their energies centered onto an organized and systematic argument, which they may employ when dealing with a white man. Loyalty should thus be it.”⁵⁰ The framing issue was not, in this case, what is the problem, but what is the best argument to confront the problem.

The league also framed its call for suffrage, when addressing the black public, as a means to other goals, such as equality in education and in the legal system. “The right secured of voting, irrespective of color, will necessarily restore to us other rights of which we are now deprived.”⁵¹ By framing the goal of enfranchisement as a tool to achieve other goals, the league targeted a broader base of support, including those black people who may be more concerned with equality of education, for example. In the 1860s, blacks in Philadelphia represented an economically marginalized group. Barring a few exceptions, such as James Forten, a wealthy sail-maker, black people usually held the least well-paid positions. They lived in the worst neighborhoods and had the least amount of leisure time and activities.⁵² Black people might be more concerned with these day-to-day issues, such as economic and educational fairness vis-à-vis something like voting, but framing helped the broader black population base, including

⁴⁹ “To the Colored People of Pennsylvania,” Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 5, HSP.

⁵⁰ Letter, William Nesbit to Octavius Catto, July 2, 1863, Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 5, HSP.

⁵¹ Nesbit, William, “Call for a National Convention,” Leon Gardiner Collection (0008) Box 16, folder 6, HSP.

⁵² Weigley, Russel F, “The Border City in Civil War: 1854-1865,” *Philadelphia, a 300 year History*, Ed. Wolf, Edwin, New York, W.& W. Norton Co, 1982, p 450.

those not necessarily active in political agitation, to understand that the ballot offered the way to achieve these other goals.

It is equally important to think about how to frame goals vis-à-vis the opponents of the movement. In the case of PSERL, framing was critical if the leaders hoped to convince white politicians that they should change a political system that has been in place for as long as the country. The only way that the league, and black people in general, were going to see real changes was if white people who had political power voted for them. The league had to try to change peoples' minds regarding enfranchising black people, or to find a way to convince politicians that enfranchising the black population was in their own best interest.

To this end, league framed arguments slightly differently when addressing policy makers and politicians. In addition to framing its issues around the idea of loyalty, the league's petitions employed a constitutional argument when addressing white politicians. Every petition sent to Congress reminded the Senators and Representatives of the, "Fourth Section of the Fourth Article of the Constitution of the United States, in which we find that 'the United States shall guarantee to every state in this Union a republican form of government.'"⁵³ The signers argued that if part of the otherwise eligible voting population were banned from the ballot based on race, then no republican form of government exists, making it an unconstitutional system. League members specifically referred to the wording of the Constitution. The word *shall*

⁵³ Weigley, "The Border City in Civil War: 1854-1865," P 450; "To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the United States," Petition, RG 46. Box SEN 39A-H8, folder 1, The National Archives; "To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives" Petition, RG 233 Box HR 40A-H10.3, folder 2, The National Archives;

[emphasis original] being used, mandatory in character, from which there is no evasion.”⁵⁴ The league pointed out that the term *shall* is unequivocal. The framers did not write, “may” or “should,” which would imply a suggestion rather than a mandate. They wrote, “shall” and so Congress was duty bound, argued the league, to provide black people with full access to a republican form of government and the right to vote.

With this argument, the league echoed a political debate that raged in Congress from antebellum times through Reconstruction: what did it mean “to guarantee a republican form of government” to all the states? What duties were implied in this wording? What was the definition of a republican form of government? Both proslavery and antislavery Congressmen had attempted to answer these questions for decades. The most radical Republicans had always, “professed to find in the clause [Art IV, Sec. 4] a powerful supervisory and regulatory power, enabling Congress to frame its own definition of republicanism and then initiate actions to force states to conform to it.” Southerners responded that the guarantee implied no action on the part of Congress until an, “overt and egregious act had been undertaken by a state.”⁵⁵ They also interpreted republicanism to hold that Congress had no sway over the right of a state to choose any particular social arrangement. This less radical, more sympathetic view to the South’s “peculiar institution,” held sway until Andrew Johnson assumed the Presidency in 1865. Insistent on more strict requirements for re-admission of a former Confederate state, Johnson

⁵⁴ “To the Honorable, the Senate and House of Representatives,” Petition, RG 233. Box HR 40A-H10.3, folder 3, The National Archives.

⁵⁵ Lerche, Charles Jr, “Congressional Interpretations of the Guarantee of a Republican Form of Government during Reconstruction,” *The Journal of Southern History*, 15(2) May 1949, pp 192-211. Accessed from JSTOR Online Database, <http://www.jstor.org.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/stable/2197997> February 17, 2011, p 193.

embraced the interpretation of this guarantee embodied in the Wade-Davis Bill, which gives Congress the right to actively define and defend its interpretation of republicanism, which during Reconstruction came to mean an abolition of slavery and an extension of the franchise to blacks.⁵⁶ The league seized on this change of pace of interpretation of Article IV and made reference to this growing sentiment within Congress in their petitions.

The league also framed its arguments in legal terms, purporting, “no condition can be guaranteed unless the power to clearly enforce provisions of such conditions,”⁵⁷ resides with all members of a state. The league argued that no law passed in a state that bars black men from voting is enforceable because many people were excluded from the democratic process. The members argued that laws that are put into effect without the consent of the governed are null and void. In effect, the league framed blacks’ right to vote into the larger Constitutional framework of the nation, forcing that right to be meaningful for men who had sworn and oath to protect the values in that document. “How can a perfect union be established? How can domestic tranquility be ensured, unless you in you official capacity adopt such measures as will make all men politically and legally equal.”⁵⁸ Essentially, the league’s framing created an argument where only through extending colored men the franchise could these politicians be doing their jobs. They had to extend the vote to black men, only then could the mandates of the Constitution, the mandates that all Congressmen had sworn to uphold, be fulfilled.

⁵⁶ Lerche, “Congressional Interpretations” pp 192-196.

⁵⁷ “To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives” Petition, RG 233. Box HR 40A-H10.3, folder 2, The National Archives.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

The league, in its address to politicians, still focused heavily on loyalty. It asked Congressmen, “will you, to whom we have given our money in taxes and our lives in battle, to maintain the supremacy of law against succession and anarchy, continue to deprive us of this dearly purchased right to the ballot?”⁵⁹ It constantly pointed out the absurdity of allowing traitors and white secessionists to vote, while African Americans remained un-enfranchised. With the bloodiest war in American history barely over, the league cleverly played upon fears that ran through Congress of restoring political rights to former Confederates. Some members of Congress feared an undoing of the hard-wrought gains of the Civil War if too much power was simply handed back to Southerners.

The league capitalized on this fear, and reminded Republicans that they would have a large, loyal voting bloc in the black communities, if they were enfranchised. Such a coalition would counteract whatever power was returned to Dixie. The league argued in one petition that was sent to the Republican National Convention, “the great political parties are now marshalling forces on both sides in their campaign for political supremacy. We must lay down our platform then, so you can see that it will bring great equality to this land, at least to the extent of defeating our common enemies.”⁶⁰ The league could not have been much clearer about promising the Republican Party support against the Democrats, if giving the right to vote. They had to enfranchise blacks, so argued the league, to curb the political weight of the Democratic Party. Just as the religious appeal to action was probably the strongest for the black

⁵⁹ “To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the United States,” Petition, RG 233, HR 39A-14.2, folder 3, The National Archives.

⁶⁰ Nesbit, William, “Fellow Citizens, from the Bureau of the Penn’a State Equal Rights League to the meeting delegates.” The Leon Gardiner (0008). Box 16, folder 4. HSP.

community, this promise of a loyal voting constituency was perhaps the argument that most resonated with Republican politicians. They saw, in black people, a new set of votes that could be used for Republican purposes, should they be given the ballot.

It is important to underscore just how strongly the league stressed loyalty in order to maintain that this was their main packaging tool. The league returned again and again to blacks' loyalty in its framing efforts, stating, "This color which mantles our cheeks ... has subjected us to every species of outrage, persecution, and disenfranchisement, but it has never been sullied by covering the brow of a single *traitor* [emphasis in the original]." ⁶¹ Black men deserved the ballot because they were loyal members of the Union who had fought to protect it, argued the league. Leaders pointed out that black people were valuable in terms of protecting democracy. In other words, only if they had the right to vote, could America fulfill its promise of a true democracy, one of the purposes of the Civil War.

Additionally, as part of the second facet of successful framing, the frame must be linked to an issue that is broad enough to apply to a sufficiently large number of people, but not be too broad as to be confusing. Here arises the idea of "experimental commensurability," ⁶² or that the framing efforts place the problems and solutions in a way that the conditions are actually experienced by those involved. In other words, can participants relate to what is being described to them? Surely, this was second nature when dealing with the frames used by the PSERL. Of course its public audience could relate to being disenfranchised. They could not vote

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Snow et al, "Ideology," p 208.

to select their leaders. Black people were prevented from receiving the same education their white neighbors were privileged to have. Blacks lived this life of deprivation and injustice just as the league's posters and rallies described. They hardly needed further convincing.

In terms of framing, the league used varied and sophisticated tactics including stressing loyalty, religion, and the Constitution, and they addressed three key issues in the struggle for equality. The league succeeded because it used revolving and changing frames, in conjunction with other tactics that capitalized on a gradual change in Reconstruction toward more radical interpretation of Constitutional powers. While always returning to loyalty as the baseline for their desire and right to the ballot, the league would critically evaluate the audience they were addressing, and tailor their frames to be most successful, given that specific audience. When addressing audiences of members and non-members, however, usually only blacks, at perhaps a rally or in a newspaper article, the league was sure to stress blacks' divine right to the vote, or the idea that God willed them to be full participants in democracy, an idea that the deeply religious black community would be sure to fully support. When the league was addressing politicians, however, which were always and wholly white, it stressed the legality and constitutionality of its desire to vote. The authors of the petitions that were sent to Congress employed legalistic language and a call to duty that politicians were sure to understand, and that tapped into the post-war context when northern Republicans tried to gauge whether they could find a political alliance with white people in the South. This differentiation of audiences was a key feature in the league's approach to framing.

A multitude of social ills existed on which the league could have focused. They narrowed their efforts, however, to three main issues, namely the desegregation of streetcars, the establishment of the right of blacks to the elective franchise, and the establishment of an equal educational system in America. The league saw the technical achievement of all three of these goals: the desegregation of streetcars in a legislative bill passed in the Pennsylvania Assembly that outlawed segregation on the cars; the right to vote extended to black men, enacted under the 15th Amendment in 1870; and the desegregation of Pennsylvania schools under another state bill outlawing such occurrences, which passed in 1881.

