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Justin Rubino March 28, 2022

Building a Blueprint for Effective Mass Protest:

A Study of Asa Philip Randolph's Coalition Building, 1925–1941

by

Justin Rubino

Dr. Jason Morgan Ward

Advisor

Department of History

Dr. Jason Morgan Ward

Advisor

Dr. Jonathan Prude

Committee Member

Dr. Tehila Sasson

Committee Member

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Abstract

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In 1925, Asa Philip Randolph formed the first Black union known as the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. The formation of the union and his subsequent actions would have a significant impact on the future of protest for disempowered groups. This three chapter study establishes Randolph's blueprint for mass protest. Over a period of sixteen years, Randolph established alliances with like-minded organizations to advocate for labor reform. He devised a way to exercise the power of his coalitions, creating the March on Washington Movement. In 1941, his mass protest strategy resulted in an executive order known as Executive Order 8802, which banned discrimination in the defense industry and established the Fair Employment Practices Committee. His victory in 1941 proved the effectiveness of his strategy. Therefore, when he organized the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the 1941 March served as the blueprint. This time Randolph's strategy of mass protest led to an event attended by 250,000 people. The 1963 March was the result of Randolph's work that began in 1925 when he agreed to form the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

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Introduction

A. Philip Randolph (seated center) and other leaders of
the 1963 March on Washington. (U.S. National Archives)[1]

The black and white photograph depicts a group of civil rights leaders seated in front of the Lincoln Memorial as they prepare for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963 (the 1963 March). The man seated at the center stares out into the distance while the other men are conversing with each other as if he is not there. He is the focus of the photograph but not of the men surrounding him. The man is Asa Philip Randolph.

In many ways, the photograph is symbolic of Randolph's labor advocacy. His work as a master coalition builder was at the center of the creation of the 1941 March on Washington (MOW). However, his coalition work has not received the attention it deserves. The MOW, which was carefully planned and ultimately canceled, became the blueprint for the 1963 March. While many historians have studied Randolph as a civil rights and labor leader, this study

[1] A. Philip Randolph (seated, center) and other leaders of the 1963 March on Washington. Washington, DC, U.S. National Archives, 1963.

focuses specifically on Randolph's strategy and coalition building. As a labor activist, this meant that Randolph partnered with individuals and organizations that complemented his labor agenda. Throughout his years as a labor organizer, he partnered with recognized organizations such as the American Federation of Labor (AFL), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League (NUL), and the Chicago Women's Clubs. He also established close working relationships with W.E.B. DuBois and New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia. Depending on his desired outcome, Randolph would partner one on one or form coalitions. If not for Randolph's coalition building strategy, the men in the photograph might not have experienced the momentous day on August 28, 1963 when 250,000 marchers from all over the country converged on Washington, DC. They marched for economic equality, higher minimum wages, school desegregation, and civil rights legislation. Most significantly, they marched so that Black people could be recognized as full citizens of the United States.

Randolph's coalition strategy and its centrality to the creation of the March on Washington Movement intrigued me and inspired me to trace its history. My search led me back to 1925 when Randolph organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP or the Brotherhood), a group of Black men who worked as attendants in railway sleeping cars. The porters catered to white passengers on cross country train trips while enduring racial slurs, low wages, and long hours. Randolph set out to unionize the porters so that they could demand the same wages and working conditions as the white train conductors. He worked tirelessly with the BSCP creating a platform for economic empowerment and eventual recognition by the Pullman Company through a collective bargaining agreement. Randolph's journey with the Brotherhood began a lifetime of coalition building to fight for economic equality for Black labor.

To analyze the birth and growth of Randolph's strategy for effective mass protest founded on coalition building, I rely on a variety of primary sources. Randolph's writings in *The Messenger*, a publication he founded in 1917, became the voice of the BSCP in 1925. Accordingly, his editorials and articles in this magazine reflect the components of his labor strategy. Randolph also wrote extensively in African American newspapers including the *New York Amsterdam News*, the *Chicago Defender*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and the *Baltimore Afro-American*. I also reviewed and analyzed articles Randolph wrote for the American Federation of Labor's official publication, the *Federationist*. Additional primary sources that I relied upon included Randolph's personal papers archived in ProQuest's history vault as well which included correspondence, memoranda, speeches, newspaper articles, BSCP formation documents, BSCP convention minutes, and AFL convention minutes. I also reviewed Randolph's testimony before Congress found in the Congressional Record. With respect to Randolph's meetings with President Roosevelt, I reviewed the archives of the NAACP and the White House. For the 1963 March, I reviewed interviews of Randolph found in the archives of the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

I interrogated each of these sources to extract the strategies Randolph devised to advocate for labor rights and the economic empowerment of Black people. Through the information, I built a narrative around Randolph's place in history as a master coalition builder. The primary sources that I selected for this thesis are certainly sources that other historians have addressed. However, I used them in a unique manner to demonstrate Randolph's process and masterful execution. He used his expertise to create the BSCP, to force the Pullman Company to recognize the union, and to pressure the government to give Black workers equal access to jobs in the defense industry.

I ground my work in the context of biographies as well as historical scholarship that centers on the BSCP and the March on Washington Movement (MOWM). My thesis extends the work of these biographies by connecting Randolph's accomplishments to his coalition building skills. The primary biographies of Randolph are written by Cornelius Bynum, Andrew Kersten, and Paula Pfeffer. Bynum and Kersten focus on Randolph's views on race and class and his commitment to socialism.[2] Bynum's biography connects Randolph's views on race and class during the interwar period to the labor rights platform he created.[3] Kersten sees several facets to Randolph that include his separate roles as "a political radical, a Civil Rights activist, a labor leader, and an advocate for progressive change in the United States."[4] Pfeffer's biography demonstrates that Randolph was an effective leader and the father of the civil rights movement.

The BSCP is intertwined with Randolph's labor work and strategies. Studies of the BSCP therefore focus on Randolph. The major works on the Brotherhood include the scholarship of Beth Tompkins Bates, William Hamilton Harris, and Eric Arnesen.[5] Their monographs outline the history of the BSCP, its struggles for recognition, and how it generally advocated for civil rights. Bates links the fundamental success of the BSCP to Randolph's agenda of economic empowerment.[6] She argues that the BSCP began as a social movement that advocated for

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[2] Cornelius Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, Urbana, Il.: University of Illinois Press, 2011; Andrew Kersten, *A Philip Randolph: A Life in the Vanguard*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007; Paula Pfeffer, *Philip Randolph, Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement*, Baton Rouge, La: Louisiana State University Press, 1996.
[3] Cornelius Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, xiv.
[4] Andrew Kersten, *A Philip Randolph: A Life in the Vanguard*, vii.
[5] Beth Tomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in America 1925–1945,* North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003*;* William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925-1937*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1977; Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color: Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.
[6] Beth Tomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in America 1925–1945*, 150.

"manhood rights," meaning the right for Black people to "equal economic opportunity."[7] Bates connects the BSCP to the civil rights movement. Harris' monograph focuses on the formation of the Brotherhood, its struggles, and Randolph's leadership skills. Arnesen focuses on the formation of the BSCP as a precursor to the civil rights movement.[8] My thesis expands this scholarship by deepening the connection between Randolph's leadership and the alliances he built.

The MOWM was Randolph's invention, so works relating to the movement contain relevant information relating to his strategy. Leading studies of the MOWM include works by David Lucander and William Jones.[9] Both Lucander and Jones provide insight into Randolph's thought process in conceiving of the march and the massive task of organizing it. Their monographs even outline all of the notable participants Randolph gathered to support the march.[10] Therefore, my thesis supplements the scholarship of Lucander and Jones by exploring Randolph's strategy and alliance building technique in the years leading up to 1941 and then tying Randolph's work from 1925–1940 to the 1941 March.

This thesis traces the evolution of Randolph's coalition building from an exercise for union recognition to a tool to place extreme pressure on the President to issue an executive order through the threat of mass protest. The chapters that follow are broken down into three periods: 1925–1932, 1933–1940, and 1941. Chapter I begins in 1925, the year Randolph agreed to form the BSCP. This was also a time when there was a strong anti-union sentiment in the nation. As a

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[7] Beth Tomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in America 1925–1945*, 90.
[8] Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color : Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality*, 56.
[9] David Lucander, *Winning the War for Democracy : the March on Washington Movement, 1941—1946,* Chicago, Illinois : University of Illinois Press, 2014; William Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights*, New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014.
[10] David Lucander, *Winning the War on Democracy: The March on Washington Movement,* 10.

result, there was what appeared to be unconquerable resistance to recognition of a Black union. Black workers also had to suffer the consequences of Jim Crow laws and widespread discrimination, severely limiting employment options. The Great Depression added an additional layer of challenges, making an already grim situation even worse. Notwithstanding these barriers to successful union organization, this period showcases Randolph's strategy. Randolph identified the AFL as an important ally for his quest to have the Brotherhood recognized by the Pullman Company. He believed that the AFL would give the union credibility to pave the way to a collective bargaining agreement. He further built one on one alliances with the NAACP and W.E.B. Dubois to build BSCP membership. These were the first of many partnerships that Randolph would form in furtherance of his labor driven objectives.

During the period covered by Chapter II, 1933–1940, Randolph built the Brotherhood's membership and used administrative proceedings to demand recognition. His work was strengthened by the New Deal in 1933 and President Roosevelt's pro-union stance that was reflected in legislation he passed. Randolph built relationships with the AFL, the NAACP, the NUL, and the National Negro Congress. He also formed a close friendship with New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia. He built a coalition among the Brotherhood, the AFL and the NAACP to secure an amendment of the Railway Labor Act and a collective bargaining agreement. Randolph pivoted his focus to discrimination in the military and defense industry with the start of World War II in 1939. An alliance with the NAACP and its President Walter White led to a meeting with President Franklin Roosevelt to discuss discrimination in the armed forces and defense industry. When President Roosevelt failed to offer a satisfactory solution, Randolph was inspired to combine the coalitions he built to create a mass protest to pressure the President to end discrimination in the military and defense industry.

Chapter III covers the 1941 MOW and the MOWM that emerged in its aftermath. In 1941, World War II was in full swing, and President Roosevelt was torn between his desire to support Black labor initiatives and his allegiances to southern segregationist Democrats. Randolph realized he had to devise a drastic solution. He combined his coalitions partners and added new ones to form the MOWM and then planned a protest in Washington, D.C. on a scale never experienced before by the nation. The threat of protest supported by a massive coalition of Black civil rights organizations and leaders pushed Roosevelt to negotiate. In exchange for Randolph's cancellation of the protest, the President signed an executive order to end discrimination in the defense industry. Randolph's strategy was proven to be successful.

This three chapter study establishes Randolph's blueprint for mass protest. Over a period of sixteen years, Randolph built alliances with like-minded organizations to advocate for labor reform. He devised a way to exercise the power of his coalitions, creating the MOWM. His victory in 1941 proved the effectiveness of his strategy. Therefore, when he organized the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the 1941 March served as the blueprint. This time Randolph's strategy of mass protest came to fruition at an event attended by 250,000 people. The 1963 March was the culmination of Randolph's work that began in 1925 when he agreed to form the BSCP.

By focusing on Randolph's strategy in building a blueprint for mass protest, this thesis outlines a framework for understanding Randolph that could be applied to all struggles for social justice. Complacency is the greatest enemy of the fight for social justice. Randolph's strategy for mass protest must be revisited when there is so much injustice, hatred, and oppression not just in the United States but all over the world. Reflecting on Randolph's life, activists must organize,

be uncompromising, inspire unity, and must capture the attention of the government through mass protest.

Chapter I

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the Birth of Randolph's Coalition Building Strategy, 1925–1932

The years 1925–1932 were pivotal years for the struggle for economic equality of Black laborers because during those years Randolph organized and built the membership of the first Black union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP or the Brotherhood). The years were personally significant for Randolph as a labor organizer and activist because he devised a signature strategy that would bring him success throughout his career. He realized that he needed to build alliances to recruit members for the BSCP and to win the recognition it deserved. The key component of Randolph's strategy was coalition building.

Randolph's commitment to labor activism predated his 1925 affiliation with the Brotherhood. He founded *The Messenger* in 1917 along with economist Chandler Owen. *The Messenger* was a publication dedicated to the economic empowerment of the Black community. Randolph firmly believed that "workers need[ed]…more wages for their work, longer hours for leisure recreation and education, and better conditions under which to work."[11] Therefore, Randolph would frequently write articles in *The Messenger* framed to educate and empower Black laborers. A topic he often wrote about was the birth of the "New Negro." According to Randolph, the "New Negro" was metaphorically the "dawn of a new day." A day when Black men and women demanded "every privilege accorded to citizens and men under the Constitution."[12] The "New Negro" was far more than a concept associated with rights for individual workers. Instead, the "New Negro" was synonymous with the "quest" for full

[11] Philip Randolph, "Negroes Organizing in Socialist Party." *The Messenger*, Vol. II , no. 7, July 1918, 30.
[12] Philip Randolph, "Negro Elective Representation" *The Messenger* Vol. I. No. 11, November 1917, 21.

recognition of personhood. In other words, it was the road to "black humanity," according to Randolph.[13]

At the time Randolph founded *The Messenger*, he was an active member in the Socialist Party. As a labor activist, it was not surprising that Randolph supported socialism as activists throughout the United States were inspired by the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. According to historian Tony Michels, the Russian Revolution created "visions of equality and justice" in the minds of the American left.[14] However, in the wake of the revolution, disenchantment with the Socialist Party grew in response to the restrictions on freedoms in Russia.[15] As oppression in Russia increased, support in the United States for socialism diminished. As a result, by 1925, Randolph became unsatisfied with the Socialist Party. He came to the realization that the Socialist Party was not sensitive to the struggles that were unique to African American workers.[16] Cognizant that the Socialist Party would not pave the way for full citizenship rights of Black workers, Randolph decided that unionization was the way to further the advancement of the concept of the "New Negro" and for Black workers to achieve economic freedom.[17]

Once Randolph embraced unionization as the path forward, he encouraged Black workers to join the AFL.[18] This was the first manifestation of Randolph's strategy of coalition building. According to labor historian David Montgomery, during the early part of the twentieth century, the prominent belief among unionists was that they could reshape "the American republic in

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[13] Philip Randolph, "The New Negro What is He?*" The Messenger*, Vol, IV No. 8, August 1920, 73-74.
[14] Tony Michels, "The Russian Revolution and the American Left: A Long View from the Twenty-First Century," *Labor,* Vol. 14, no. 3, 2017, 17–21, 21.
[15] Tony Michels, "The Russian Revolution and the American Left: A Long View from the Twenty-First Century," *Labor*, 21.
[16] Beth Tomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in America 1925–1945*, 37.
[17] Beth Tomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in America 1925–1945,* 37.
[18] Beth Tomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in America 1925–1945,* 37.

accordance with the aspirations of its working class" by "working within labor's own self-legitimizing federation."[19] However, when World War I erupted and labor opportunities increased, workers were emboldened and became more extreme in their demands. This radicalism continued in the post World War I period, and Montgomery argues that union demands became "too menacing for business and the state to tolerate."[20] The end result was that unions were excluded from many corporations throughout the 1920s.[21] According to Industrial and Labor Relations Expert James O. Morris, obstacles placed in the way of unionism were increased wages, lack of legislation favorable to unions, and employer "hostility" towards unions.[22] Responding to anti-union sentiments, in the early 1920s, the AFL assumed a more conservative approach. Montgomery observes that in response to all of the radicalism it endured during World War I, the AFL "imposed a new orthodoxy on its counsels" which meant that it opposed radical demands such as industry nationalization and shorter work hours.[23] While the AFL survived through the anti-union period, its membership declined.[24] Randolph likely saw this as an opportune time for a Black union to affiliate with a predominantly white organization. In all events, the AFL offered affiliation with an established organization that did not have the taint of radicalism, supporting Randolph's decision.

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[19] David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor*: *The Workplace, the State and Labor Activism, 1865-1925,* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987, 6.
[20] David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor*: *The Workplace, the State and Labor Activism, 1865-1925*, 6.
[21] David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor*: *The Workplace, the State and Labor Activism, 1865-1925*, 6.
[22] James O. Morris, "The AFL in the 1920's: A Strategy of Defense." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*. Vol.11, no. 4, 1958, 572–90, 572.
[23] David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor*: *The Workplace, the State and Labor Activism, 1865-1925*, 7.
[24] David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor*: *The Workplace, the State and Labor Activism, 1865-1925,* 348.

Randolph's views on labor and unionism drew a group of Black workers to enlist his help in 1925. The group consisted of sleeping car porters who worked for the Pullman Company. The Pullman Company manufactured luxury railway cars that passengers could sleep in on long trips.[25] It also used the luxury sleeper cars in its railway service. Its founder, George Pullman, began hiring African American men right after the Civil War. Many of Pullman's initial employees were former slaves.[26] The job of the Pullman porter consisted of waiting on wealthy, white passengers who traveled in the sleeping cars. Due to Jim Crow prejudice, jobs were hard to come by even for Black people who were college educated. Therefore, by the 1920s, some of the porters were college educated.[27] The job paid low wages and required long hours, and the porters relied heavily on the tips they received from wealthy passengers.[28] The Pullman porters viewed Randolph as an obvious choice to assist them in unionizing because of his dedication to labor rights and his views on unionization.

Ashley L. Totten, a Pullman porter from New York who was also a loyal subscriber and reader of *The Messenger,* reached out to Randolph in June 1925. Totten saw unionization as the remedy for the discrimination against the Pullman porters. They were working longer hours and making far less money than the white conductors whose jobs were far less rigorous. Totten invited Randolph to meet with a group of porters in New York City to educate them about unions and collective bargaining.[29] The group met secretly as they feared the Pullman company would fire them if word got out that they were thinking of unionizing. Randolph met with Totten, W.H. Des Verney, and Roy Lancaster at Des Verney's home in New York City. The time was "ripe"

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[25] Beth Tomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in America 1925–1945,* 17.
[26] Beth Tomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in America 1925–1945,* 17.
[27] Beth Tomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in America 1925–1945,* 18.
[28] Beth Tomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in America 1925–1945,* 18.
[29] Andrew Edmund Kersten, A. *Philip Randolph: A Life in the Vanguard*, 25-26.

for a Black labor movement, according to Randolph, because recently tightened restrictions on immigration from eastern and southern Europe had led to a labor shortage. As a result, he saw the moment as a "strategic" time for Black workers to demand higher wages.[30]

Totten, Des Verney, and Lancaster were optimistic that Randolph could lead them to success. Totten believed that *The Messenger* would spread the word of the union and that Randolph's reputation in connection with labor organization would be the necessary element for recognition by the Pullman Company.[31] Impressed with and inspired by Randolph's ideologies, the porters asked Randolph to help them form a union. While Randolph initially expressed reluctance, he ultimately agreed.[32]

Randolph stepped into the role as organizer with an eye toward the goal at hand: to build nationwide membership in the union. Randolph's strategic coalition building skills were an essential step to attracting members as well as nationwide support. He immediately reached out to Frank Crosswaith, the Executive Secretary of the Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers, an organization formed by a group of Black labor leaders whose mission was to get Black laborers to unionize.[33] Crosswaith agreed to assist and eventually joined the Brotherhood on a full-time basis.[34] Randolph also looked to the NAACP for support and it endorsed the union's efforts and also provided financial support.[35] Randolph separately sought

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[30] Philip Randolph, "The Negro and the Labor Movement," *The Messenger* Vol. VIII No. 7, July 1925, 261, 275.
[31] William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925–1937*, 34.
[32] Andrew Edmund Kersten, A. *Philip Randolph: A Life in the Vanguard*, 26.
[33] Philip Randolph Letter to Frank Crosswaith, September 8, 1925, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080010603.
[34] Frank Crosswaith Letter to Philip Randolph, September 24, 1925, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080010603; William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925–1937*, 38.
[35] Philip Randolph Letter to James Weldon Johnson, NAACP, January 19, 1926, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080010603.

and received approval from W.E.B. DuBois, one of the founders of the NAACP. This support was quite powerful as Du Bois was one of the most influential Black scholars in the 1920s. Du Bois was the editor of *The Crisis,* an African American magazine. After Randolph contacted him, Du Bois wrote an editorial denouncing the Pullman Company comparing Pullman porters to "driven slaves."[36] With the support of Crosswaith, the NAACP, and Du Bois, Randolph immediately held meetings throughout the country attended by thousands of porters as well as labor leaders.[37]

Randolph's efforts were met with overwhelming enthusiasm from the porters. At one meeting in New York City, while no more than 75 people were expected to attend, the meeting drew a crowd of 480 people who crammed into an auditorium at the Imperial Lodge of Elks. They came to hear Randolph speak. He did not disappoint his audience and delivered an inspiring speech outlining the "insults and indignities" that the porters suffered, and he proposed a methodical approach to demanding "humane treatment" and "American standard" wages.[38]

Hoping to build a coalition between the Pullman porters and the Black community, Randolph delivered a speech at one membership meeting that he knew would resonate with the Black community and the Pullman workers. He presented the concept of economic freedom of Black people as "manhood rights," a term "inextricably linked with economic freedom," according to historian Beth Tompkins Bates.[39] Manhood status equated to "suffrage and citizenship in African American history."[40] The concept was articulated in W.E.B. Du Bois' *The*

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[36] Editorial, W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Crisis,* Vol. XXXII, April 1926, 271.
[37] "Sleeping Car Porters Held Mass Meeting," *The Chicago Defender,* September 26, 1925, 3.
[38] "A. Philip Randolph Given Tremendous Ovation-Scores Apply for Membership in New Union," *The New York Amsterdam News*, September 2, 1925, 9.
[39] Beth Tomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in America 1925–1945,* 36.
[40] Patricia H. Hinchey, *The Souls of Black Folk by W. E. B. Du Bois* 1909*,* Gorham, ME: Meyers Education Press, 2018, 9.

Souls of Black Folk where Du Bois called for resistance when people "Strove singly and together as men...not as slaves."[41] Black people had to be recognized as Black and "American."[42] The message of manhood rights had universal appeal because it indicated advancement toward economic and political rights for Black people. From the outset, Randolph ensured that the message of the BSCP would unite the porters and enable them to align with other similar groups and individuals. He proclaimed that Black people "shall take their place in the sun of democracy, of citizenship, and economic welfare."[43] Randolph's compelling speeches coupled with the support he received from the alliances he built with labor leaders, the NAACP, and Du Bois prompted many of the attendees to join the union on the spot.[44]

Randolph used *The Messenger* to gather support from the Black community for the BSCP and unionization in general. He described the union as a vehicle to promote education, organization, and agitation to "[e]mancipate the overworked and underpaid."[45] It was Randolph's intent to empower the Pullman workers as well as "all Negro workers."[46] He hoped that out of the suffering of the porters they could "bring forth a new, vital, stirring message for industrial peace with justice" to advance "the cause of humanity."[47] Randolph viewed his role not only as that of organizer, but also as an educator. In his mind, publicly demanding recognition of the union by Pullman was "a national school in economics for the race."[48] His language suggests that he was trying to awaken the Black community to direct its attention towards wages and working

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[41] Patricia H. Hinchey, *The Souls of Black Folk by W. E. B. Du Bois,* 9.
[42] Patricia H. Hinchey, *The Souls of Black Folk by W. E. B. Du Bois,* 9.
[43] Circular for BSCP October 30, 1926, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder: 0016080340001.
[44] "N.Y. Porters Launch New Labor Union," *The Baltimore Afro-American*, September 5, 1925, 3.
[45] "Emancipate Pullman Porters," *The Messenger*, Vol. VII No. 9, September 1925, 336.
[46] Philip Randolph, "Editorial," *American Federationist*, November 1926, 1339.
[47] Philip Randolph, "Editorial," *American Federationist*, November 1926, 1339.
[48] Philip Randolph "The State of the Brotherhood *The Messenger,* Vol. IX No. 2, February 1927, 55.

conditions, transforming the porters' struggle into a community struggle. Due to the prominence of the NAACP, its alliance with Randolph gave his ideologies a wider reach beyond the pages of *The Messenger.*

Through coalition building, Randolph convinced a community that unjustifiably held Pullman in high regard to see the unflattering side of Pullman. Religion was important to the Black community, so Randolph's focus on support from clergymen was critical. The strategic partnership formed with the religious community put pressure on Pullman to recognize the union. As a result, on March 14, 1926, Randolph issued a press release announcing that a conference was held in New York City which included "[n]ine of the most outstanding clergymen representing practically 100,000 citizens." The clergymen backed the Brotherhood, and according to Randolph, they resolved to "preach…a Brotherhood sermon from their respective pulpits."[49] After a "gripping" editorial in *America*, a Christian publication, Father John LaFarge, a Jesuit priest dedicated to the fight against racism, wrote a strong letter of support for the Brotherhood. At Randolph's request, the letter was sent to porters around the country, several African-American news publications, and individuals.[50] As the Pullman Company was held in high regard in Chicago, the location of its corporate headquarters, it was essential to build an alliance with the clergy in Chicago. Randolph turned to Rev. Junius C. Austin, a clergyman who founded the Pilgrim Baptist Church in Chicago. Rev. Austin expressed support for the Brotherhood and allowed its meetings to be held in his church.[51]

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[49] Press Release, March 14, 1926, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 001608034000.
[50] Philip Randolph Letter to Father John LaFarge, October 10, 1927, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 001608034000.
[51] Beth Tomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in America 1925–1945,* 76.