The PSERL did truly set the groundwork for the actual realization of these efforts. They accomplished getting the necessary laws on the books, so to speak. Unfortunately, the brave and tireless workers of the league would not live to see the enactment of any of these provisions as a tangible reality in the lives of most black people in America. It would take another century of activism, the creation of a multitude of other civil rights groups, and many generations of a slow chipping away at the racist attitude that pervaded America before all black people could truly enjoy equality in public accommodations, freedom and ease in exercising the right to vote, and equality of education in America.

Chapter 3: Resource Mobilization

In November 1866 Joshua Burrows, president of the Sellersville chapter of the PSERL, rushed to the local corner store to pick up the newspaper. He had received a letter a few weeks back from the president of the PSERL that informed him that sometime soon, a blank petition would appear in his local newspaper. Since then, Burrows had been waiting with anticipation to start the petition signing process. That day, he found the petition buried in the advertisement section. He carefully cut it out and began gathering signatures. Within a few weeks, the petition had hundreds of names on it, so many that Burrows had to glue extra paper to the bottom of the petition so it became not a single sheet, but rather a packet of papers. Burrows mailed the petition to the United States Congress, where it joined hundreds of identical petitions from around the state. This process of petitioning was the league's largest single mobilization tactic and allowed it to present a cohesive message to Congress, as well as attempt to persuade the white politicians who could push forward the legislation to create change.

Any social movement needs participants to be successful. These are the workers on the ground. They do the talking, protesting, lecturing, and lobbying. These participants, for the most part, must be recruited and directed. In an organization like the PSERL, recruitment was important but was not terribly difficult, given that all black people were motivated to change the harsh reality in which they lived. Instead, the league needed to create broad consensus and sense of unity within the organization concerning strategy and tactics for accomplishing goals. It needed a plan. Its leaders knew that all the local branches needed to know what that plan was in order to support it. In fact, the leaders of the league in Pennsylvania were aware that they

needed to reach out to all parts of the state in order to gain that broad consensus.⁶³ Accordingly, the leaders of the Pennsylvania chapter worked hard to make sure their executive board represented, as much as possible, the geography of the state. To that end, William Nesbit, the first and later president of the PSERL was from Altoona, in central Pennsylvania, White and Catto, recording secretaries and lobbyists for the league, were from Philadelphia, and Vashon, Vice President, was from Pittsburgh. Even the most rural counties of Pennsylvania had an active chapter in the League through the 1870s.⁶⁴

Recruiting members, or mobilizing resources, would take more than simply having leaders from different parts of the state. According to Robnett's discussion of movement participation, members not only must be recruited, but they also must be persuaded to act. This is the difference between passive and active support of an organization. This is the resource mobilization portion of social movement culture. In terms of the PSERL, recruitment took on a subtler meaning. Black people in the post-Civil War United States hardly needed reason to act on the cause of social justice and equality. The league, however, did need to invoke action and define and organize strategy. A movement's resources can be human, monetary, or spatial. A group or social movement needs all three resources to be successful.

Resource Mobilization can be studied through a discussion of the possible factors that contribute to mobilization. These factors are the, "two main spatial settings in which movements and potential participants come into contact," and, "the two main modes of

⁶³ "Call for a National Convention," Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 6, folder 2, HSP.

⁶⁴ Petition to Congress, 1 December 1868, RG 46, Box, SEN 40A-H10.2, folder 3, The National Archives.

communication through which information can be imparted.”⁶⁵ Given these options, a movement has four recruitment options, which are simply cross-sections of the two settings and two modes of communication. In other words, a group can publicly or privately recruit members, and it can reach out to potential participants either directly or through written appeals or intermediaries. The group’s choices among these options help to determine the strategy and success of the movement.

Recruitment can take place in any number of spaces, anywhere where people come into contact really. These places could be public like meeting halls and churches, or private, like homes.⁶⁶ Public spaces include sidewalks, parks, meetinghouses, churches, etc, and include places that require membership for entrance. Private space encompasses the home. There is every range of options of semi-private spaces in-between, such as clubhouses, in which some people, namely members, were granted access, but others were not. The available modes of communication can be divided by whether or not they are face-to-face or through another medium, such as written communication. Research into other social movements has discovered that a group is generally most successful at achieving its goals when it uniquely combines the elements of space and communication into new types of mobilization unique to that group. The league for example, blended two types of mobilization in its petitioning campaign, which is discussed later, and that blending is what made it so successful.

⁶⁵ Ekland-Olsen, Sheldon; Snow, David; Zurcher, Louis A, “Social Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential Recruitment,” *American Sociological Review*, 45(5). Pp 787-801, p 789.

⁶⁶ Ibid p 789.

The major site that the PSERL recruited from was the church. Churches have long been centers of community action and both the PSERL and the modern movement used them to spread their message and gather support. The churches proved to be valuable sites for political mobilization because the churches existed with an established information infrastructure and people viewed it as a legitimate source of information and guidance. In fact, the PSERL was founded on a religious basis, one that, “acknowledges our entire dependence upon God and his control in the affairs of men, and relying on his Truth, his Justice, and Almighty power for success, we so declare the objects of the league.”⁶⁷ The PSERL was also actively involved specifically with the American Methodist Church and the Wesleyan Church, as well with the A.M.E.-run *Christian Recorder* newspaper.

The PSERL used churches for a variety of purposes, the most common being as a meetinghouse. There are countless examples of the PSERL holding meetings in churches throughout the state, including places such as Lewistown and Pittsburgh.⁶⁸ This type of recruitment is an example of utilizing a public place and, what political scientists have termed, semi-personal appeals. Church meetings were semi-personal in that they were not one-on-one discussions between a group member and a potential member, but these exchanges did not occur through a totally impersonal medium such as a newspaper appeal. A preacher at a pulpit fostered a very personal discussion for some followers and turned out to be an effective means of gathering support. “Many adherents come from our church outreaches,” wrote Nesbit in a

⁶⁷ *Constitution of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights' League*, Leon Gardiner (0008), Box 6, folder 4, HSP.

⁶⁸ “Letter from Lewistown,” *The Christian Recorder*, January 28, 1865; “Great Suffrage Meeting,” *The Christian Recorder*, September 15, 1866; “Reply of the Pittsburgh Equal Rights League,” *The Christian Recorder*, December 8, 1866.

letter to Catto.⁶⁹ He argued further that it was the personal encounters and the faith that people had in their church leaders that helped persuade them to act.

Whether a PSERL meeting was held in a church or elsewhere, it always opened with a prayer by a reverend, such as the Reverend Thomas Parent or the Reverend Calvin Fairbanks, who both appear several times in the letters and minutes of the league. These ministers were from Pennsylvania and served as leaders of A.M.E. or Baptist churches. The league did not appear to have relied on one or two ministers, but instead employed many different people. The examples are incredibly numerous and the minutes of the all the league's meetings and conferences make a special note to introduce the reverend who was present and mention his prayer.⁷⁰ Even white owned newspapers drew attention to the religious nature of the league, describing in great detail, "A hymn was then sung, Rev. Thomas Parent conducted a religious service, and offered up a prayer."⁷¹ The use of preachers at meetings of the PSERL was a tradition that started with the league 1864 and continued until the league became inactive. People felt connected to the PSERL meetings through the church, which gave more validity to the political meetings.

This relationship with the church was also symbiotic in several ways as well, representing a further dimension in the mobilization process. The PSERL was known to have

⁶⁹ Letter, William Nesbit to Octavius Catto, April 7, 1865, The Leon Gardiner (0008). Box 16, folder 4, HSP.

⁷⁰ "Colored Equal Rights Convention" *The Philadelphia Inquirer* 11 February, 1865; "Meeting of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 5 May 1870; "Grand Public Demonstration" *The Christian Recorder*, 7 January 1865; "Letter from Harrisburg," *The Christian Recorder*, October 7, 1865; "Our Harrisburg Letter" *The Christian Recorder*, October 21, 1865; "Proceedings of the State's Equal Rights' Convention of the Colored People of Pennsylvania," E441.A58 Vol 113(19). HSP.

⁷¹ "Meeting of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League," *The Patriot*, May 11, 1870.

participated in church functions, such as processions that had little to do with politics, and laying cornerstones for new churches, which demonstrated the partnership between the league and the church.⁷² There is also evidence that several branches of the league, such as the Franklin and Lincoln, both located in neighborhoods in Philadelphia, used the churches to hold elections for their delegates and officers. Other district leagues in Philadelphia, such as the Frankfort league and the West Philadelphia league branches, held their elections in the A.M.E. church on Oxford Street and the Shiloh Baptist Church respectively. Elections were certainly a non-religious function of the league, and their presence at churches highlights the engagement between the league and the church community.⁷³ This cyclical relationship served to help make the church's mobilization efforts more effective and continuous. Additionally, people and members could see the PSERL supporting their church, which heightened the place the PSERL held in the eyes of the parishioners, which in turn would certainly have aided in political mobilization. This relationship served the PSERL well as a rallying point, an information distribution center, and a site for petition signing.

Besides the semi-private mobilization, such as that in churches, the PSERL also used more public venues and personal communications. The league held a series of outdoor rallies and marches, particularly in its earlier years, 1864-1867, but also occasionally later. These "Grand Public Demonstrations," were popular events that attracted thousands of supporters and often resulted in, "many many converts to the cause."⁷⁴ They were frequently held in such

⁷² "Report of the Laying of the Cornerstone of the A.M.E. Church," *The Christian Recorder*, September 28, 1867.

⁷³ "Equal Rights League," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, " 9 August, 1869.

⁷⁴ "Grand Public Demonstration," *The Christian Recorder*, January 7, 1865.

places as National Hall, the former Philadelphia Convention Center, on Market Street in Philadelphia and the State House of Representatives in Harrisburg.⁷⁵

These rallies were large, purposefully public events. In fact, the league made specific overtures to invite non-members. While the league did target specifically black people, it made quite clear in its flyers and invitations that race was not a barrier to participation. Several newspaper articles that announced a demonstration end with a calling to the public identical or similar to, “But come and hear, and see for yourselves, what the State League is all about.”⁷⁶ The speakers at the rallies often opened with a sentiment similar to, “I see before me a crowd of every level of person, men and women, a large number of good people turned out support this league”⁷⁷ which shows that these demonstrations were not confined to the elite in black society, and that they were meant for a broader audience. Another article, printed in the *Christian Recorder*, notes that at the annual convention in 1867, “the crowd represented well nigh all the callings in life. The delegates themselves and speakers number 110. There was one lawyer among them. There was also among them two doctors, one bishop, ten ministers, three college professors, five school teachers, five graduates from college, three professional lecturers, two editors of newspapers, two grocers, one merchant, two cotton planters, and a large number of mechanics and farmers.”⁷⁸ It is difficult, however, to determine the true amount of working class blacks that attended. Several newspaper articles exclaim the “vast

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ “Letter from Rev. Benjamin Lynch,” *The Christian Recorder*, September 23, 1865.

⁷⁸ “The Convention,” *The Christian Recorder*, January 26, 1867.

amount of people from every part of society,” that were present at rallies. Yet the quotation above suggests that the crowd might have tilted toward the middle and upper middle classes. In general, however, it appears that the league had success in attracting, at least to its rallies, a broad cross-section of society.

This type of mobilization was slightly different from the recruitment that took place at churches, in that rallies and demonstrations were completely insular events not tied to an outside organization. The league ran them by itself, whereas the league’s association with the church represented a partnership between two groups. These public meetings also differed from the use of churches in the mode of communication they employed. Rallies and marches offered the chance for personal communication: people on the ground would speak to each other and leaders of the league would walk through the crowds and attempt to gather support and action from the attendees.⁷⁹ This type of public mobilization appears to have been a very effective in introducing the league to the community. When league organizers went around town with petitions or collection baskets, the people they targeted understood what the PSERL entailed.

Little evidence exists that the league engaged in private mobilization, such as door-to-door recruitment or individualized letter-writing campaigns. Leaders likely socialized in each other’s homes and perhaps discussed the business of protest, but there is no evidence of any concerted door-to-door campaigning or mass mailings.

⁷⁹ “Letter from Rev. Benjamin Lynch,” *The Christian Recorder*, September 23, 1865; “The Convention,” *The Christian Recorder*, January 26, 1867.

The league also engaged heavily in non-personal communication through newspapers and posters. For example, the league announced all of its annual meetings in newspapers.⁸⁰ The league also stirred up support by printing lists of wrongs that African Americans currently suffered and successes that leagues across the country had achieved. For example, a letter from Indianapolis described the successes of other leagues throughout the states, explaining, “Kentucky, and many other Western states, are moving forward in the area of justice,” but that some places are still subject to, “those black codes that have forbidden them to return to their native homes.” In this case, the author, identified only as W. H. G., was referring to laws in place just before the Civil War regarding manumissions, or the freeing of slaves. Some states, and W. H. G. refers specifically to Maryland, gave free papers but expelled those people.⁸¹ The author is excited that some states are moving away from this practice. Another jubilant letter written in 1864 about the founding of a league chapter in Lewistown, Pennsylvania, exclaimed, “Rev. Holling was often applauded during the time of his address and... when the meeting adjourned, there were three rousing cheers for the President of the United States”⁸²

The league also conducted recruitment through newspapers where it could control what was printed and where members could post their announcements. Particularly, they used *The Christian Recorder*, which was printed from the basement of the A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia. This represented a further connection between the league and the church community. This

⁸⁰ “State Equal Rights Convention of the Colored People of Pennsylvania,” *The Christian Recorder*; “National Equal Rights League,” *The Christian Recorder*; “Civil Rights,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. August 27, 1873.

⁸¹ “Indianapolis Correspondence,” *The Christian Recorder*, January 28, 1865.

⁸² “Appeal to the Colored People of the State of Pennsylvania,” *The Christian Recorder*; “Letter from Lewistown,” *The Christian Recorder*, January 28, 1865.

newspaper was run by the church and was used as the organ of the PSERL. Announcements about its activities and meetings would appear in the circular, as would its petitions.

The PSERL printed and posted banners and flyers throughout public parks and other public places in Philadelphia. They also printed and distributed copies of the minutes of their meetings to anyone who requested them, at a reduced printing price for members to give away.⁸³ This type of papering and leafleting is the prime example of the league's engagement in non-personal modes of communication. Newspaper articles or flyers that a person reads are not a personal interaction, not one person speaking to another person and trying to convince them of something. It is important, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter, for a group to integrate various modes of recruitment. The strategy to incorporate various types of communication underscored the league's ability to innovate.

As another mode of conscription, the PSERL was particularly concerned with petitioning and felt that it represented the best chance to achieve their goals. Petitioning provided a very effectual means of deploying resources. While petitioning has been a common tactic of social struggle throughout history, the PSERL used an ingenious tactic that allowed its petitioning process to be efficient and streamlined.⁸⁴ While it petitioned to the national and the state government, there are far more extant records of its petitions to the national government.⁸⁵

⁸³ Nesbit, "Suggestions," The Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 2, HSP; "To the Colored People of Pennsylvania," The Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 4, HSP; "Call for a National Convention," The Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 2, HSP.

⁸⁴ "Letter, William Nesbit to J.C. White." November 25, 1868. Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 4. HSP.

⁸⁵ RG 46, Boxes SEN39A-40A, The National Archives; RG 233, Box HR 39A-40A, The National Archives; Record group 7, series 7.60, Pennsylvania State Senate Archives.

Simply put, more evidence remains at the national level that their petitions were actually received and acknowledged by the Congress. These petitions were unique tools that served many purposes. The league would commonly disseminate its petitions by printing a template petition in the *Christian Recorder*.⁸⁶ People, usually league chapter presidents or church leaders, would then cut out the template, which would have the body of the text filled in already, add the name of the group and have people sign the document which would then be sent to Congress.

As discussed earlier, resource mobilization concerns the cross-section of public and private spatial places and personal and non-personal modes of communication. Political scientists have argued that groups are the most successful when they combine or mold together different modes and places to form unique spaces of mobilization.⁸⁷ This particular method of petitioning that the league created represents the melding of personal and non-personal modes of communication. The original petition templates were, of course, a non-personal mode of communication, but when they were physically cut out of newspapers and passed around to potential members, they became personal modes of resource mobilization. By publishing blank petitions in newspapers, the PSERL streamlined the process, ensured that a consistent message was sent to Congress, and lessened the time individuals had to devote to creating such a document. At the same time, the procedure greatly reducing the costs that any leader had to pay, either in terms of printing or traveling to pick up the petition, by allowing them to simply cut it out a newspaper. Innovations like this made the league so effective in

⁸⁶ "Petition to Congress," RG46, Box SEN 40A-H10.2 folder 6, The National Archives.

⁸⁷ Eklund-Olsen, et al, "Social Networks and Social Movements," p 789.

getting their petitions to the people who needed to see them, and there are hundreds of these petitions with thousands of signatures on them that reached the national Congress.

These petitions were incredibly eloquent and persuasive. The league opens one petition with, "Slavery, finding no undisputed sanction under the American law honestly interpreted, made its final appeal to the sword, and by its terrible arbitrament[sic], the chains are broken, the bonds loosened, and the iron shackles which clanked upon the limbs of the soul-crushed, toil worn slave have crumbled." The petitions further declare, "On the Constitution of our common country we stand, and in its name, demand justice."⁸⁸ These petitions also discuss black American's loyalty and hard work, claiming, "never did a man of color bear arms against this great Union."

The league again compared its loyalty against the anti-Confederate current in Congress. The rhetoric painted the League as more deserving of the ballot than traitors and as a bulwark against encroachment in the power of government from former rebellious citizens. The league solidified this position by asking in several petitions for concessions that would weaken the former Confederate states and that echoed the goals of many of the more radical Reconstructionists. "We earnestly pray that this honorable body will not restore any state that has rebelled and warred against the United States to its place of power until adequate security has been obtained from them... and will not recognize or pay any debt incurred by any State in rebelling or making war against the United States." By demanding these points in their

⁸⁸ "To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress Assembled," RG 233, Box HR 39A-14.2, folder 3, The National Archives.

petitions, the league was effectively showing Republicans in Congress that it wanted what they wanted, and so would be a good political ally.

As mentioned earlier, mobilization did not only include gathering human support, but also monetary resources. Political scientists typically ask such a question as does the movement or group have any income? How is it generated? What does it spend it on? These questions fall under the category of economic mobilization. Often, radical or non-mainstream movements are plagued by economic shortcomings. The league, however, had a sufficient income and was able to accomplish a great deal because it could dedicate resources to the effort.

The National league collected yearly dues from the state leagues, which also collected dues from the county leagues. Each member, in turn, paid annual dues to their county chapter. These dues were often 50 cents a month or \$5 a year, or a similar amount.⁸⁹ The league also levied a slight entrance fee from non-members who attended lectures sponsored by the organization. One such lecture, which was held at the National Hall on Market Street in Philadelphia, sold tickets for 25 cents.⁹⁰ The state league used this revenue, which often totaled over \$12,000 annually (over \$1.4 million in today's money), to print articles, pay for lecturers, and offer reduced train fares for transportation to rallies and meetings.⁹¹ The league paid \$4.40

⁸⁹ "Proceedings of the State's Equal Rights' Convention of the Colored People of Pennsylvania," E441.A58 Vol 113(19) HSP; "Proceedings of the Second Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania State's Equal Rights League," Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 4, HSP.

⁹⁰ "Grand Public Demonstration," *The Christian Recorder*, January 7, 1865.

⁹¹ "Congratulatory Address," *The Christian Recorder*, December 23, 1865; "Proceedings of the Second Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania State's Equal Rights League," Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 4, HSP; "Special Meeting," *The Christian Recorder*, February 17, 1866.

in 1868 for 16 lines of advertising space in *The Daily Press*, a Philadelphia broadside. The league also paid \$6.15 in 1869 to Mann Steam Printers in Philadelphia, to print 500 circulars.⁹² This intake and spending of money allowed the league to reach out into the community in a very real way.