Randolph also built coalitions with women's organizations. In *The Messenger,* Randolph wrote extensively about his construct of the "New Negro Woman," whom he defined as "ever conscious of her historic and noble mission of doing her bit toward the liberation of her people in particular and the human race in general."[52] Given the challenge of enlisting Black support in Chicago, Randolph turned to the city's women's groups for support. In 1926, he approached Irene Goins and Ida B. Wells for assistance. Irene Goins was a suffragist and a women's union supporter.[53] Ida B. Wells was a renowned journalist and activist. Both women were active in the Black Women's Club Movement which began in the 1890s with a mission to ensure the protection and welfare of the Black race.[54] It consisted of hundreds of nationwide women's clubs that shared a mission of racial uplift. There were 150 clubs in Chicago.[55] Goins and Wells requested assistance for Randolph from the Chicago and Northern District Federation of Colored Women's Club, the Illinois State Federation of Colored Women's Club, and the Douglass League of Women Voters.[56] These women allied with Randolph and the BSCP because his mission statement of education and economic empowerment complemented the mission statement of the Women's Club Movement. Likewise, Mary McDowell, the first president of the Chicago branch of the Women's Trade Union League, put her full support behind the Brotherhood. The Women's Trade Union League was an organization founded in 1903 that supported unionization of female laborers.[57] McDowell viewed unionization as an important measure for workers to achieve their economic goals and to negotiate their own contracts. She

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[52] Philip Randolph, *The Messenger*, "The New Negro Woman," Vo1VI No. 7, July 1923, 19.
[53] Thomas Dublin. *Biographical Sketch of Irene Goins*. Alexandria, VA: Alexander Street, 2020.
[54] Yohuru Williams, *Rethinking the Black Freedom Movement,* New York, NY: Routledge 2016, 6.
[55] Yohuru Williams, *Rethinking the Black Freedom Movement,* 6.
[56] "Local Groups Provide Assistance, *Chicago Defender*, March 16, 1929, 9.
[57] Susan Amsterdam, "The National Women's Trade Union League." *Social Service Review* 56, no. 2 1982, 259–72. 259-260.

was a strong proponent of Randolph's core message.[58] The Chicago Alpha Suffrage Club, a women's group that advocated for "citizenship rights" for all Black people, likewise assisted Randolph in his efforts.[59] These groups of women agreed to back the Brotherhood and build grassroots support to increase membership and spread its message.[60] Thus, aligning with these women's groups expanded the demographic of Randolph's coalition, the reach of his message, and the base of his support.

The support of the women's groups blossomed into the formation of the Chicago Colored Women's Economic Council. This organization, formed in 1926, served as an extension of the BSCP whose members included the spouses as well as family members of porters.[61] One of the functions of the Women's Economic Council was to educate the community about the Brotherhood and its goals. As such, this organic growth of an organization arising from the formation of the union is illustrative of Randolph's coalition building skills and strategy.

Randolph's coalition building and membership drive was effective as 5700 porters had joined the union by 1927.[62] With a strong membership base and a solid group of strategic partners, Randolph believed the timing was right to obtain recognition by the Pullman Company. In an open letter to the Pullman Company in 1927, he advised that it would be wise for Pullman to negotiate because the Brotherhood was "the most significant economic movement of racial

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[58] Philip Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement,* Chicago, Ill.: Haymarket Books, 2018, 470-475; Philip Randolph Letter to M.P. Webster, September 3, 1926, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of A. Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080340001.
[59] Angela Davis, "Black Women in the Club Movement," in *Women, Race and Class,* New York: NY, Vintage Books, 1983, 106.
[60] Beth Tomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in America 1925–1945,* 66.
[61] Philip Randolph, "Editorial," *The Messenger*, Vol VIII. No. 9, September 1926. 376.
[62] Milton Webster Letter to Philip Randolph, February 23, 1927, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080080838.

progress instituted in the last half century."[63] Randolph's language implies that he was building a platform that would have universal application beyond the union.

Unfortunately, the promising start of the BSCP did not mean recognition by Pullman would be without struggle. Once Pullman saw Randolph's open letter, it threatened the porters who joined the union with termination. Randolph was up against a company whose president, Edward Carry, shamelessly proclaimed that under no circumstances would it "sit down at the same table with a bunch of black porters."[64] Fearing the porters would break under pressure, Randolph realized he had to appeal to the porters' sense of outrage to keep them invested in their mission. Addressing the fears of the porters, he wrote to them asking that they disregard the Pullman Company's intimidation and "not to allow such poisonous propaganda to intimidate, coerce, or influence" them.[65] Further, Randolph highlighted that Pullman was treating the porters as slaves because "the docility and sub-servience of the Negro, recently emancipated, was capitalized and exploited by the Pullman Company."[66] He also appealed to the porters' masculinity when he admonished the porters "not [to] swerve or falter, equivocate or retreat a single step" because the porters were "real" men.[67] Thus, Randolph realized that he not only needed the group to embrace his agenda, but he needed to provoke the anger of the group so they would stay on course.

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[63] Philip Randolph, "An Open Letter to the Pullman Company," *The Messenger,* Vo1. IX No. 7, July 1927, 240.
[64] Jervis Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph: a Biographical Portrait.* New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973, 221.
[65] Philip Randolph Letter to Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, February 17, 1927, Cottrell Laurence Dellums Papers, Oakland Library Archives, Folder MS014_BO3_FO5.
[66] Philip Randolph "The State of the Brotherhood." *The Messenger,* Vol. IX No. 2, February 1927, 55.
[67] Philip Randolph Letter to Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, February 17, 1927, Cottrell Laurence Dellums Papers, Oakland Library Archives, Folder MS014_BO3_FO5.

Recognition of the Brotherhood as the official union of the Pullman Company required alliance building supplemented by a demand for arbitration through the Railway Labor Act. Randolph needed to ban Pullman's Employee Representation Plan (the "ERP"). This was a large task because such plans were quite common in the mid-1920s. The plans were calculated to replace unions and collective bargaining agreements. They grew in popularity when organized labor was disfavored during World War I and its aftermath. To deter the formation of unions, companies would provide plans to their employees setting forth wages and working conditions. The plans were one-sided and favored corporations.[68] However, corporations hid behind notions of "corporate welfarism," arguing the plans protected employees.[69] Pullman claimed the ERP provided employees with benefits that they would derive from a union.[70] However, Randolph identified the inadequacies and discrimination in the ERP and advised the porters to reject it in favor of BSCP membership. He observed that "[t]he Pullman Company sensing the desire for organization on the part of the porters and maids, organized and imposed the Employee Representation Plan upon them" so they "had no choice with respect to the organization, adoption or operation of the Plan." [71] The ERP was a further demonstration of the Pullman Company's desire to "enslave" the Pullman workers, according to Randolph. He thus decided to challenge Pullman by relying on the procedure set forth in the Railway Labor Act (RLA) of 1926.[72]

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[68] David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor*: *The Workplace, the State and Labor Activism, 1865-1925,* 348-349.
[69] David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor*: *The Workplace, the State and Labor Activism, 1865-1925,* 348-349.
[70] David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor*: *The Workplace, the State and Labor Activism, 1865-1925,* 454-457.
[71] Philip Randolph, "Editorial," *The Messenger*, Vol. IX No.53, May 1928, 9.
[72] Philip Randolph, "Editorial," *The Messenger*, Vol. X No. 3, March 1928, 6.

Randolph invoked the procedure of the RLA, hoping to compel Pullman to negotiate. The RLA, signed into law by President Coolidge, was labor legislation that set forth a method to address disputes between unions and management.[73] The procedure required that labor or management request arbitration. If either party declined arbitration and the National Mediation Board (NMB) believed there was a controversy that threatened interstate commerce, the NMB could request that the President designate an Emergency Board to investigate and resolve the dispute. Thus, it was in the discretion of the NMB to determine if there was an emergency. Under the procedure, labor and management had to maintain the status quo. If an Emergency Board were assembled by the President, the Board would conduct fact finding and make recommendations for resolution. If the parties declined the recommendations, they could take whatever action they believed was necessary after a thirty day "cooling off" period. The union would then be free to strike.[74]

Randolph commenced the arbitration procedure under the RLA, but Pullman declined to arbitrate. According to Randolph, "when it agreed to arbitration in the Railway Labor Act, doubtless the Company never dreamed that someday that same ghost of arbitration would plague it in the form of a bona fide porters union demanding arbitration."[75] The Pullman company ultimately hid behind a technicality and stated that it had the right to decline to arbitrate. Randolph's next step was to resort to direct protest, and he called a strike. He hoped the NMB would ask the President to convene an Emergency Board. "The public fervor a strike threat created would put pressure on Pullman to negotiate a settlement," according to Randolph.[76] He

[73] *Railway Labor Act of 1926*, ch. 347, §1, 44 Stat. 577, May 29, 1926.
[74] *Railway Labor Act of 1926,* ch. 347, §1, 44 Stat. 577, May 29, 1926.
[75] Philip Randolph, "The Brotherhood Moves to Victory," *The Messenger*, Vol. IX No. 12, December 1927, 356.
[76] Cornelius Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle For Civil Rights*, 131.

argued that the ERP violated the RLA because it was a company sanctioned union, and the law specifically precluded coercive acts by interstate carriers.[77] Relying on the language of the RLA, Randolph believed that calling a strike would force the NMB to declare an emergency and force Pullman to negotiate with the Brotherhood.

Randolph called for a strike in June and then suddenly changed course and canceled it under the advice of the AFL. A union vote on the strike resoundingly supported the strike by a vote of 6053-17. Following the procedure set forth in the RLA, Randolph provided the date of the strike, June 8, 1928, and argued that an Emergency Board had to be convened to hear the dispute.[78] Using his alliances, Randolph had the NAACP send telegrams to President Coolidge and the NMB supporting the Brotherhood's request for emergency relief.[79] The efforts were useless, and the NMB sent a letter to Randolph on June 6, 1928, stating that it did not find that there was an emergency.[80] On June 7, 1928, AFL President, William Green, sent a telegram to Randolph, asking him to cancel the strike. Green believed that it was necessary for Randolph to educate the country about the porters' grievances that drove their desire to strike, but the timing was off.[81] He believed that "economic conditions [were] unfavorable to the success of such an undertaking."[82] He noted "this arrogant dominating attitude assumed by the Pullman Corporation is contrary to the American spirit of fair play and justice" and that it "ought to arouse feelings of

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[77] Cornelius Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle For Civil Rights*, 132.
[78] William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925–1937*, 134.
[79] NAACP News Release, June 7, 1928, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the NAACP, Folder 001412-017-0698.
[80] Federal Mediation Board Letter to Philip Randolph, June 6, 1938, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080100188.
[81] "June 1928 Memorandum to Organizers from A Philip Randolph" Cottrell Laurence Dellums Papers, Oakland Library Archives, Folder MS014_BO3_FO5.
[82] "June 1928 Memorandum to Organizers from A Philip Randolph" Cottrell Laurence Dellums Papers, Oakland Library Archives, Folder MS014_BO3_FO5.

righteous indignation among all classes of people when they behold a powerful corporation oppressing its workers to the point of forceful resistance."[83] Green's rhetoric was a clear demonstration that he supported the Brotherhood's initiatives, but his advice to cancel did not align with this rhetoric.