Furthermore, the league's conventions were often self-sufficient, in that members in attendance were "taxed" and this money was used to put on the conventions. At the annual convention of 1865, the league Committee on Finance reported that it received revenue in the form of, "Tax from the delegates, \$135.00; Attendance collections, \$39.94" and paid out for the convention, "For Church hire, \$50.00; Erecting platform, \$2.55; Stationary and Printing, \$2.55; Expenses of traveling agents, \$47.00; Printing Call and Appeal, \$25.00; Advertising, \$11.50" this left the league with, "a balance in hand of \$36.39."⁹³ In this way, the league covered its expenses and made sure to receive that amount from its members and delegates through dues, taxes, or collections.

Besides collecting dues, the league also held fundraising fairs to generate income. These gatherings featured food, informal speakers walking around and talking to people, and music. There was an attendance fee, and the fairs were quite successful. "G. B. Vashon, on behalf of the sub-Committee charged with the Fair, reported as follows: Total Receipts, \$1,304.11; Disbursements, \$725.76; Net Proceeds, \$578.35."⁹⁴ This type of economic

⁹² Receipt, January 19, 1868, Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 14, folder 6, HSP; Check, June 15, 1869, Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 14, folder 6, HSP.

⁹³ "Proceedings of the State's Equal Rights' Convention of the Colored People of Pennsylvania," E441.A58 Vol 113(19), HSP.

⁹⁴ "Reply of the Pittsburg Equal Rights League," *The Christian Recorder*, December 8, 1866.

mobilization allowed the league to remain solvent and produce a voice that could be heard by people in power in Washington. Without income, the league would have had a difficult time reaching the ears of Washington.

Finally, in terms of mobilization, the league, and any social movement or group, needs physical spaces in which to conduct their meetings and achieve their goals. The study of the physical resources a group is slightly different than the discussion of spaces of mobilization because it discusses the places where the league conducted its day-to-day or administrative business and not necessarily where it recruited members. The league's headquarters in Pennsylvania were at 717 Lombard Street, in Philadelphia. This also appears to be the regional office of the national league. All letters addressed to any member of the PSERL's executive board were sent to this address and all due collection forms were sent here as well. When the league held meetings in Philadelphia, they were either at National Hall, located on Market and 12th Streets in Philadelphia or the A.M.E. church, located at 419 South 6th Street in Philadelphia.⁹⁵ When the league held rallies or conventions in Harrisburg, it used the Hall of the House of Representatives, which was the actual government building in Harrisburg.⁹⁶

Of course, while the league did have successful mobilization tactics, it was not perfect, in the sense that a segment of its target audience, black Pennsylvanians, apparently did not participate. Leaders lamented this lack of complete involvement in newspaper articles and internal memos. One such letter, written by J. W. Brown, recounts the problems with having an

⁹⁵ "Office of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League," Invitation., December 20, 1865, Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 8, HSP.

⁹⁶ Flyer, August 8, 1872, Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 8, HSP.

organization supported by, “the few, which directly benefits the lives of the mass of our people.”⁹⁷ There were a noticeable amount of African Americans who they claimed “were simply apathetic about their rights.” The league encountered failure at times in mobilizing particular portions of the state. Leaders tried to establish a chapter in Wilkes-Barre but found that “too many people in this community take no pride in this great noble act.” One activist even once referred to trying to muster blacks to actual action was like “trying to force water to run uphill.”⁹⁸ While there are a few newspaper articles that discuss the issue of participation, it does not appear to be a pervasive problem that the league had, and is only discussed in one annual meeting.⁹⁹

One explanation that could shed light on some of the difficulties the league had in mobilization members in various areas around the state could have to do with class, or socio-economic status. “An insidious enemy plagued most black organizations in the 19th century, poverty.”¹⁰⁰ Poverty alone prevented participation in social movements. If a person was struggling to support himself and perhaps a family, he would be much less likely to spent time and energy, and perhaps even pay dues, on a social movement. Poverty for a black man, woman, or family in the 1860s had another component that prevented indigent people from joining such groups. If black people came from the working class, their livelihood could depend entirely on the benevolence of whites. Many were servants, sharecroppers, or otherwise

⁹⁷ “Equal Rights,” *The Christian Recorder*, December 2, 1865.

⁹⁸ Davis, “Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League,” p 617.

⁹⁹ “Proceedings of the State’s Equal Rights’ Convention of the Colored People of Pennsylvania,” E441.A58 Vol 113(19), HSP.

¹⁰⁰ Alexander, Leslie M. *African or American*, Chicago, U of Illinois P, 2008.

employed directly by white people. It was a safe assumption for African Americans to make that their white employers would be unhappy, maybe even unhappy enough to fire them, if they attempted to make waves in the status quo of social order. Elite blacks--those whose livings were more insulated from white retaliation--had both more economic autonomy in which to agitate and more security from the threat of white reprisal.

So how did the PSERL gather resources--human, monetary and otherwise? The three most successful mobilization tactics in which the league engaged were building a close relationship with the church community, using newspapers to advertise themselves, and streamlining the petitioning process. The league basically presented itself to its black audience as closely aligned and working together with their religious institutions. The church and the league were presented as having similar goals and values. This association gave the league credibility in a community that was highly religious. The league's use of newspapers was highly advantageous as well. It was able to announce its plans, publish calls for action and successes, and interact with members through their petitions. The league was also financially solvent and was able to attract people from all walks of life to their movement. These two successes were a direct result of their effective mobilization tactics.

Chapter 4: Political Opportunities

In 1854, the Pennsylvania legislature passed the Pennsylvania School Act, which required “school directors in districts with twenty or more black students to maintain segregated schools.”¹⁰¹ While some African Americans delighted in the chance to have their own schools for their children, it soon became clear that these separate schools would be woefully neglected by the state. Soon, leading blacks in Pennsylvania began to refuse to send their children to the all-black schools. Robert Forten, the son of James Forten, the wealthy black sail-maker in Philadelphia, sent his daughter, future civil rights activist, Charlotte Forten Grimke, to a private boarding school in Boston in order to avoid the neglected segregated schools in Philadelphia. Black people in Pennsylvania brought cases to court that challenged this law. Elias Allen, whose full story is included in the rest of this chapter, fought in open court against the unequal treatment to which his children were exposed. These cases were always successful. Individual children were granted the right to attend white schools. For decades however, law was never changed and majority of black children were still forced to attend segregated schools.

The final aspect of social movement culture is political opportunity. This idea encompasses laws or political norms that work for or against a movement’s social agenda, prevailing social attitude towards the group or its members, and political allies or alliances a social movement or group might have. For example, a law that allows children to go to any school they want is an example of a political opportunity. Any discussion of political opportunities for a minority group must touch first and foremost on the right to elective franchise. This is the single greatest difference between the opportunities available to the

¹⁰¹ Price, “School Segregation,” p 124.

PSERL and the modern movement. In the 1950s black men and women could vote. Racism and prejudice aside, they formed a voting constituency, giving them an inherent advantage over the PSERL, whose members were excluded from the legitimate political process. Blacks in the 1960s had a voice, albeit a constrained one until the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and they could use it in the democratic manner to elect people who would work for their interest. This was the very principle for which the PSERL fought, which laid the foundation for the modern activists and their ability to leverage the vote as a political opportunity.

What opportunities presented themselves to the PSERL, if not the ballot? They did have access to other avenues for political action. The most important aspect of political opportunity that the PSERL had to work with was the passage of the 13th and 14th Amendments. The League also capitalized on powerful white allies that were willing to stand up and work for their rights in Congress and in the states. Additionally, the league was able to successfully use the court system, both at a local and federal level, as a political tool in furtherance of its goals.

Under the 13th Amendment, which reads, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States,”¹⁰² slavery was outlawed. The 14th Amendment clarified citizenship and African Americans became full citizens. These amendments were an obvious step forward in the quest for equality, but much more was needed. These two Amendments are clear political opportunities of which the league could and did take advantage. They were the baseline from which blacks could base many of their future claims. They had freedom and

¹⁰² Amendment 13, The United States Constitution.

recognition as citizens under the law. This is the most fundamental political opportunity that exists. If the law does not recognize a person as a person, there is no hope for political opportunity. This situation was remedied for blacks in America with the passage of the 13th and 14th Amendments. In almost all of their petitions, the league quoted these amendments, “we have been true members of this country and now that those two amendments that grant us great freedoms, the 13th and 14th, we hope Congress will support our efforts to further democracy by granting your people the fair and just right to vote.”¹⁰³ These laws were baselines from which the league built its argument.

Beyond the 13th Amendment, the league found powerful allies in certain members of the Republican Party in general. The idea of partnering with white allies was not a pre-supposed reality for the entire league. In fact, at the outset, many members felt conflicted over whether or not to join with whites to work for their rights. “On one hand, as a marginalized minority, they realized they depended on white allies to make legal equality a reality ... on the other hand they condemned the racist white majority for having so long humiliated and oppressed them.”¹⁰⁴ Despite this internal debate, the league did reach out and receive support from some white politicians. It cultivated relationships with leaders such as Senator Charles Sumner, US Representative Thaddeus Stevens, and Pennsylvania governor John Geary.

Charles Sumner, a six-term Radical Republican Senator from Massachusetts who was one of the leaders of the antislavery and later civil rights movements, presented many of the

¹⁰³ “To the Colored People of Pennsylvania,” Broadside, June 24th 1872, The Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 14, folder 6, HSP.

¹⁰⁴ Davis. “The Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League.” P 614.

League's petitions in Congress and wrote letters of support that were published in newspapers throughout the country. Sumner praised its unity of action, called himself its friend and ally, and promised to do all in his power to, "promote the fullest recognition and the most complete protection of all rights for all men,"¹⁰⁵ in a letter he wrote to the president of the PSERL in 1867 that was published in the *Christian Recorder*. Sumner also presented petitions for the league to be included in the proposed Civil Rights Bill. This particular petition asks for the restoration of the elective franchise to the colored citizens of the nation.¹⁰⁶ The promises that Sumner made to the league were not hallow. The Senate journals record, "Mr. Sumner presented a petition of citizens of the United States, praying that absolute equality of civil and political rights may be extended to all persons, and that all class legislation may be prohibited; and that free speech, a free press, free instruction, free intercourse, and personal safety may be guaranteed and protected."¹⁰⁷ He was working for it in Congress and the league would see these actions as encouragement to continue working with like-minded politicians.

The league also reached out to Thaddeus Stevens, most often in its quest for streetcar desegregation. Stevens, a four-term Representative from Pennsylvania and Radical Republican, was instrumental in the fight to pass anti-segregation legislation. Stevens helped state Senator Morrow Lowry push a desegregation bill through the state legislature in 1866.¹⁰⁸ Stevens was

¹⁰⁵ "The National Equal Rights League," *The Christian Recorder*, February 2, 1867.

¹⁰⁶ "Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 14, 1865.

¹⁰⁷ "Journal of the Senate of the United States of America, 1789-1873 Thursday, February 8, 1866," Congressional Records Online, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?hlaw:1:/temp/~ammem_edEQ: January 21, 2011.

¹⁰⁸ Davis, "The Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League," P 615.

also dedicated to preventing former Confederates from gaining political influence. In fact, in the first draft of the 14th Amendment, Stevens proposed disenfranchising all Confederates until 1870. While this version was voted down in the Senate, it represents yet again the political current in Congress on which the PSERL was able to capitalize. Black leaders seized on the existing wave of anti-Confederate sentiment and desire to keep power away from rebellious Southerners and offered themselves and other black voters as a viable option for political power. The league openly acknowledged the help of these men. In its printed minutes, the league, “did tender in the name of our constituents our thanks to the Hon. Thaddeus Stevens, Wm. D. Kelly, and Charles Sumner.”¹⁰⁹

Although agreeing on the goals, the PSERL members disagreed on the issue of cooperation with whites. These disagreements fell into two categories. The first was whether or not to make compulsory support for the Republican Party a condition of membership in the PSERL. The PSERL had instituted a policy that required all its members to support the Republican ticket in all elections, local, federal, and national, “that no member shall be admitted to a seat until he pledges himself to the support of the Republican party[sic] in the coming elections”.¹¹⁰ This policy came under strong attack by members of the group who felt that each member should have the right to support a candidate of his own choosing in any election. Those members felt it was part of their basic democratic rights to be able to pick whom to support. League delegates began to question why they were not able to choose their

¹⁰⁹ “Synopsis of the Second Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League,” Minutes. Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 12, folder 4, HSP.

¹¹⁰ “Minutes of the Second Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League,” Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 4, HSP; Constitution and By-laws of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League, Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 4, HSP

own candidate to support. At one meeting, “a number of delegates protested [the league’s mandate to support the Republican ticket from top to bottom]. They were met with the ultimatum, subscribe or go. They went.”¹¹¹ This type of disagreement could prove problematic to the movement. One of the main ways that the PSERL went about trying to secure political opportunities was through guaranteeing support to the Republican Party. Dissent threatened to weaken that promise and, consequently, the support the league might hope to receive from Republican allies.¹¹² In fact, by 1878, there were already several black groups, and a, “liberal array of black voters for the whole Democratic ticket, which might cause the Republicans to view the black vote as split.”¹¹³

The second debate over white involvement concerned how closely to work with white groups, such as the Union League, when trying to achieve their goals. The Union League was founded in 1862 as a civic-social society dedicated to support of the Lincoln and the Union. It was made up primarily of upper-middle class, white men who raised funds to mobilize regiments and produced pamphlets arguing for supporting the Lincoln Administration.¹¹⁴ Both the Union League and the American Equal Rights Association, a group based on universal suffrage regardless of race or gender and presided over by Lucretia Mott, had apparently made overtures to the League for joint activity. The PSERL voted in its second annual meeting against formally merging with the Union League, which would have meant that the league give up its

¹¹¹ “Niggars,” *The Wilkes-Barre Leader*, October 10, 1878.

¹¹² “Letter from Ohio,” *The Christian Recorder*, September 9, 1865; “The National Equal Rights League,” *The Christian Recorder*, February 2, 1867.

¹¹³ “Niggars,” *The Wilkes-Barre Leader*, October 10, 1878.

¹¹⁴ Union League Official Website, <http://www.unionleague.org>, December 2, 2011.

autonomous identity in favor of combining with an existing group.¹¹⁵ It is unclear how involved the PSERL was with the American Equal Rights Association. There is only a single petition that was sent to Congress that was co-authored by both groups and signed by both Mott and Nesbit.¹¹⁶ In another example, a black activist church group from Delaware offered, at one of the league's rallies, to join with the PSERL. Its leaders were hissed and booed off the stage. There was also debate within the league about recognizing delegates from other groups at the PSERL's conventions. "It was claimed that abuses were heaped upon this league by members of the Freedman's Association of Pittsburgh who tried to augment their apportionment at our recent convention."¹¹⁷

Despite these negative reactions to cooperation, there were also times that the league worked with other black groups. The league attended a multi-group conference in 1865 called the State's Equal Rights Convention of the Colored People of Pennsylvania. At this convention, there were at least four other groups, both black and white, present including the Ladies Union Association, the Sanitary Commission of St. Thomas's Church, a group dedicated to raising funds to support wounded soldiers and their families, the Banneker Institute, an all black think tank instituted to promote colored people, and the Union League.¹¹⁸ The league was often

¹¹⁵ "Synopsis of the Second Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League," Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 12, folder 4, HSP.

¹¹⁶ "Memorial of the American Equal Rights Association to the Congress of the United States," RG 233, Box HR 39A-14.2, folder 4, The National Archives.

¹¹⁷ "Minuets, Second Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League," HSP; "Letter from Ohio," *The Christian Recorder*; "Reply of the Pittsburg Equal Rights League," *The Christian Recorder*.

¹¹⁸ "Proceedings of the State Equal Right's Convention of the Colored People of Pennsylvania," E441.A58 Vol 113.19, HSP.

willing to work with other groups on individual efforts, such as petition signing and troop parades, but was unwilling to formerly merge with any organization, including mainstream white groups.

The league did, however, welcome a variety of speakers from other groups or communities at its public events. These speakers ranged from prominent religious leaders within the black community, to state leaders and national leaders. The religious leaders were always black, and included Rev. James Austin, rector of St. Thomas' Church in Philadelphia; the Rev. Calvin Fairbank, "a grand public orator to whom much honor is due;"¹¹⁹ and the Rev. G. H. Graham, pastor of the Philadelphia A.M.E. church.¹²⁰ When white, these speakers were always Republicans, mostly radically so. The league's rallies and parades often had the governor of Pennsylvania and various senators, including Charles Sumner; Thomas Bigham, a state senator from Allegheny County; and Salmon Chase, a noted abolitionist and Philadelphia financier.¹²¹ At a particular rally, two Pennsylvania state senators spoke of the support they had always given the black population and how they, "had seen the day when the black man, under the Old Constitution, was allowed his suffrage and he hoped the time would soon come when he could vote again."¹²² The Old Constitution in this case refers to the pre-1836 Constitution in Pennsylvania when black were allowed to vote, prior to a law passed in that year that

¹¹⁹ "Grand Public Demonstration," *The Christian Recorder*, January 7, 1865,.

¹²⁰ "Colored Equal Rights Convention" *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 11, 1865; "Letter from Ohio," *The Christian Recorder*; "Grand Public Demonstration," *The Christian Recorder*, January 7, 1865.

¹²¹ "Colored Equal Rights Convention," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 February, 1865; "Proceedings of the State's Equal Rights' Convention of the Colored People of Pennsylvania," E441.A58 Vol 113(19), HSP; "The National Equal Rights League," *The Christian Recorder*, February 2, 1867.

¹²² "Colored Equal Rights Convention," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 February, 1865.

disenfranchised them. This support from key political actors was an important political opportunity for the league because it gave it a direct “in,” if you will, into the mainstream political arena. If a prominent politician were to advocate to a petition from the league, it would certainly carry more weight than a simple letter sent to Congress.

The PSERL also used the court system to push through some items on its agenda, particularly its fight for equality in streetcars and schools. The streetcars in Philadelphia were segregated, a sentiment often enforced with violence on the part of conductors and passengers. In Philadelphia, a central place for this movement because of the size of its black community, laws and practices denied equal access to streetcars. Blacks were sometimes denied passage on streetcars entirely, especially when there was high traffic, and other times they were forced to sit in the worst seats, often standing on the edges or in the isles. Their treatment when they tried to board was horrendous. In one instance, conductors shuffled all the black women together and told them, “they were being taken to the depot to be whitewashed,” to be beaten, if they did not vacate their seats. Men were often simply pushed off the moving cars by the conductor or passengers.¹²³ They were generally treated with violence and disrespect if they attempted to resist their mistreatment. This situation became increasingly acute as black soldiers and their families returned to the city after the Civil War and tried use the streetcars, often to visit hospitals where wounded family members and comrades were being treated. The leading members of the PSERL proclaimed segregation on public

¹²³ Weigley, “The Border City in Civil War: 1854-1865,” p 415.

transportation to be an, “inhuman prejudice,”¹²⁴ one that the PSERL should put every effort into removing.

The league engaged in concerted efforts to reduce this segregation and eventually succeeded in overturning prejudicial laws. The league hired lawyers to represent black citizens who had been violently and rudely pushed off the cars when there was no room for white people. In fact, the league occasionally provoked these attacks by having large groups of black men and women get on the bus and refuse to leave when white people got on. Once an attack occurred, the league would help the victims take the case to court. These court cases had mixed success. The league won a series of court cases for individuals who had been forcibly ejected from the cars and succeeded in “pushing a bill through the Pennsylvania Assembly prohibiting segregation on streetcars throughout the state in 1866, which was enacted in 1867.”¹²⁵ However, while each individual case resulted in a victory for the victims, “these successes produced no change in the streetcar companies’ policies.”¹²⁶ Although it would take the concerted efforts of legislation and petitioning for meaningful legislative changes to the segregation problems, the league did learn how to use the court system as a political opportunity to bring attention to its agenda.

The fight to end school segregation followed a path similar to that of the streetcars. The league brought individual lawsuits to court and often won victories for clients. Of course, desegregation of schools on a national level took until the mid-20th century. The league,

¹²⁴ “Hanchett, “George B. Vashon,” p 336.

¹²⁵ Davis, “Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League,” p 614-5.

¹²⁶ Ibid p 615.

however, did affect some local change in Pennsylvania schools. In 1881, the league helped a man named Elias Allen, a resident of Meadville, bring a case to suit. The Meadville school directors denied Allen's request to let his children attend the school in his ward, which was an all white school, and he filed a suit with the Crawford County Court of Common Pleas. The league paid for the court fees and helped drum up support for Allen in the community. Judge Church, who had been president of the Thirteenth District Circuit Court since 1877, ruled that the two schools were not equal and therefore violated the 14th Amendment.¹²⁷ The following year, the Pennsylvania Legislature cleared up misinterpretation of the 1854 school laws and banned separate schools for blacks.¹²⁸ This local victory foreshadowed the eventual outcome of the school equality issue in America.