It is not clear why Green advised Randolph to cancel the strike. Historian William Harris considers it a "question of some difficulty" as to why Green was involved and the basis for his advice.[84] At the time of the strike's cancellation, unions were still disfavored, and the AFL was trying to rebuild its reputation that had been tarnished in the early 1920s. Therefore, perhaps Green was trying to demonstrate that the AFL did not encourage radical acts. Industrial and Labor Relations expert, James O. Morris, observed that to combat the obstacles unions endured in the 1920s, the AFL had to demonstrate that unions were "patriotic" and "respectable."[85] While striking was not necessarily a radical act, perhaps Green perceived that encouraging a Black union to strike was. Harris asserts that Randolph may have requested Green's help to cancel because he really wanted an Emergency Board to be assembled under the RLA. It may not have been a strike that he desired.[86]

Randolph was criticized in the aftermath of the strike, but he proceeded unfazed by the attacks. In an editorial appearing in the *Chicago Whip,* a Black newspaper, Randolph was chastised for "tomfoolery" and putting the jobs of the porters at grave risk.[87] He ignored his

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[83] William Green Telegram to Philip Randolph, June 7, 1928, Cottrell Laurence Dellums Papers, Oakland Library Archives, Folder MS014_BO3_FO5.
[84] William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925–1937*, 111.
[85] James O. Morris, "The AFL in the 1920's: A Strategy of Defense." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* Vol. 11, no. 4, 1958, 572–90, 573.
[86] William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925–1937*, 111.
[87] Louis Argus, "Randolph's Bluff Called," *The Chicago Whip*, Vol 10, No. 25, June 23, 1928, 1.

critics and persevered. While by some accounts the union and its message were failing, it was actually progressing to a new level. It gained traction as the Black middle class became prominent supporters of the BSCP's agenda.[88] Moreover, Randolph's decision to follow the advice of the AFL actually elevated his standing in the eyes of some Brotherhood members. They acknowledged that if the strike was canceled upon the advice of William Green, Randolph was "displaying good judgment."[89] Therefore, what appeared to be a significant setback actually turned out to be an opportunity to gain a new following and to nurture an alliance with the AFL.

Randolph desperately desired a charter for the Brotherhood, but the AFL resisted. In the 1920s, Black workers were excluded from unions that were affiliated with the AFL. This placed Black workers in a position where they often had to quit or work as "scabs," according to historians Philip Foner and Ronald Lewis.[90] Notwithstanding the AFL's racism, Randolph believed that solidifying the BSCP's relationship through a charter would bring prestige. Randolph thought that Black workers benefited from the strength of the AFL and could achieve higher wages due to the "organized and systematic fight of the A.F. of L."[91] He aspired to a full AFL International Charter because it was an opportunity to change the power dynamic and "psychology of the white wage earners toward race workers."[92] In his view, "black workers stood alone in their fight for equal justice;" therefore, it was essential to build an alliance with the AFL. Randolph first had to fight through the wall of prejudice within the AFL's member unions to get the charter.

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[88] Beth Tomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in America 1925–1945,* 105.
[89] F.H Flojosdall Letter to Philip Randolph, June 15, 1928, Cottrell Laurence Dellums Papers, Oakland Library Archives, Folder MS014_BO3_FO5.
[90] Philip Foner and Ronald Lewis, "The Black Worker and the American Federation of Labor," in *The Era of Post-War Prosperity and the Great Depression, 1920-1936*, Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1981, 352.
[91] "Race Workers Turning to the American Federation of Labor," *Chicago Defender*, June 29, 1929, 6.
[92] "Race Workers Turning to the American Federation of Labor," *Chicago Defender*, June 29, 1929. 6.

The odds were against Randolph when he initially applied for a charter. He had filed the necessary paperwork with the AFL for charter affiliation. While the paperwork was fully submitted by April 28, 1928, months passed before a decision was rendered.[93] Green ultimately offered Randolph an opportunity to affiliate with the AFL through the Bartenders' League. This meant that the BSCP would not have its own charter; it would be affiliated with the AFL through a white union. Randolph deemed this to be unacceptable as he believed "Jim Crow" prejudice fueled the offer.[94] A compromise was reached and the BSCP was recognized by the AFL through a charter for BSCP's "locals," but it did not have the full international charter it requested. It would be years before the full charter was granted. Randolph was pleased that the BSCP was officially connected to the AFL as the affiliation elevated its standing.[95]

Another manifestation of Randolph's campaign to build alliances was Randolph's organization of the National Negro Labor Conference (NNLC), an educational organization.[96] The NNLC became the educational division of the BSCP.[97] The Conference was founded to win further support in Chicago for the union and to spread the word that the struggle of the porters was one shared by the Black community.[98] The NNLC helped to form alliances with other unions because the AFL endorsed it and encouraged its members to attend the conferences.[99] At

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[93] AFL Letter to Philip Randolph, April 28, 1928, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder: 001608-034-0001.
[94] William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925–1937*, 153.
[95] William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925–1937*, 155.
[96] William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925–1937*, 153.
[97] William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925-1937*, 163.
[98] Philip Randolph Letter to Milton Webster, December 1, 1927, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder: 001608-034-0001.
[99] William Green, "Editorial on Negro Labor Conference," *American Federationist*, Vol. IIIVI, July 1929, 12.

the conferences, workers were educated on the importance of changing the balance of power with their employers by making demands rather than asking for relief.[100] And, they were warned that the dynamic would only change when the porters were able to "write [their] own economic contracts."[101] To inspire support for the message of economic freedom, conference organizers informed participants that the torch was passed to them to carry on a long tradition in the Black community to fight against oppression hearkening back to significant individuals in African American history including: Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Tubman.[102] The Conference attendees looked to the porters as the group that would bestow "economic democracy" on all workers in the United States.[103] In a speech he delivered, Randolph alluded to slavery and reconstruction and argued that the Pullman Company believed that "'the Negro should keep in his place.'"[104] At one conference, Milton Webster, BSCP Vice President, asserted that "Porters want to be self-respecting citizens…the Pullman company wants them to be serfs."[105] The Conferences continued through the 1940s. Reflecting on their significance, Webster believed that they were essential in convincing Black labor leaders who were "indifferent" or even "hostile" to organized labor, to see the virtues of it for Black workers.[106] So considered, the NNLC was an opportunity to build a coalition among unions to support the struggle of Black labor.

Randolph partnered with the NAACP and the National Urban League (NUL) in 1930 to promote unionization of Black workers. In early 1930, the NAACP made an announcement that

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[100] Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era.* Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2006, 13-14.
[101] Philip Randolph "State and Policy of Brotherhood" Messenger Vol. VIII No. 4, April 1929, 86.
[102] Beth Tomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in America 1925–1945,* 89.
[103] Philip Randolph, "Editorial," *The Messenger* Vol. 8 No. 7, July 1929, 201-203.
[104] Philip Randolph, "To the Brotherhood Men," *The Messenger*, Vol. VIII No. 11, November 1929, 325.
[105] Milton Webster, "Labor Must Organize," *The Messenger,* Vol. IX No. 3, March 1929, 89.
[106] Milton Webster, "The National Negro Labor Conference," Vol. XXXIX, March 1932, 302-303.

it would advocate on behalf of Black industrial workers to gain admission into unions.[107] When Randolph heard about the NAACP's agenda, he reached out to Walter White, Acting Secretary, to join him at a BSCP conference to be held in New York that would spotlight the unemployment problems Black people were facing.[108] Randolph also reached out to James Hubert of the NUL and extended an invitation.[109] The NUL's mission was to provide "social services" to the Black community. From its founding in 1910, it positioned itself as an organization that provides aid.[110] The agenda of the conference included a drive to unionize Black workers as well as the establishment of a committee to monitor unemployment.[111] Accordingly, Randolph seized an opportunity to build a coalition between the BSCP and two prominent organizations while continuing to battle Pullman.

As a supplement to his coalition building strategy, Randolph used the legal system to fight Pullman. Determined to draw attention to Pullman's unfair labor practices, Randolph devoted his attentions to multiple lawsuits against Pullman throughout 1931. The BSCP pursued a case against Pullman arguing that holding elections under the ERP violated the Brotherhood's right to organize a union under the RLA.[112] It also commenced cases on behalf of porters who were discharged without cause, arguing that the porters should be compensated for loss of wages

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[107] "A Good New Year Resolution," *Pittsburgh Courier,* January 8, 1930, 1.
[108] Philip Randolph Letter to Walter White, March 11, 1930, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the NAACP, Folder 001418-004-0595.
[109] Philip Randolph Letter to James Hubert, March 11, 1930, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080080838; William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925-1937*, 165.
[110] Jennifer A. Wade and Brian N. Williams, "The National Urban League: Reinventing Service for the Twenty-First Century." In *Black Political Organizations in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, edited by Ollie A. Johnson and Karin L. Stanford, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002, 40-53, 40-43.
[111] Philip Randolph Memorandum March 20, 1930, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080080838.
[112] "Eleven Cases Filed Against Pullman Co., *St. Louis American,* July 18, 1931, 6.

and tips.[113] Another lawsuit was a claim on behalf of an injured porter.[114] While the cases may not have all been wins, Randolph believed they sent a message to Pullman that the porters were militant.[115]

The financial plagues of the Great Depression impacted the porters' wages. By 1932, the plight of the Pullman porters further deteriorated, but the coalitions that Randolph worked so hard to build supported them through the difficult period. The porters were no longer earning the tips they required to support their families. With a total disregard for their welfare, the Pullman company cut their wages.[116] Outraged by this fact, the Chicago Congregational Ministers Union wrote to the Pullman Company on behalf of the porters. The letter noted that the Depression placed a disproportionate burden on Black workers. As a result, the Ministers' Union sought to protest against the "injustice of cutting wages of Pullman Porters" when their tips had diminished and asking the Pullman Company to construct a way for the porters to earn "a living wage" in the absence of tips.[117] The union implored Pullman to recognize the BSCP under the RLA.[118] The letter was provided to the press in an effort by Randolph to draw the public's eye to the injustices inflicted by the Pullman Company on the porters.[119] The strength of his alliance building with

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[113] "Eleven Cases Filed Against Pullman Co., *St. Louis American,* July 18, 1931, 6.
[114] "Labor Demands Full Salary for Injured Porter," *Chicago Defender,* August 13, 1931, 4.
[115] Philip Randolph, "Porters of Brotherhood Look Toward Victory," *St. Louis American,* August 8, 1931, 10.
[116] Chicago Congregational Ministers' Union Letter to the Pullman Company, February 8, 1932 Cottrell Laurence Dellums Papers, Oakland Library Archives, Folder MS014_BO3_FO5.
[117] Chicago Congregational Ministers' Union Letter to the Pullman Company, February 8, 1932 Cottrell Laurence Dellums Papers, Oakland Library Archives, Folder MS014_BO3_FO5.
[118] Chicago Congregational Ministers' Union Letter to the Pullman Company, February 8, 1932 Cottrell Laurence Dellums Papers, Oakland Library Archives, Folder MS014_BO3_FO5.
[119] Chicago Congregational Ministers' Union Letter to the Pullman Company, February 8, 1932 Cottrell Laurence Dellums Papers, Oakland Library Archives, Folder MS014_BO3_FO5.

Chicago clergy was evidenced by the compelling words of the Chicago Congregational Ministers Union.

In a period of just seven years, Randolph built strong coalitions that would fight for the cause of the BSCP as it continued to challenge the discriminatory acts of the Pullman Company. Randolph built alliances with distinguished leaders such as W.E.B. Du Bois in order to build the membership of the first Black union. Partnering with the Women's club groups led to the formation of the Women's Economic Council, an organization that would build the membership and strength of the BSCP. This core support was buttressed by the backing of clergymen throughout the country. Randolph systematically proceeded to confront the Pullman Company in alliance with the NAACP and the AFL. With the coalitions in place, as an adjunct, he used the administrative procedure of the RLA and the legal system. Remarkably, Randolph accomplished all of these steps in the face of national disdain for unions as well as a failing economy during the Great Depression. While he may not have immediately achieved victory, he built a strong foundation through this strategy that would serve him well in the short and long term.

Chapter II

Coalition Building Yields Results and National Prominence, 1933–1940

Randolph continued to use the Brotherhood as the core of his coalition building which led to tangible results. In addition to nurturing the coalitions he built during the period from 1925–1932, he formed new alliances with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the National Negro Congress (NNC). He also solidified his alliance with the National Urban League (NUL). He used his position as president of the BSCP to gather appointments to committees and other leadership positions that elevated his national recognition and his ideologies on labor reform. Randolph's strategic alliances used in conjunction with administrative proceedings, the legal system, lobbying, and direct protest resulted in several significant victories. He achieved recognition of the BSCP as the representative of Pullman porters, a collective bargaining agreement, and an International Charter from the AFL. These achievements presented an opportunity for Randolph to increase his following and expand his agenda beyond the BSCP. Randolph's unique mastery of coalition building between 1933–1940 drove his success and positioned him to create what would be one of the most significant movements in United States history: the March on Washington Movement.

The Democratic Party and labor aligned to elect President Franklin Roosevelt in 1932. According to Political Scientist Daniel Schlozman, the Democratic Party was supported by militant labor and the Party "reoriented itself as the protector of the disadvantaged."[120] When President Roosevelt took office in 1933, his pro-union stance led to the passage of legislation

[120] Daniel Schlozman, "Labor and the Democrats in the New Deal," *When Movements Anchor Parties: Electoral Alignments in American History*, 49–76, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015, 49-50.

supporting labor.[121] He passed the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) in an effort to bring stability to industrial production. This sweeping legislation included protections for industrial workers such as: minimum wages, restrictions on work hours, and the right to union representation.[122] The Emergency Transportation Act (ETA) was also passed which prohibited railway companies from using corporate funds to create and support company unions.[123] These were organizations that were dominated by employers and their objectives rather than by employees. Around this time, a new organization was formed by John Lewis, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). John Lewis was a prominent industrial labor organizer. The CIO disagreed with the AFL's philosophy that unions should be organized by craft. This organizational model created multiple unions within a company, diluting bargaining power. Lewis advocated for organization by industry. He believed his organization would exert pressure on the AFL to rethink its position on union organization. The CIO was a strong supporter of Roosevelt's New Deal initiatives, and it was open to Black unions.[124] The CIO also became a coalition partner of the Brotherhood, supporting its demand for a collective bargaining agreement. The pro-union climate was an optimal moment for Randolph to demand recognition of the Brotherhood. In his estimation, the ERP could not survive with the New Deal legislation in place. He regarded the legislation as a "definite promise and assurance of relief from the

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[121] Daniel Schlozman, "Labor and the Democrats in the New Deal," 50; Theda Skocpol, Kenneth Finegold, and Michael Goldfield, "Explaining New Deal Labor Policy." *The American Political Science Review* 84, no. 4, 1990, 1297–1315, 1301.
[122] *An Act to Encourage National Industrial Recovery, to Foster Fair Competition, and to Provide for the Construction of Certain Useful Public Works, and for Other Purposes*, June 16, 1933; Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789-1996, General Records of the United States Government, Record Group 11, National Archives.
[123] *An Act To Relieve the Existing National Emergency in Relation to Interstate Railroad Transportation, and to Amend Sections 5, 15a, and 19a of the Interstate Commerce Act, Emergency Railroad Transportation Act*, Public Law 73-68, 48 STAT 211, as amended, June 16, 1933, National Archives.
[124] Daniel Schlozman, "Labor and the Democrats in the New Deal, " 50.

notorious and vicious industrial slavery fastened upon [the porters] by the Pullman plan of Employee Representation or Company Union."[125]

The New Deal initiatives and the hope that they inspired in workers brought an increase in membership to the BSCP. From 1933-1934, the union saw an increase in membership of close to 2000 porters.[126] Feeling rejuvenated by increasing support, Randolph attended the AFL convention to build momentum for the Brotherhood's recognition. Understanding that he alone could not create change, Randolph sought the assistance of the AFL to contact President Roosevelt and to lobby members of Congress on behalf of the BSCP. He specifically asked the AFL to request that the President invoke his executive powers to order that the BSCP was subject to the jurisdiction of the RLA.[127] His efforts paid off as he convinced the delegates present at the convention to support his proposed demand to President Roosevelt.[128] Randolph therefore relied on the AFL to increase the visibility of his labor platform and his goal for union recognition.

Randolph also revisited an administrative proceeding to challenge Pullman. He reached out to Joseph Eastman, the federal transportation coordinator at the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC). He asked Eastman to open an investigation under the ETA regarding Pullman porter wages and working conditions.[129] At the same time, Randolph wrote to Pullman and requested a negotiation based upon the fact that its officials who had opposed the BSCP

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[125] Philip Randolph Letter to President Roosevelt, June 12, 1934, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Folder 0015480020308.
[126] William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925–1937*, 183.
[127] "AFL Convention Report of the Proceedings" October 1934, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Folder 0015480300059.
[128] "AFL Convention Report of the Proceedings" October 1934, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Folder 0015480300059.
[129] "AFL Convention Report of the Proceedings" October 1934, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Folder 0015480300059.

were no longer at the company and new management was in place.[130] Both efforts did not yield satisfactory results. On September 25, 1933, Eastman wrote to Randolph stating that the ETA was not applicable to the porters because Pullman was not a railway and was instead a carrier.[131] At the time of Eastman's response, Randolph also received a negative response from Pullman. The rejection was progress according to Randolph as such requests were ignored in the past.[132] As usual, the odds were against the Brotherhood, but Randolph and his allies decided to seek amendment of the 1926 Railway Labor Act. The amendment would cover carriers under the labor friendly legislation.

With the help of AFL President William Green, Randolph lobbied Congress to amend the Railway Labor Act of 1926. He relied on his allies and the legislative process to exert pressure on the company.[133] Green gladly came to Randolph's aid and rallied railroad unions to support Randolph's lobbying efforts.[134] Green also brought the struggles of the Brotherhood to President Roosevelt's attention.[135] As a result of these efforts, the legislation proposed was immediately

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[130] F.L. Simmons Letter to Philip Randolph, September 18, 1933, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080340301.
[131] Joseph Eastman Letter to Philip Randolph, September 25, 1933, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080340301.
[132] F.L. Simmons Letter to Philip Randolph, September 18, 1933, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080340301; Cornelius L. Bynum, *Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights,* 134.
[133] Cornelius L. Bynum, *Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights,* 134.
[134] William Green Letter to Philip Randolph, November 8, 1933, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080090204; Walter Green Letter to Philip Randolph, February 2, 1934, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080010063.
[135] William Green Letter to Philip Randolph, February 2, 1934, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080010063.

backed by white unions, demonstrating the efficacy of Randolph's strategies.[136] In turn, Eastman prepared a proposed amendment to the RLA to encompass the sleeping car porters.[137]

The legislation was approved by the House of Representatives and sent on to the Senate. The Senate convened hearings for testimony pertaining to the amendment. Thereafter, a hearing was held on April 10-19, 1934 where Randolph and other union leaders testified in support of the amendment. At the hearing, he outlined the barriers to recognition that the Brotherhood suffered: the failed requests for arbitration and repeated reliance on litigation to force Pullman to recognize the porters.[138] He illustrated the inequity of the company union under the Employee Representation Plan (ERP) and how the union never decided against Pullman, explaining that "the whole machinery for adjudicating the disputes and grievances of the Pullman porters is entirely in the hands of the Pullman Co."[139] Ultimately, Randolph claimed victory when the Senate passed the legislation and the amended RLA became law on June 21, 1934. Railway carriers, such as Pullman, could no longer shield themselves from the reach of the RLA.[140] Contracts requiring workers to agree not to join or stay in a union–"Yellow Dog Contracts"--were deemed to be null and void.[141] Significantly, the victory was a demonstration of Randolph's ability to harness the strength of the coalitions he built around labor.

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[136] William Green Letter to Philip Randolph, February 2, 1934, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph , Folder 0016080010063; *Hearings Before the Interstate Commerce Committee,* United State Senate, 73rd Congress, Second Session, S. 3266, April 10, 11,12, 18, and 19, 1934, 2-40.
[137] William Green Letter to Philip Randolph, November 24, 1933, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080090204.
[138] *Hearings Before the Interstate Commerce Committee*, United State Senate, 73rd Congress, Second Session, S. 3266, April 10, 11,12, 18, and 19, 1934, 50-52.
[139] *Hearings Before the Interstate Commerce Committee*, United State Senate, 73rd Congress, Second Session, S. 3266, April 10, 11,12, 18, and 19, 1934, 51.
[140] 1934 Amendment to the Railway Labor Act, 45 U.S.C. §l5l *et seq*.
[141] *Hearings Before the Interstate Commerce Committee*, United State Senate, 73rd Congress, Second Session, S. 3266, April 10, 11,12, 18, and 19, 1934, 12.

Randolph relied on the coalition with the NAACP to place pressure on the AFL to grant the BSCP an international charter. The AFL remained uncompromising in its belief that the Brotherhood should be chartered through the Order of Sleeping Car Conductors, a white union. Randolph was incensed at the suggestion since the conductors did not stand in the same position as the sleeping car porters, since they did not suffer racially motivated discrimination.[142] The AFL's actions prompted Randolph to ask for assistance from the NAACP.[143] Together with the NAACP, he determined that the most impactful strategy would be to confront the AFL and publicize its racist policy prohibiting the full chartering of a Black union. Rather than applying for entry and facing rejection, Randolph used direct protest to challenge the racist practices of the AFL. Randolph's move was bold and certainly risky as he often relied on the AFL as an ally. Taking a calculated risk, the NAACP and the BSCP protested at the AFL convention in 1934 to advocate for equal treatment of Black laborers.[144] The protest highlighted the AFL's halfhearted support of Black workers. Randolph complemented the protest with a speech he delivered at the convention where he called upon the AFL members to strike "color clauses" from their constitutions. He further demanded that the AFL bring on Black organizers who would be sympathetic to the struggle of Black workers.[145] Following the speech, the BSCP immediately won the support of the United Mine Workers and the International Ladies Garment Workers.[146]

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[142] Philip Randolph Letter to Walter White, August 20, 1934, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080090204.
[143] Philip Randolph Letter to Walter White, August 20, 1934, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080090204.
[144] Walter White Letter to Philip Randolph, August 31, 1934, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the NAACP, Folder 0014690200604.
[145] "AFL Convention Report of the Proceedings" October 1934, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Folder 0015480300059.
[146] Milton Webster Letter to Bennie Smith, October 1934, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Folder 0015480300059.

Realizing the strength that Randolph's coalition with the NAACP held, Green decided to convene a committee to investigate member discriminatory practices.[147] The NAACP's involvement had to have raised concern for Green due to its strong support for Black labor. According to Historian Peter Lau, the NAACP battled "to ensure fair treatment and just wages for African Americans."[148] Further, historian Patricia Sullivan observes that the NAACP took the opportunity to use the "fertile ground" created by the New Deal to advance "full rights of citizenship" for Black people including economic rights.[149] The NAACP's commitment to labor created a natural ally to protest the AFL's discriminatory practices. The committee appointed by the AFL, which counted Randolph among its members, became known as the Committee of Five. When the Committee of Five had concluded its investigation, it determined that the AFL member organizations engaged in rampant racial discrimination. It recommended expulsion for organizations that would not cease engagement in discriminatory practices.[150] When the report was issued, it was intended to be presented at the 1935 AFL convention. However, unwilling to own up to the widespread discrimination among member unions, the AFL attempted to tone down the report and tried to avoid discussion of it.[151] When Randolph learned of the fact that the AFL Executive Council was attempting to cover up the damaging report, he threatened to reveal the content of the report on the convention floor. Repeating its approach during the 1928 failed

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[147] William Green Telegram to Philip Randolph, June 27, 1935, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the NAACP, Folder 0014690200604; Philip Foner and Ronald Lewis, "The Black Worker and the American Federation of Labor," *The Era of Post-War Prosperity and the Great Depression, 1920-1936*, Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1981, 315.
[148] Peter F. Lau. "Radicalism and Liberal Reform: The NAACP during the New Deal," in *Democracy Rising: South Carolina and the Fight for Black Equality since 1865*, Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 71-106, 79.
[149] Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era*, 5.
[150] Philip Foner and Ronald Lewis, "The Black Worker and the American Federation of Labor," in *The Era of Post-War Prosperity and the Great Depression, 1920-1936*, , 352.
[151] William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925–1937*, 197.