Yet another factor affecting the way a group operates within a system is how the public views a group and its struggle. Both the modern civil rights movement and the PSERL were subject to various levels of racism, which certainly had an affect on the political opportunities open to them. The overall public perception of African Americans leading up to the Civil War had been "deteriorating steadily during the antebellum decades, reaching its nadir in the 1850s with the Fugitive Slave Act and the *Dred Scott* decision."¹²⁹ In fact, the members of the PSERL were working in a situation where their forefathers had the right to vote in Pennsylvania, but were stripped of that right in the previous few decades. The league's white allies acknowledged

¹²⁷ Price, "School Segregation," p 620; "School Director's Decisions Overturned," *Meadville Crawford Journal*, May 13, 1881.

¹²⁸ *Pennsylvania Legislative Record*, April 1882, <http://www.archive.org/details/legislativecor00penn>. January 21, 2011.

¹²⁹ Davis, "The Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League," p 615.

this situation. In a speech at a PSERL convention, the Hon. Thomas Bigham, a state senator from Allegheny County stated, “the prejudice that now exists against the black man, he hoped would soon pass away and a morning would soon come when the color of a skin or the curl of a hair would not distinguish a man.”¹³⁰

A common negative perception about the franchise movement concerned the violence and disruption that such an outcome might release. In the case of the PSERL, critics maintained that African Americans were too base a human being to adequately deal with privileges such as the vote or to stay in the same hotels as white people. To grant them these measures, opponents charged, would lead to social conflict, confusion, abuse of public spaces, and ultimately violence and chaos.¹³¹ The PSERL also encountered another type of public scrutiny. It were charged with, and had to actively work against, being labeled a secret society. Leagues all over the nation, in fact, were categorized as such in newspapers and were forced to print specially written reports on their activities in order to dispel concern over their purpose and agenda. “The officers of the league disclaimed any secrecy and said the object of the league was to secure political and moral means to repeal any law that makes distinctions on account of color.” The league goes on to describe, in detail, its motives and plans of action.¹³² This was certainly a political liability, as it created a second handicap against which the league had to work. In addition to being black, the league was now viewed as untrustworthy.

¹³⁰ “Colored Equal Rights Convention,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 February, 1865.

¹³¹ “Minutes of the Second Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League,” Leon Gardiner Collection (0008), Box 16, folder 4, HSP.

¹³² “The Equal Rights League, Announcement of its Objectives,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 30 December 1865.

The PSERL used a variety of political opportunities to achieve its political goals. Most importantly, leaders combined their goals with a pre-existing political thought. Many Republicans during the Reconstruction were actively looking for ways to prevent former Confederates from regaining political power. The league successfully capitalized on these sentiments by positioning itself as an alternative constituent base to Southerners. Members offered loyalty to the Republican Party in exchange for political rights. This position allowed the league to target specific, powerful white allies, such as Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens, and use them to help the league's agenda. The PSERL was also very successful in holding rallies, which were popular gatherings that allowed the league to both build a support base from the general population and to showcase its high profile advocates. Finally, the league had mixed success using the courts as a political opportunity. On one hand, courts were useful because the league was able to actually fund the prosecution of both violent streetcar drivers and the segregated schools. They almost always gained victories for their clients, which is of course, a success. These successes led to opportunities on the individual basis, for those specific clients, but it would take much more work for meaningful changes to come about through legislation.

Chapter 5: The Modern Movement in Comparison

When studying the PSERL, many of its tactics and events seem similar to the events of the 1950s and 1960s. Women in 1864 refused to make room on streetcars for white people, much like Rosa Parks did on buses in Montgomery, Alabama. Reverends led ceremonies and made political speeches, not unlike Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In many ways, the two were similar movements. They differed, however, in important ways that show that one was not an extension of the other. Additionally, while there are clearly defined years to the existence of the PSERL, the modern movement is difficult to assign a beginning or end date. Many scholars argue it began in 1905 with W. E. B. Du Bois's Niagara Movement and that it remains under way today. For the purposes of this paper, I will generally constrain the discussion of the Civil Rights era to the height of the movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Also, instead of analyzing one group in particular, as done with the PSERL, I will draw evidence from several groups, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).

Much like the PSERL, large, national, and highly organized groups that help to solidify the challenges for their constituencies and established strategies for achieving their collective goals, championed the modern movement. For the modern civil rights movement, the NAACP and SNCC were well-known, highly centralized, and hierarchically organized groups that very much resemble the National Equal Rights League in both form and makeup.¹³³ The NAACP was

¹³³ Lehman, Christopher Paul, "Civil Rights in Twilight: The End of the Civil Rights Movement Era in 1973," *Journal of Black Studies*, 36 (3). pp. 415-428, p 420.

founded in 1909, with a national headquarters opened in 1910 in New York City. A board of directors was appointed and Du Bois was named Director of Publications and Research, including editor of *The Crisis*. The groups of the modern movement often had a similar organization to the PSERL, with a national body that coordinated the efforts of lower level chapters. The NAACP operated under the direction of various leaders who would control the flow of the movement and decide the issues to be tackled.¹³⁴

The modern movement and the PSERL both framed goals within a religious context. Leaders portrayed equality as a religious issue, claiming that only by extending rights denied to the black population could the precepts of the Christian and other faiths be carried out properly. The modern movement mirrored the PSERL practice of having religious leaders open and speak at rallies. The modern movements even took the religious aspects a step further by designing rallies that revolved completely around religion. The “Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom” that took place on May 17, 1957 was led by, “the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and four other Negro ministers.”¹³⁵ This rally was called specifically to acknowledge the religious help that freedom needed and to offer thanks to God for successes already accomplished, such as the desegregation of schools mandated in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision by the Supreme Court in 1954.

This emphasis on religion echoes the operations of the PSERL. The modern groups made it a point to give thanks to God for successes. At one rally in 1957, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*

¹³⁴ Lehman, “Civil Rights in Twilight,” p. 420.

¹³⁵ “50,000 Expected Here for Civil Rights Rally,” *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, May 17, 1957.

commented on the “large number of religious leaders in attendance.” The article goes on to further describe the religious tones used by the leaders to, “evoke feelings of passion and righteousness of pursuit in those in attendance and to thank God for all they had achieved so far in their goals.”¹³⁶ Just as in the 1860s, churches formed the cornerstone of black public life and seamlessly integrated politics, religion, and civil rights. As one scholar noted about political activism in the post-emancipation South, “The black construction of the public sphere, of which churches were the center, included forms of discourse that included prayers, stump speeches, testimonies of crimes and debates of issues on the political legislative floor.”¹³⁷ In terms of actual churches the modern movement used church buildings directly in mobilization efforts and that, “regular meetings in the African churches quickly became the basis for constructing a discourse about freedom and organizing large-scale protest.”¹³⁸ Black people in the 1950s and 1960s used churches as central meeting places, recruitment halls, and as a foundation on which to build their political argument. All of these represented tactics similar to the PSERL’s use of churches and religion.

In terms of similarities in mobilization tactics between the two time periods, the modern movement engaged in rallies, demonstrations, and the use of newspapers just as the PSERL had done. The NAACP, SNCC, and many other groups held massive rallies and demonstrations to present demands in a dramatic way. To talk about all the rallies that were held during the two

¹³⁶ “Equal Rights Meeting of the States Colored League Taking a new Tone,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 5, 1870.

¹³⁷ Brown, Elsa Barkley, “Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life and the Transition from Slavery to Freedom,” *Time Longer than Rope*, Eds: Payne, Charles M; Green, Adam. New York, New York U P, 2003, p 70.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 71.

decade height of the civil war movement would be a major effort. The NAACP sponsored rallies in such places as Madison Square Garden and elsewhere in New York City, the Lincoln Memorial and elsewhere in Washington. These were huge rallies, drawing tens of thousands of people, sometimes up to 50,000 attendees.¹³⁹ Clearly, with this many people in attendance, rallies provided an effective mobilization tool, creating excitement for the movement.

Just as the PSERL had the *Christian Recorder*, the modern groups used a series of newspapers to get their message out. Starting with *The Crisis*, the official organ of the NAACP which was originally edited by Du Bois, black-run newspapers sprung up across the nation and worked together to distribute their messages. Some of these included *The Lighthouse* in Florida, the *Black Dispatch* in Oklahoma, the *Carolina Times* in North Carolina, and the *Birmingham World*, which were all black-run, “crusading papers and the ardent foes of Jim Crow.”¹⁴⁰ These papers published meeting and rally information, acts of violence and discrimination against blacks, and tallies of a politician’s efforts for or against the African American agenda. They were used in the same way as the *Christian Recorder*. Additionally, it goes without saying that with a movement as large as civil rights in the 1950s and 60s, national, white-owned papers would report on them, similar to the way the *Philadelphia Inquirer* did on the PSERL.

¹³⁹ “Civil Rights Scored Lag at Rally,” *The New York Times*, May 25, 1956; “50,000 expected here at Civil Rights Rally,” *The Washington Times Herald*, May 17, 1956; “15,000 Attend Garmet Center Civil Rights Rally,” *New York Times*, May 18, 1960; Carper, Elise, “Youths Rally for Civil Rights,” *The Washinston Post Herald*, June 23, 1960.

¹⁴⁰ Roefs, Wim, “Leading the Civil Rights Vanguard in South Carolina,” *Time Longer Than Rope*, Eds: Payne, Charles M. and Green, Adam, New York, New York U P, 2003, p 463.

A natural extension of the newspaper in terms of public media was the radio and television. The PSERL obviously did not have access to these media, but the modern groups did and they took full advantage of them. Rallies featuring speeches of key leaders such as Dr. King were broadcast. This technology increased the number of people that one man or one woman could reach. While the use of new technology may seem to be a difference between the two groups, it represents the same strategy to reach as many people as possible through public media.

The modern movement also used the court system to its advantage, as did the PSERL. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) was the landmark case that changed the face of education in America. It federally desegregated public schools throughout the nation. This case brought closure to the many state and individual cases that the PSERL and other groups were trying the 1870s. Finally, desegregation became a reality. This use of the court system to achieve goals is the major similarity, in terms of political opportunities, between the PSERL and the modern movement. The NAACP sponsored numerous individual court cases throughout the nation, including, "voting rights cases, teachers' pay equalization suits, and a variety of criminal defense cases."¹⁴¹ There was also a tradition in the South, in an effort to find loopholes in the 15th Amendment, of barring blacks from the Democratic primary, often more important than general election. Following a pattern of bringing "test cases" to court until one stuck, the NAACP finally achieved success in the *Smith v. Allwright* (1944) which allowed black

¹⁴¹ Emmons, Caroline, "A Bland, Scholarly, Teetotalling Sort of Man," *Time Longer than Rope*, Eds: Payne, Charles M. and Green, Adam. New York, New York U P, 2003, p 441.

people to participate in primary elections specifically.¹⁴² Just as the PSERL brought cases to trial for streetcar and school desegregation, the NAACP found support in the courts for voting rights and school desegregation.

The modern movement also benefited from the support of key white politicians who spoke at rallies. At one rally, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt pleaded with Southern states to protect African Americans' rights to civil liberties.¹⁴³ At another event, the mayor of Milwaukee addressed a civil rights crowd that had gathered and expressed support for their goals.¹⁴⁴ Leaders of the modern movement also met with President Kennedy, starting in August 1963, which provided leverage in terms of political opportunities.¹⁴⁵ With such direct exposure to leading political actors, the NAACP and others worked to change the minds of people who had the power to help them. The modern agitators were not dependent on other politicians, whereas the PSERL needed Sumner and others to talk for them. The modern groups had had direct meetings with the President and other prominent politicians and could make their case for themselves.

While all these similarities might lend the appearance of continuity between the two movements, there are fundamental differences in the structures, political climates, and tactics that make drawing an intellectually straight line between the two impossible. The movement in the 1950s and 1960s cannot be viewed simply as a continuation of the work done by the PSERL.

¹⁴² Emmons, "A Bland, Scholarly, Teetotaling Sort of Man," p 445

¹⁴³ "Civil Rights Lag Scored at Rally," *The New York Times* 25 May, 1956, p 18.

¹⁴⁴ "Milwaukee Police Break Up a Civil Rights Rally," *The New York Times*, August 31, 1967.

¹⁴⁵ "Leaders in Civil Rights March to Meet Kennedy Tomorrow," *New York Times*, 1963

While both movements were championed by large overarching organizations, the PSERL had less of a grassroots base, whereas the NAACP, SNCC, and others were greatly influenced by the grassroots movements that came to support and shape them. A large part of the modern movement originated from below—or in response to local imperatives—rather than following orders from above. These movements, “fed on all of the oppression they faced. The young people, the common, grassroots activists gathered new strength as the early 1960s became more violent. They fed on the individual atrocities that plagued their towns and urged the leaders of groups like SNCC to do more.”¹⁴⁶ Leaders understood that the strength of their movement lie with individual and small time organizing, praising the “unlimited potential of the individual,” to make a difference in the movement. In fact, one of the landmark books to cover the freedom struggle in the twentieth century titled itself *Local People*, which stressed the importance of local efforts in producing change.¹⁴⁷

Another difference in resources for the NAACP and SNCC was a fairly large amount of white participation among the rank and file of the workers and activists. Whereas the PSERL worked with key white politicians, there is no evidence of whites working and organizing on the ground for it. This dynamic was different in the 1950s and 1960s, when white people, mostly college students, enthusiastically joined rallies and demonstrations alongside African Americans. There were often thousands of white people in the crowd to hear Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speak. Additionally, SNCC began to specifically target Northern white college students for summer internships almost, working in their Southern offices and agitating alongside blacks

¹⁴⁶ Dittmer, John, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, Chicago, U of Illinois P, 1994, o173.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid p 175.

in the day-to-day business of protesting.¹⁴⁸ This mixed-race participation below the national level speaks to the fundamental differences between how the two movements organized and operated.

Structurally, the two groups also differed in the amount and type of female involvement they experienced. Women in the later movement held slightly less obvious and slightly less influential roles in the leadership of these organizations. They very seldom held elected positions that had formal sway over the course of the activities of the group. They were more active behind the scenes, with welfare work, for example. While these were not formal leadership roles, several writers have argued that informal leadership abilities and roles are equally as important to the success of the movement as are the formal ones.¹⁴⁹

The reasons for women's lack of formal leadership in the modern civil rights movement could be any number of things. Following WWII, a general attitude of middle class values emerged that stressed women's place in the home following their husbands' triumphant return from fighting a war. Veterans wanted their jobs back, so women headed home. This idea that men were best suited to hold outside the home positions translated to the civil rights movement. Women who were involved in the movement felt that their contributions to the movement, especially those by the way of leadership, were often rewarded not with

¹⁴⁸ "Milwaukee Police Break Up a Civil Rights Rally," *The New York Times*, August 31, 1967.

¹⁴⁹Robnett, "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement," p 1669.

acceptance as real acts of influence, but with a “paternalistic pat on the head,” as if the women were being congratulated on learning so well from their male counterparts.¹⁵⁰

This division of men in the public realm and women at home that seemed to pervade the civil rights movement may also have been a function of the burgeoning middle class. It was a luxury for women to stay home, meaning that her husband was successful enough at his job to afford her that luxury. For a racial class, such as black Americans, who strove to be accepted into the dominant social arenas, it makes sense that women who wanted to be likened to all the other middle class women would act in the manner similar to the white women whose acknowledgement as equals they had been working so hard to gain.

However, this idea of espousal for middle class achievement only holds strong for those women in the movement that were truly middle class, which was not a large percentage. Most of the women working for the modern movement were of the working class. While being of the working class is not a barrier in and of itself to leadership positions, especially within a grassroots movement, it would have made active participation difficult. The fact remains that women held almost no elected positions in any of the organizations. It is difficult, and beyond the scope of this project, to determine why that might be.

It is also argued, however, that many women held roles that were not officially important but who had a great deal of influence over the movement from behind the scenes. These authors argue that the women who ran the summer training schools for SNCC, for example, held powerfully influential position over the hearts and minds of future activists, and

¹⁵⁰ Robnett, “African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement,” p 1670.

could shape how the movement progressed by how they taught their classes.¹⁵¹

Another main area in which the two groups most noticeably diverge is in the area of political opportunities. Most notably, the men and women who worked for the modern groups had the right to vote. They had that aspect of direct participation that the men and women of the PSERL did not. The issue of the right to vote and how it affected each movement is difficult to describe in clear-cut terms. Most obviously, the two groups operated in different circumstances and political climates. Both black men and women in the 1950s and 1960s could vote as part of their constitutional right from the 15th and 19th amendments. The members of the PSERL could not until 1871. In reality, however, blacks in the 20th century were kept from the polls by a variety of mechanisms, including poll taxes, grandfather clauses, and outright violence. One investigation into why so few blacks were registered to vote, “revealed a pattern of discrimination throughout the nation, ranging from paternalistic coercion to kidnapping to beating, all designed to prevent blacks from voting.”¹⁵²

It is the violence that represents the largest difference between the PSERL and its more modern relatives. While the modern groups spoke about this violence to convince blacks that they needed to vote in order to change their circumstances, the extent and savageness of the violence encountered by black and white activists in the 1950s and 1960s forced those groups to work in a world unknown to the PSERL.

¹⁵¹ Robnett, “African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement,” p 1675.

¹⁵² Dittmer, “Local People,” p 5.

In 1962, a SNCC truck loaded with food and supplies for African Americans was threatened and the crew told not to deliver its goods. The driver disregarded the message and fed over 600 in Greenwood, Mississippi, people that day. The next day, the SNCC office there was set ablaze and burnt to the ground.¹⁵³ The violence was even worse in prisons where innumerable incidents occurred in which activists, both black and white, receiving beatings. . June Johnson was beaten and raped in jail for refusing to give up information regarding upcoming NAACP events. Annelle Ponder, a leader of SNCC, was beaten for refusing to call her jailors "sir."¹⁵⁴ Assassinations were common, from Medgar Evers, the NAACP organizer in Jackson, Mississippi, who was murdered in 1963, to Dr. King, who was murdered in 1968 at a public rally.¹⁵⁵ These "summer campaigns of white lawlessness, and winter blitzkrieg attacks on blacks," continued for decades throughout the late 20th century.¹⁵⁶ Leaders of the NAACP proclaimed in several newsletters and flyers that, "securing the ballot for blacks was essential in overcoming other abuses blacks faced, including outrageous violence."¹⁵⁷

This difference in political situations is only heightened when one considers the political climate in which the PSERL was working, as opposed to the violence and intimidation which modern activists faced. In 1865, the United States had just concluded the Civil War, the bloodiest conflict in its the history. Politicians, especially Northern and Republican ones,

¹⁵³ Dittmer, "Local People," P 147

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p 171

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p 201

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, p 173

¹⁵⁷ Emmons, "A Bland, Scholarly, Teetotalling Sort of Man," p 441.

wanted to limit the power of ex-Confederates and the Democrats who sympathized with them. As mentioned earlier, the PSERL actively positioned itself within the political spectrum as a force to counter-balance the restoration of power to traitors. It played on politicians existing fears and desires and made themselves into a viable alternative base of political power. Hence, there was a more sympathetic sentiment among these people for African Americans in the late 1860s because, when it came down to it, they were less evil than Confederates. No such political sympathy existed for the black activists in the 1950s and 1960s. While many whites were involved with the movement at the grassroots level, these groups attempted to fundamentally change established political and social rules that had been in place for half a century. They did not have the benefit of being able to point to a violent civil war and say, “we will help prevent those people from coming back,” as did the PSERL.

White critics of the movement tried to pin the blame for the violence on African Americans, suggesting that its public activism incited the conflicts and that their own unruliness had required violent retaliation. Opponents maintained that civil rights demonstrations and protests should be banned because of the disruption they caused. The newspapers decried, “the lawless and belligerence of these mobs,” and the, “interracial violence which they propagate.”¹⁵⁸ Many news articles mentioned the most belligerent and aggressive of the groups caused the most trouble, and argued that this trouble was made their struggle illegitimate and not worthy of consideration.¹⁵⁹ This great, “public indignation,”¹⁶⁰ acted to diminish access to

¹⁵⁸ “Tactics on Rights,” *The New York Times*, July 14, 1963.