Pullman strike, the AFL admonished Randolph to drop the issue as the timing was not optimal. Green asserted that he was causing harm and proceeding too quickly.[152] This response was abhorrent to Randolph, and he would not relent; he exposed the conduct of AFL member unions even though he knew the AFL would not sanction the offending unions.[153] Randolph's pressure tactics worked as the BSCP was granted an International Charter, and he publicly exposed the AFL's practices.[154] Years later in an interview when questioned about the reason for the alliance with the AFL when it engaged in discrimination, Randolph pointed out that the AFL and Walter Green brought "prestige" to the BSCP.[155] He accordingly confirmed that he overlooked the AFL's major flaw in order to secure an important coalition.

Randolph's national exposure led to a significant broadening of the scope of issues on his agenda. His leadership and philosophies expanded beyond labor. He consistently proposed ways in which to protect the Black community from discrimination beyond the work arena. In a piece he wrote for the *New York Amsterdam News* in 1935, he proposed that Black consumers form food co-operatives. He sought to protect impoverished Black communities from exploitation. Further, the purchasers could share in the profits of businesses that were supported by their "purchasing power."[156] In the article, he also articulated his belief in coalition building and unity which he described as a "united front." According to Randolph, a "united front" was "the joining of organizations upon common issues such as lynching, job discrimination, etc."[157]

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[152] William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925–1937*, 197.
[153] "AFL Convention Report of the Proceedings" October 1934, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Folder 0015480300059.
[154] "AFL Convention Report of the Proceedings" October 1934, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Folder 0015480300059.
[155] John Slawson, "Recorded Interview with A. Philip Randolph," Transcript, April 20, 1970 American Jewish Congress, 15,
[156] Philip Randolph, "The Negro is a Worker," *New York Amsterdam News*, 1935, 8.
[157] Philip Randolph, "The Negro is a Worker," *New York Amsterdam News*, 1935, 8.

In employing this strategy, he made it clear that uniting around issues did not mean that the individual organizations had to abandon their respective agendas. The scope of Randolph's ideologies indisputably were expanding.

Randolph nurtured an alliance with the mayor of New York City, Fiorello LaGuardia. In 1935, LaGuardia sought Randolph's counsel and the two men became close personal friends. A young man was detained at a Harlem store and accused of shoplifting and violence erupted. Determined to get to the bottom of the problem and to devise a solution to the discrimination and violence that plagued Harlem, LaGuardia created a Commission on Conditions in Harlem. Randolph was appointed along with other leaders from the NAACP, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the clergy.[158] The appointment evidenced Randolph's willingness to participate in and contribute to coalition efforts, a distinction he built through his affiliation with the Brotherhood and the relationships it fostered.

The revised RLA was put to the test a year after its passage. In a failed scheme, the Pullman Company created a rival union to defeat the BSCP. In 1935 a new union was formed, the Pullman Porters and Maids Protective Association (PPMPA). The PPMPA claimed to be the representative of the Pullman porters. It was comprised of the employees who supported the ERP that was null and void due to the 1934 Amendment to the RLA. A PPMPA circular stated that the Plan of Employee Representation "was a very good form of representation."[159] Randolph was faced with the task of invoking the RLA's administrative procedures, and he demanded that the NMB certify the BSCP as the recognized union of the porters. Ultimately, on July 1, 1935, the

[158] Fiorello LaGuardia Letter to the People of New York, March 20, 1935, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080090204.
[159] "Memorandum to the Pullman Porters and Maids" signed by J.S. Morris, U.J. Turnquest, and W.H. Thomas, Cottrell Laurence Dellums Papers, Oakland Public Library, Folder MS014_B09_F01_00.

NMB concluded its investigation and found that the BSCP was the rightful representative of the Pullman porters.[160] Randolph had scored another win for the Brotherhood using the administrative process set forth in the RLA. If not for the coalitions he built that aided in his effort to amend the RLA, Randolph might have achieved this victory.

Randolph continued to build coalitions under the unifying issue of economic freedom for Black people. Indeed, he directed members of the BSCP to contact the National Urban League (NUL) so that an NUL representative could speak at a Brotherhood Program in New York City at the end of 1935 on the topic of "The economic status of Negroes."[161] The topic was consistent with the NUL's mission to provide "social services" to the Black community. It focused on providing housing and jobs for those who were displaced such as migrants and veterans.[162] In coordinating a program for workers, Randolph advised union member McLaurin to gather as many workers as he could without regard to the organizations with which they were affiliated. The BSCP-NUL Conference was representative of Randolph's methodology to partner with organizations to serve the interests of the BSCP and the greater Black community.

Randolph's desire to extend the audience of his labor platform was at the foundation of his partnership with the National Negro Congress (NNC). The NNC was formed by John Davis, a lawyer, journalist, and activist, and Ralph Bunche, a political scientist. It was an umbrella organization dedicated to civil rights for Black people. At its formation in 1935, the NNC had

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[160] "National Mediation Board Report, *BSCP v. PPMPA*" July 1, 1935, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Folder 0016080090204.
[161] Philip Randolph Letter to B.S. McLaurin, August 7, 1935, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080340301.
[162] Jennifer A. Wade and Brian N. Williams, "The National Urban League: Reinventing Service for the Twenty-First Century" *Black Political Organizations in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, edited by Ollie A. Johnson and Karin L. Stanford, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002, 40-53, 40-43.

representatives stationed in 70 cities that had a direct impact on local communities.[163] It was able to place Black people in jobs that were closed to African Americans such as in public utilities. It also battled housing discrimination and "slumlords" even "winning substantial reductions in rents or improvement in conditions," according to historian Lawrence Wittner.[164] It distinguished itself from the NAACP as it helped communities directly in a similar fashion to the work of the NUL; it was also more militant.[165] The NNC was a left leaning organization later found to be funded by the Communist Party.[166] From its founding, the NNC drew well known African American public figures. At its opening convocation, 585 organizations were in attendance, including unions and other civic groups.[167] Randolph became president of the NNC as he intended to create a community and social programs in which all Black people could support and participate.[168] At the NNC's opening convention in 1935, he used the rhetoric of his BSCP speeches to push the Black community into action.

As the NNC's membership grew, Randolph organized marches advocating for "bread and shelter" for Black residents of Chicago. The NNC also tackled the issue of discrimination in AFL member unions.[169] As a result, Randolph used the NNC to carry out his BSCP agenda on a grand scale. The organization's efforts on behalf of the community in Chicago drew the attention of the NAACP, and the NAACP joined in the NNC's protests on behalf of laborers and the Black community. Interestingly, the protests and marches drew Black people of all classes, which gave

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[163] Lawrence S. Wittner, "The National Negro Congress: A Reassessment," *American Quarterly,* Vol. 22 No. 4, Winter, 1970, 883-901, 887.
[164] Lawrence S. Wittner, "The National Negro Congress: A Reassessment," 887.
[165] Lawrence S. Wittner, "The National Negro Congress: A Reassessment," 889-890.
[166] Lawrence S. Wittner, "The National Negro Congress: A Reassessment," 900.
[167] Lawrence S. Wittner, "The National Negro Congress: A Reassessment," 885.
[168] Erik Gellman "The Spirit and Strategy of the United Front" in *Reframing Randolph Labor Black Freedom and the Legacies of A. Philip Randolph*, New York, NY: New York University Press, 2015, 129-162, 129.
[169] Lawrence S. Wittner, "The National Negro Congress: A Reassessment," 891.

Randolph the opportunity to be heard by a diverse sector of the Black community. According to historian Erik Gellman, "the emergence of these new organizations offered Randolph an unprecedented opportunity to build much larger and more militant anti-racist coalitions."[170] Randolph's continued involvement in advocating for Black labor as well as civil rights according to Gellman placed Randolph in the "vanguard of the movement for economic security and civil rights among African Americans."[171] With his leadership role in the NNC, Randolph created a greater audience for his labor based platform and connected his labor ideologies to a more general platform of civil rights. It also increased his coalition base.

Ultimately, Randolph had a bitter break from the NNC based upon its communist leanings. He exited from the NNC to strategically preserve the coalitions he had worked so hard to build that were also anti-communist. Randolph built a successful relationship with the NAACP and AFL. Since the NAACP and AFL were anti-communist and did not want any affiliation with organizations associated with communism, it makes sense that Randolph was not willing to lose his crucial support from these organizations.[172] He also felt that as an organization for Black empowerment, it was improper to be dominated by a white organization, the Communist Party.[173] Randolph had sought the President's assistance to support his work with the BSCP, and he saw the alignment as anti-Roosevelt.[174] These factors contributed to his decision to leave the NNC.

Randolph's break with the NNC placed his anti-communist rhetoric in the spotlight. Towards the end of the 1930s, the NNC adopted communist principles and became more and

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[170] Erik Gellman "The Spirit and Strategy of the United Front," 129.
[171] Erik Gellman "The Spirit and Strategy of the United Front," 154.
[172] Lawrence S. Wittner, "The National Negro Congress: A Reassessment," 887.
[173] Lawrence S. Wittner, "The National Negro Congress: A Reassessment," 900.
[174] Kevin M. Schultz, "The FEPC and the Legacy of Labor Based Civil Rights Movement of the 1940s," *Labor History,* Vol. 49. No. 1, February 2008, 71-92, 75.

more radical in its views, arguing that labor and civil rights struggles were class struggles. Randolph did not see radicalism as an effective way to combat discrimination. Instead, it drove away moderates and centrists from the fight for freedom rights for Black people.[175] Dating back to 1925 when he formed the BSCP, he wrote in *The Messenger* that communism was the foe of the worker and "a menace to the American labor movement."[176] He had such passion for the issue that he testified before the House Committee to Investigate Communist Activities in the United States in 1930 because it was his belief that the Party was misleading the porters to believe that the BSCP endorsed the Party. He concluded that the Communist Party sought to infiltrate the BSCP and then "disband" it.[177] When questioned by Congressman Nelson as to why the Communist Party might appeal to the Black community, Randolph testified that the Communist Party misled the community into thinking it would eradicate "lynchings" and "peonage" because under communism all "men would stand equal."[178] He further argued that the Communist Party had no interest in Black people because its allegiances were with a "foreign state, the Soviet Union"[179]

Given Randolph's disdain for communism, he viewed the NNC's affiliation with the Communist Party as destructive as it took away the NNC's independence and ability to control its destiny. In exiting the NNC, Randolph drew national attention to his belief that the NNC's support for the Soviet Union was metaphorically "a death prison where democracy and liberty

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[175] Andrew Kersten and David Lucander, "Introduction" in *For Jobs and Freedom*, *Selected Speeches and Writings of A. Philip Randolph,* Amhurst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014, 1-40, 14.
[176] Philip Randolph, "Editorial," *The Messenger* Vol. VIII, No. 7, July 1925, 261 and 275.
[177] *House Hearings Before a Special Committee to Investigate Communist Activities in the United States,* 71st Congress, 2nd Session 1930, 242-251.
[178] Philip Randolph Testimony, *House Hearings Before a Special Committee to Investigate Communist Activities in the United States,* 71st Congress, 2nd Session 1930, 242-251.
[179] Philip Randolph, "The World Crisis and the Negro People Today, *New York Times,* April 28, 1940, 9.

have walked their last mile."[180] According to David Lucander and Andrew Kersten, even though his affiliation with the NNC ended on a low note, it confirmed the wisdom of his strategy that the way to battle discrimination was to organize similar thinking groups into a national movement.[181] Furthermore, in breaking away from the NNC as he did, Randolph was reaffirming that he shared the NAACP and AFL's views on communism. It was also a statement of his support for President Roosevelt who passionately opposed communism. In other words, he broke away from one coalition partner to secure his position with other partners.

As the recognized representative of the porters, the BSCP was well positioned to demand a collective bargaining agreement from Pullman. In 1936, Randolph made his formal demand on behalf of the Brotherhood. In response, Pullman declined to treat the union "as a full time collective bargaining agent for its employees."[182] For the majority of 1936, even though the Pullman Company was losing footing on the issue, it continued to argue that it would not enter into a collective bargaining agreement with the BSCP. In response, in 1937, Randolph called for a strike. This time Pullman took Randolph's threat of a strike quite seriously. With the reemergence of the popularity of unions in the New Deal Era, strikes became prevalent. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 1937, there were 4740 labor strikes, the highest in the nation's history at that point.[183] By April 1937, the Pullman Company realized they could not avoid a negotiation with Randolph and agreed to sit down to negotiate with him as representative

[180] Philip Randolph, "Editorial," *The Black Worker,* May 1940, 6.
[181] Andrew Kersten and David Lucander, "Introduction" in *For Jobs and Freedom: Selected Speeches and Writings of A. Philip Randolph*, 14.
[182] William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925–1937*, 208.
[183] "Analysis of Strikes," United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1938.

of the Brotherhood.[184] In perhaps the biggest win of Randolph's career, the Pullman Company signed an agreement with the union on August 25, 1937.[185]

While the terms of the contract were by all measures standard for a collective bargaining agreement, the contract held a deeper meaning for Randolph and the porters. It was the product of strategic alliances, lobbying, reliance on administrative procedure, and direct protest. According to William Harris, the execution of the contract placed Randolph in a "position of prominence that marked" him as a leader "among Black organizations"[186] As a result, the union was far more than a union, according to Harris, it was "a black-advancement group."[187] The triumph was especially impressive in light of the economic and philosophical struggles that the Brotherhood encountered during the period from 1925–1932. Randolph's battle with Pullman was reflective of the struggle for recognition and equality for the Black community.

Randolph used the victory to promote the economic advancement of the Black community. Seizing the opportunity to promote the significance of his achievement, in a press release, Randolph stressed the importance of job security for the Black community. He believed that a secure job was even more important than higher wages.[188] He underscored the power of the union by highlighting that the agreement encompassed $20,000,000 worth of wages, making the contract one of the largest financial contracts controlled by Black workers. Accordingly, he

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[184] Philip Randolph, "Memorandum to Pullman Porters," March 27 and 30, 1937, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080010063.
[185] Agreement Between Pullman Company and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, August 25, 1937, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Folder 0015480300059.
[186] William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925–1937*, 217.
[187] William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925–1937*, 217.
[188] Philip Randolph, Press Release "The Story of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters," 1934, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080080838.

stated: “No other single movement among Negro people has brought such large and definite material resources, as well as spiritual hope to them, as the Brotherhood.”[189] Randolph’s rhetoric was consistent with the fact that the union and its success had far-reaching implications for the Black community.

Randolph’s platform expanded beyond unionism to world politics. At the 1938 Brotherhood Convention, which followed his 1937 victory, Randolph touched upon the implications of unrest in Europe on its workers. He noted that the world was divided between “democracies and “fascist dictatorships.”[190] He advocated for the security of unprotected workers in Europe. On the home front, he drew attention to Black workers generally and rail workers in particular who continued to battle discrimination and economic challenges. He noted that these workers were “without privilege or power to redress wrongs inflicted upon them.”[191] Randolph concluded by cautioning the audience that the struggle for labor rights was just beginning, noting that the task of the union was to “build up and go forward and never retreat.”[192] The speech was suggestive of the fact that Randolph was broadening the scope of his focus beyond the BSCP both internationally and domestically. The speech reflects Roosevelt's preparation of the economy for potential wartime production.[193] A wartime economy would require an increase in jobs which was beneficial to all workers.

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[189] Philip Randolph, Press Release “The Story of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters,” 1934, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080080838.
[190] Transcript of 5th Annual Convention Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Report of Proceedings September 18, 1938, Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080080838, 13.
[191] “Transcript of 5th Annual Convention Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Report of Proceedings,” September 18, 1938, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Folder 0016080080838, 15.
[192] “Transcript of 5th Annual Convention Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Report of Proceedings,” September 18, 1938, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Folder 0016080080838, 34.
[193] Tracey Warm, “Wartime Production.” *OAH Magazine of History* 16, no. 3, 2002, 47–52, 51.

A downturn in rail use added to the struggles of the porters. Randolph continued to promote unionism as the key to survival when the railway industry changed in 1939. He delivered a speech entitled "The Crisis of Negro Railroad Workers," demonstrating consistency in his approach. Notwithstanding all of his efforts on behalf of the union, railroad workers were losing their jobs in large numbers and Black workers were impacted more profoundly than their white counterparts. Transportation had changed by 1939, and there were trains that were faster and labor saving. There were mergers among railway companies, and railways suffered from competition with other modes of transportation. Black workers were hit the hardest because they were "the last hired and the first fired."[194] Randolph advocated that the only way Black workers could survive in the face of a failing railroad system was to preserve their rights through unions and advocate for their economic rights through direct protest.[195] He proposed a "new spirit to organize and fight for economic, social, and political justice on the part of Negro workers."[196] Unanimity among Black and white workers was essential so that they could unite in the "spirit of solidarity and cooperation."[197] This speech was further demonstration that in the late 1930s Randolph's focus evolved from a focus on porters to the economic rights of all workers.

By 1940, the fortunes of railway workers changed as World War II increased the use of the rails. As a result, membership in the BSCP likewise increased. During wartime, the union members relied on Randolph not only for his wisdom on labor issues but also with respect to general views relating to race relations. He spoke out passionately against discrimination in the armed forces. At the BSCP's annual meeting in 1940, one of the major issues addressed on the

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[194] Philip Randolph "The Crisis of Negro Labor Workers", *American Federationist,* August 1939, 1.
[195] Philip Randolph "The Crisis of Negro Labor Workers," *American Federationist,* August 1939, 1.
[196] Philip Randolph "The Crisis of Negro Labor Workers," *American Federationist,* August 1939, 1.
[197] Philip Randolph "The Crisis of Negro Labor Workers," *American Federationist* , August 1939, 1.

agenda was discrimination and racism in the armed forces and defense industry.[198] Still in the midst of war, Randolph recognized that Europe was tragically changing. Concerned about the impact of the war on labor, he noted that under Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin, the trade union movement was dead.[199] During his address, he outlined the expansion of the Brotherhood to all train porters who were members of the AFL. In the end, he opined that the amount of wages earned and establishment of grievance processes while important were not nearly as important as the "recognition of the right of self organization, self selection and self designation of representatives."[200] Randolph was setting the stage for the next phase of his coalition building and labor agenda which would include a demand to ban discrimination in the military and defense industry.

Randolph used direct protest to agitate against discrimination in the defense industry. The demonstration coincided with the 1940 BSCP convention.[201] The message of the demonstration was that Black workers should share in the benefits of the defense program of the United States with equal rights to white workers. Notably, the procession included people who were not affiliated with organizations but who supported the message of the demonstration.[202] As the war intensified, defense jobs became more and more prevalent. By 1940, there were over 250,000 potential defense jobs that were closed to Black people due to discrimination. Factories in St.

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[198] "Transcript of the Convention of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters," September 1940, *ProQuest History Vault,* Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Papers, Folder 0016080090204.
[199] "Transcript of Pre-Convention Meeting of the International Executive Board of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters," September 1940, *ProQuest History Vault,* Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Papers, Folder 0016080090204.
[200] "Transcript of Pre-Convention Meeting of the International Executive Board of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters." September 1940, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Folder 0016080090204.
[201] "Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Plan Patriotic Demonstration," *The New York Age,* September 7, 1940, 3.
[202] "Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Plan Patriotic Demonstration," *The New York Age,* September 7, 1940, 3.

Louis that had contracts with the government to produce weapons for war, for example, employed a negligible number of Black workers. Out of 56 factories, there were only three Black people working in each factory.[203] Union racial barriers at Boeing Aircraft in Seattle precluded entry of Black workers into the International Association of Machinists. Unions expressed racist sentiments even during a time when there was a labor shortage.[204] In September 1940, using the discrimination against workers in the defense industry as a basis for meeting, Randolph along with Walter White of the NAACP and T. Arnold Hill of the NUL met with President Roosevelt to discuss discrimination in the armed forces and defense industry. While President Roosevelt expressed sympathy for the cause, the three men did not walk away with a commitment by the President to do anything to put a halt to the widespread discrimination in the military and the defense industry.[205] Using his requests to Roosevelt as a starting point, Randolph conceived of the March on Washington Movement as a form of direct protest to exert pressure on the government to open jobs for Black laborers in the defense industry. The nation was months away from a movement that would forever change protest politics, and Randolph was the architect.

Close analysis of Randolph's strategy during the period from 1933–1940 reveals a series of coalitions built upon a common cause. He was always a champion of labor and economic empowerment of Black workers, so his leadership of the BSCP was a perfect fit for his ideologies. But, what was most remarkable about Randolph is how he took the union platform and used it to build coalitions around labor. He chose organizations that would work synergistically with the Brotherhood such as the NAACP, the NUL, and the AFL. However,

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[203] Paula F. Pfeffer, *A Philip Randolph, Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement*, 46.
[204] Paula F. Pfeffer, *A Philip Randolph, Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement,* 47.
[205] Walter White Telegram to General Edwin Watson, September 10, 1940, *ProQuest History Vault,* NAACP Papers, Folder 0014690200604: Edwin Watson Telegram to Walter White, September 19, 1940, *ProQuest History Vault,* NAACP Papers, Folder 0014690200604; Philip Randolph, "Editorial," *Black Worke*r, November 1940, 3.

Randolph was never tied to one organization, and he freely challenged his coalition partners when necessary. He recognized that affiliation with the AFL would raise the Brotherhood's status, but he felt free to challenge the AFL when its agenda conflicted with that of the BSCP. The NNC placed Randolph in the spotlight and expanded the scope of his audience, but he had no regrets about parting ways with the NNC when it embraced communism. He needed to preserve these coalitions with strong organizations that opposed communism, such as the NAACP and AFL. Randolph used his coalitions with the NAACP and NUL to engage President Roosevelt. Further, he always supplemented the coalitions with reliance on administrative procedure, lobbying, legal action, and direct protest. As the seven year period came to a close, Randolph had counted among his victories: recognition of the BSCP, a collective bargaining agreement for the union, and an AFL Charter. Remarkably, Randolph then used these achievements and the prominence that they brought to him to broaden his causes. There was a direct correlation between the growth of his coalitions, his successes, and the expansion of the issues for which he advocated. So considered, what began as coalition building in 1925 when the Brotherhood was formed was evolving into a movement by 1940.

Chapter III

Coalition Building Becomes a Movement: The March on Washington, 1941

Dissatisfied with the outcome of his September 1940 meeting with President Roosevelt, Randolph became convinced that drastic measures were in order. His coalition building with the NAACP and the NUL brought him to the White House, but he was unable to persuade the President to take action. His next move had to place pressure on Roosevelt to issue an executive order or else rampant discrimination in the military and in the defense industry would continue. According to Randolph, an aggressive strategy was the only option to right the "greatest wrong" facing the Black community– "denial…of the right to work."[206] Randolph's solution was coalition building on a scale he had never used before: organization of a mass protest of thousands of people. He executed on his plan and received his desired result, an executive order that banned discrimination in the defense industry. Randolph's superlative coalition building skills in 1941 would create a blueprint for successful mass protest which would become a movement and define his legacy.

As Randolph told the story, in December 1940, riding on a train with BSCP Vice President, Milton Webster, he had a sudden realization that could force the government to end discrimination in the military and defense industry. He and Webster were chatting about Brotherhood business and then there was a pause in their conversation. An idea came to him that he spontaneously shared: if he could get 10,000 Black people to march down Pennsylvania Avenue, President Roosevelt would have no choice but to comply with their demands.[207]

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[206] Philip Randolph, "March on Washington Movement Presents Program for the Negro," in Logan, ed., *What the Negro Wants,* Notre Dame: IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 2001, 141.
[207] David Welky *Marching Across the Color Line*: A *Philip Randolph and Civil Rights in the World War II Era,* 51.