¹⁵⁹ “Kennedy and Civil Rights,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 21, 1963; “2 Jurors chosen in Trenton Trial,” *The New York Times*, March 6, 1951; “Most Whites Found Opposed to Civil Rights Demonstrations,” *New York Times*, August 16, 1966.

political opportunities for the civil rights activist. While blacks and their white supporters could certainly vote, in many places they were prevented from doing so by tactical laws or lived in areas where politicians would almost certainly be voted out of office for showing support for civil rights.

This violence and lack of justice in the court system led black activists to create a tactic not seen with the PSERL, that of purposeful non-violence. The PSERL employed peaceful tactics for the most part, but non-violence as a tactic was not specifically on the radar. The modern movement was faced with massive and brutal violence and in response chose to enact a policy of non-violence to enhance the effectiveness of their protests. This idea of non-violent political action had its roots in another country altogether. Mahatma Ghandi was a political and revolutionary leader in India who advocated both for democracy and independence for India and independence for Pakistan. He championed the idea of non-violent resistance, which has been used in many parts of the world, including by Dr. King and other civil rights activists. Young people were instrumental in the non-violence movement. As one scholar has observed: “determined to hold strong in the face of rabid violence, the students steadfastly resorted to non-violence as a stance in combating prejudice.”¹⁶¹ This reliance on non-violence protest differentiates the PSERL from the modern movement.

The modern movement, however, also used additional mobilization tactics that were unused by the PSERL. Just as the PSERL faced some difficulty in persuading people to act, often

¹⁶⁰ “Kennedy and Civil Rights,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 21, 1963.

¹⁶¹ Roefs, “Leading the Civil Rights Vanguard in South Carolina,” p 463

linked to the fear of white reprisal, the modern groups at times encountered this same roadblock to full mobilization. There is a difference between watching a rally on the television, and taking time off from work, getting into a car and driving to D.C. and paying for a hotel and food for the rally. There is a difference, in other words, between watching and participating. Some of the hesitation was a factor of simple economic hardship. A black housemaid from Jackson Mississippi might simply not be able to attend a march in Washington.

Much of the hesitation, however, came from fear of the white reprisal from challenges to the social status quo. In South Carolina, for example, the black Teacher's Association stubbornly resisted change because the leaders of the organization had been given well-paid positions by the white school board and feared losing them if they tried to help other black teachers. This all too often, "near-sighted view of the potential civil rights progress to be had and the selfish thoughtlessness for others of their race,"¹⁶² could hold the movement back. Whites could claim that all blacks were happy because of such examples. This hesitation and the reasons for it are similar to what the PSERL experienced. The main resource mobilization tactic that the modern movements used that was not present in the league was the creation of bonds through specific common experiences. SNCC, in particular, sponsored training camps, summer programs, and bus rides designed to bring activists together and build identities before "hitting the streets" as activists. The organizations also ran training in how to meet violence and other obstacles from white opponents. These experiences had the additional benefit of building group solidarity. Throughout 1963 and 1964, SNCC organized "freedom rides" in which supporters boarded buses in an attempt to ride them across state lines. They were almost

¹⁶² Roefs, "Leading the Civil Rights Vanguard in South Carolina," P 473.

never successful and quite often stopped by police or militia and arrested. The riders were taken to prison together and beaten together, which forged even tighter bonds among many of the participants.¹⁶³

While there are many similarities and differences that can be drawn between the PSERL and modern civil rights movements, the largest single difference, and the one that perhaps made the modern movement so dramatic and gained it so much attention, was the rampant and horrifying violence to which the activists of the modern movement were subjected. Lynchings were common, court cases were almost always unfair, beatings in and out of jail were frequent, and intimidation was a daily reality. As far as my research has revealed, members, leaders, and allies of the league were not subjected to overt violence. The only exception is Octavius Catto, who was murdered in a street fight, in 1871; the first day blacks were permitted to vote. There were street riots and racial intimidation, the beginning of a century of violence and intimidation that would face African Americans as they tried to exercise their democratic rights.

¹⁶³ Dittmer, *Local People*, p 97.

Conclusion

Political change takes time. In the case of equality of political and social rights, it took America over 100 years to extend this equality to its black citizens. One of the first organized groups that fought for this equality was the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League. This was a group active primarily in 1864-1880. On the surface, the PSERL seems to be closely similar to the modern groups, those that fought for equality in the 20th century. In many ways, they are. There were, however, fundamental differences between the two groups that drawing deeper connections beyond these shallow investigations of actions is impossible. The modern groups were based primarily in grassroots action and each branch or locale of groups such as the NAACP and SNCC had their own personality, sometimes their own agenda. The PSERL, in comparison was hierarchically structured and acted very much within the confines of that hierarchy, with decisions on agendas and actions coming from the top. Agitators in the 20th century also had a main obstacle that the league did not, violence. The modern groups suffered horrendous violence, terror, and aggression at the hands of those who would maintain that status quo. This atmosphere of danger and fear was so deeply ingrained in their actions and story, that to study them without looking at the effects of such violence would be to ignore a main feature of their story. The league had to contend with no such brutality.

The struggle for equality under the law for all social groups has been strong in this country since it was founded, and is still going on today for many social groups. This work has been the study of but one of the many trying to make America a better country. We owe every person who fights for equality a great debt of gratitude.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Manuscripts

The Leon Gardiner Collection of Negro History, Collection 0008, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The Records of the United States Senate, Record Group 46, The National Archives, Washington D.C.

The Records of the United States House of Representatives, Record Group 233, The National Archives, Washington D.C.

The Pennsylvania State Senate Records, Series 7.6. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Printed Matter

Nesbit, William, "Suggestions of the President of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League, to the Colored People of Pennsylvania," The Leon Gardiner Collection of American Negro Historical Society Records, Collection 0008, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP).

Newspapers

The Christian Recorder

The Philadelphia Inquirer

The Patriot

The New York Times

The Washington Times

The Meadville Crawford Journal

The Pittsburg Post Gazette

The Wilkes-Barre Leader

The Washington Post

Secondary Sources

Books

Alexander, Leslie, M. *African or American? Black Identity and Political Activism in New York City, 1784-1861*, Chicago, U of Illinois P, 2008.

Dittmer, John, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, Chicago, U of Illinois P, 1994.

Articles

Banaszak, Lee Ann, "Introduction to the U.S. Women's Movement in Global Perspective," *The U.S. Women's Movement in Global Perspective*, New York, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2006,

Brown, Elsa Barkley, "Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life and the Transition from Slavery to Freedom," *Time Longer than Rope*, Eds: Payne, Charles M; Green, Adam, New York, New York U P, 2003.

Davis, Hugh, "The Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League and the Northern Black Struggle for Legal Equality, 1864-1877," *The Pennsylvania Magazine for History and Biography*, Vol. 126, No. 4 (2002), pp611-34.

Ekland-Olsen, Sheldon; Snow, David; Zurcher, Louis A, "Social Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential Recruitment," *American Sociological Review*, 45(5), pp 787-801.

Emmons, Caroline, "A Bland, Scholarly, Teetotaling Sort of Man," *Time Longer than Rope*, Eds: Payne, Charles M. and Green, Adam, New York, New York U P, 2003.

Hanchett, Catherine M, "George Boyer Vashon, 1824-1878: Black Educator, Poet, Fighter for Equal Rights," *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, 68(4) pp 333-349.

Lehman, Christopher Paul, "Civil Rights in Twilight: The End of the Civil Rights Movement Era in 1973," *Journal of Black Studies*, 36 (3), pp. 415-428.

Lerche, Charles Jr, "Congressional Interpretations of the Guarantee of a Republican Form of Government during Reconstruction," *The Journal of Southern History*, 15(2) May 1949, pp 192-211.

Price, Edward Jr, "School Segregation in Nineteenth Century Pennsylvania," *The Journal of Pennsylvania History*, pp 121-137.

Robnett, Belinda, "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965: Gender, Leadership, and Micromobilization," *The American Journal of Sociology*, 101(6), May, 1996.

Roefs, Wim, "Leading the Civil Rights Vanguard in South Carolina," *Time Longer Than Rope*, Eds: Payne, Charles M. and Green, Adam, New York, New York U P, 2003.

Silcox, Harry C, "Philadelphia Negro Educator: Jacob C. White, Jr 1837-1902," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 97(1) pp 75-98.

Snow, David A; Benford, Robert D, "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization," *International Social Movement Research*, Vol.1. 1988, pp 197-217.

Weigley, Russel F, "The Border City in Civil War: 1854-1865," *Philadelphia, a 300 year History*, Ed. Wolf, Edwin. New York, W.& W. Norton Co, 1982.

Online Sources

"John Langston," Heroes of the Republican Party,
http://www.gop.com/index.php/issues/heroes/john_langston/ January 21, 2011.

"Journal of the Senate of the United States of America, 1789-1873 Thursday, February 8, 1866,"
Congressional Records Online, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?hlaw:1:./temp/~ammem_edEQ: January 21, 2011.

Pennsylvania Legislative Record, April 1882,
<http://www.archive.org/details/legislativecor00penn>, January 21, 2011.

Smith, V. Chapman, "The Triumph and Tragedy of Octavius V. Catto," US History Online,
<http://www.ushistory.org/people/catto.htm> January 23, 2011

The Union League Official Website, www.unionleague.org.

US Constitution, US Constitution Online, <http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html#Am13>,
January 24, 2011

"William Nesbit Replies," Afrolumens Project Online,
http://www.afrolumens.org/rising_free/colonization03.html, January 23, 2011.

ACADEMIC VITA of Amanda Marie Fellmeth

Amanda Marie Fallmeth
112 Cardinal Way
North Wales, PA 19454
amandafellmeth@gmail.com

Education: Bachelor of Arts Degree in History, Pennsylvania State University, Spring 2011
Bachelor of Arts Degree in International Politics, Pennsylvania State University,
Spring 2011
Honors in History
Thesis Title: The First Civil Rights Movement: The Pennsylvania State Equal Rights
League in Movement Culture
Thesis Supervisor: Dr. William Blair

Related Experience:

Internship at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Summer: 2010
Supervisor: Ms. Dana Dorman

Research Assistant, The George and Ann Richards Civil War Era Center
School Terms: Spring 2009-Spring 2011
Supervisor: Dr. William Blair

Awards:

Dean's List: 2007-2011
Academic Excellence Award: 2007-2011
Graduation with Distinguished Honors

Presentations/Activities

Phi Sigma Pi, National Honor Fraternity
Director of Staff Training Program, YMCA Tockwogh Camp and Conference
Center