Webster immediately embraced Randolph's spontaneous idea. As he thought through his plan, he determined that he was relying on the "shock value" of the march.[208] Randolph concluded that the federal government perceived Black Americans as too "scared and unorganized," to devise such a protest, so the march would undoubtedly be unexpected.[209] He chose Washington, DC as the proposed site as the President and Congress could not escape the marchers' presence and their demands.[210] The drastic plan did not diverge from Randolph's gift of coalition building and his belief that "power and pressure… flow from the masses."[211] He eloquently summed up the necessity of the plan when he proclaimed: "No other force under the sun can save the Negro today but his mass power, orderly and lawfully used to achieve his liberation from economic, social and political slavery." [212]

In the days that followed the momentous conversation with Webster, Randolph expanded on the strategy behind the plan to organize a March on Washington (MOW). The MOW was to take place on July 1, 1941 to leave enough time for organizing while keeping the pressure on the government. Randolph announced the plan in several African American newspapers, setting forth the urgency and goals of the MOW. In the announcement, he argued that the government made empty promises stating that it would intervene to end discrimination when he met with President Roosevelt in 1940, but "[n]othing [was] being done to stop discrimination."[213] Given

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[208] Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919–1950,* New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2009, 357; "Leaders Charge 'Trick' to President's Army Edict," *Atlanta Daily World*, October 15, 1940, 1.
[209] Philip Randolph, "Let's March on the Capital," *Chicago Defender,* February 1, 1941, 1.
[210] Andrew E. Kersten, *A. Philip Randolph: A Life in the Vanguard*, 57.
[211] David Welky, *Marching Across the Color Line*: *A. Philip Randolph and Civil Rights and the WWII Era*, 53.
[212] Philip Randolph, "The March," *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080100188.
[213] Philip Randolph, "Let's March on Capital 10,000 Strong, Urges Leader of Porters," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* January 25, 1941, 1; Philip Randolph, "Let's March on the Capital," *Chicago Defender,* January 25, 1941, 1.

the strength of profound racial prejudice in the nation, merely wanting defense jobs and requesting them was never an option. Black people had no choice but to "diplomatically and undiplomatically, ceremoniously and unceremoniously, cry out in no uncertain terms their demand for work," according to Randolph.[214] The demands had to be made by a large group acting for a common cause. Randolph had long emphasized the importance of unity and the necessity that groups form around common issues.[215] He believed that discrimination in the military and the defense industry would garner mass support from the Black community in general and from labor rights and civil rights organizations.[216] Work and patriotism appeared to be reasonable issues around which to unify.

In choosing to protest during wartime concerning the treatment of Black people in the military and missed opportunities for jobs in the defense industry, Randolph was able to establish a common ground for protest. According to David Welky, the subject of lost opportunity for defense jobs was a common platform that civil rights organizations and the Black community embraced because the statistics were so compelling. In New York, for example, there were 142 Black people employed in defense plants that employed 29,215 workers.[217] African Americans and civil rights organizations, according to Welky, were "fired up to the point of explosion."[218] The slogan of the MOW reflected the unifying platform: "We Loyal Negro-Americans Demand

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[214] Philip Randolph, "Let's March on Capital 10,000 Strong, Urges Leader of Porters," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* January 25, 1941, 1.
[215] See, for example, Philip Randolph "The Crisis of Negro Labor Workers," *American Federationist* August 1939, 5.
[216] David Welky, *Marching Across the Color Line*: *A. Philip Randolph and Civil Rights and the WWII Era*, 53.
[217] David Welky, *Marching Across the Color Line*: *A. Philip Randolph and Civil Rights and the WWII Era*, 62.
[218] David Welky, *Marching Across the Color Line*: *A. Philip Randolph and Civil Rights and the WWII Era*, 62.

the Right to Work and Fight for Our Country."[219] Randolph's proposed agenda reflected the strategy he repeatedly relied upon in the past with success: coalition building centered around a unifying labor theme. Because Randolph was such a prominent figure in the labor movement by 1941, the Black press coordinated with Randolph and immediately began to publicize the march and comment on the wisdom behind the march.[220] John Sengstacke, the editor of the *Chicago Defender*, stated in an editorial that "this is the time, the place, the issue and the method."[221]

Never one to rely on a single tactical plan, Randolph continued to lobby in Congress while organizing the MOW. In February 1941, he partnered with the NAACP and the NUL to request that Senator Robert Wagner sponsor a resolution to investigate discrimination in the defense industry. Further, he joined a group of fifty clergymen and civil rights leaders to "discuss discrimination in the defense effort with the secretaries of war, the Navy, labor, and the interior."[222] Randolph's lobbying efforts suggest that he realized that given the proportions of his goal, direct protest alone would not be enough to achieve it. Further, appearing before government officials with his coalition partners in advance of the MOW previewed the power of the march he was constructing.

Randolph determined that the demographic of the MOW should be confined to the African American community. Historian Kevin Schultz observes that Randolph was reluctant to include white people because he "knew well the problems of interracial organization, especially after the American Federation of Labor (AFL) took 8 years to allow Randolph's Brotherhood of

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[219] Philip Randolph, "Let's March on Capital 10,000 Strong, Urges Leader of Porters," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* January 25, 1941, 1;"Let's March on the Capital," *Chicago Defender* January 25, 1941, 1.
[220] Philip Randolph, "Let's March on Capital 10,000 Strong, Urges Leader of Porters," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* January 25, 1941, 1; "Let's March on the Capital," *Chicago Defender* January 25, 1941, 1.
[221] Philip Randolph, "Let's March on Capital 10,000 Strong, Urges Leader of Porters," *The Pittsburgh Courier,* January 25, 1941, 1; "Let's March on the Capital," *Chicago Defender* January 25, 1941, 1.
[222] David Welky *Marching Across the Color Line*: *A Philip Randolph and Civil Rights in the World War II Era*, 51.

Sleeping Car Porters into its fold–all because of its unwillingness to incorporate black people into the Labor Movement."[223] Further, when the NNC accepted funds from the white Communist Party, it was forced to follow the Party's agenda. Randolph believed that the presence of white support led to a "client-patron" relationship that interfered with a race based agenda of economic freedom for Black people.[224] Based upon these ideologies, the MOW would be a march for Black participants only.

Randolph began the job of coalition building for the MOW by focusing on labor. He began writing about the march frequently in the *Black Worker*, the publication sponsored by the BSCP.[225] Notably, when he visited with the Southern BSCP chapters throughout January 1941, he was intent on securing his coalition with the BSCP for the march so he referred to it as "raising a black army to invade the capital."[226] In response to Randolph's hyperbole, many of the union members expressed concern and fear, worrying that the march might incite violence.[227] They believed that the marchers could be attacked by white supremacist crowds.[228] However, after initial reluctance, the union agreed to support the MOW.[229] The BSCP started off strong by immediately publicizing the MOW through rallies and fliers. The union's Chicago and Oakland offices became "regional hubs" and distributed information on the March through porters on the

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[223] Kevin M. Schultz, "The FEPC and the Legacy of Labor-based Civil Rights Movement of the 1940s," *Labor History,* Vol. 49. No. 1, February 2008, 71-92, 75.
[224] Kevin M. Schultz, "The FEPC and the Legacy of labor-based Civil Rights Movement of the 1940s," 75.
[225] Paula F. Pfeffer, *A. Philip Randolph, Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement,* 47.
[226] David Welky *Marching Across the Color Line*: A *Philip Randolph and Civil Rights in the World War II Era*, 52.
[227] Andrew E. Kersten, *A. Philip Randolph: A Life in the Vanguard,* 57.
[228] Andrew E. Kersten, *A. Philip Randolph: A Life in the Vanguard*, 57.
[229] William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights*, New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company 2014 (Kindle Edition), 35.

railways.[230] This information landed in the hands of all sectors of Black society, carrying out Randolph's stated directive that the MOW was a march for freedom of the entire Black community which encompassed Black people "'in the tavern, pool-room, on the streets'" and those who were '"store-front preacher[s], and sharecropper[s]."[231]

After initiating the mass appeal for the upcoming MOW, Randolph began the arduous task of building coalitions with activist organizations and influential leaders in the Black community. In framing the necessary coalitions he would have to assemble, Randolph focused on establishing a group of influential allies who could bring marchers to the capital and draw government attention due to their standing as successful activists. Randolph first approached the NAACP's Walter White. "I hope it may be convenient for you to join with me and a few other persons in the issuance of a call to the Negro people for such a march" Randolph wrote.[232] Walter White embraced the opportunity because the agenda of the march echoed the NAACP's mission.[233] As historian Steven Reich observes, one of the founding principles of the NAACP was the right of African Americans to work, and it "envisioned employment as central to its definition of citizenship."[234] White went on to become one of the most avid supporters of the MOW and even offered financial support.[235] Interestingly, when Randolph first conceived of the MOW, the NAACP was planning a string of "protest meetings" around the country to speak out

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[230] William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights*, (Kindle Edition), 33.
[231] William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights*, (Kindle Edition), 33.
[232] Philip Randolph Letter to Walter White, March 18, 1941, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the NAACP, Folder 001608017077.
[233] Walter White Letter to Philip Randolph, March 21, 1941, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of the NAACP, Folder 001608017077.
[234] Steven A. Reich, "Organized Labor and the Civil Rights Movement: Lessons from a Troubled Past." *New Labor Forum* 18, no. 3, 2009, 60–70, 62.
[235] Andrew E. Kersten, *A. Philip Randolph: A Life in the Vanguard,* 58.

against discrimination in the defense industry.[236] The meetings did not have much impact– perhaps due to their lack of coalition building– and the NAACP was exploring the possibility of picketing at defense plants when it decided to partner with Randolph for the MOW. Given that the NAACP often preferred to work on its own projects and have others join, Randolph's ability to convince White to partner with him was a huge feat.[237] Historian David Welky asserts that the NAACP was very territorial and feared rival organizations. In order to make White feel comfortable, Randolph specifically stated that he was not forming an organization to rival the work of the NAACP. The MOW was going to supplement the work of the NAACP. Further, White was given the opportunity to participate in choosing and approving coalition partners and speakers for the MOW.[238] Randolph's ability to win White's trust under these circumstances is further evidence of his stellar coalition building skills.

With the NAACP on board, Randolph then sought "support and cooperation of Negro leadership from "church, labor, [and] business."[239] He assembled an impressive and influential roster of organizations and luminaries that supported and worked on the MOW. Lester Granger of the NUL recalled that "Randolph's immense prestige among all classes of Negroes…made this idea something more than a pretentious notion" and solidified the interest of coalition partners.[240] In addition to Granger and the NUL, MOW supporters included: Mary Church

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[236] John H. Bracey Jr. and August Meier, "Allies or Adversaries?: The NAACP, A Philip Randolph and the 1941 March on Washington," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Spring 1991, Vol. 75, No. 1, 1-17, 8.
[237] John H. Bracey Jr. and August Meier, "Allies or Adversaries?: The NAACP, A Philip Randolph and the 1941 March on Washington," 8.
[238] David Welky *Marching Across the Color Line*: *A Philip Randolph and Civil Rights in the World War II Era*, 61; see also, John H. Bracey Jr. and August Meier, "Allies or Adversaries?: The NAACP, A Philip Randolph and the 1941 March on Washington," 9, for a discussion or the NAACP's concerns over partnering with potential rival organizations.
[239] Philip Randolph, "Should Negroes March on Washington Against Jim Crow, If so–When," January 1941, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080220352.
[240] William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights*, 34.

Terrell (civil rights and suffrage activist), Reverend Adam Clayton Powell Jr. (Harlem pastor and community activist), Bayard Rustin (civil rights activist), Reverend William Lloyd Imes (Clergy, Presbyterian Church of Harlem), Frank Crosswaith (Negro Labor Committee of New York), Layle Lane (VP, American Federation of Teachers), Dr. Rayford Logan (Chair, National and State Committees for the Participations of Negroes in National Defense), and Henry Craft (Secretary Harlem Branch YWCA).[241] In addition, representatives from the Harlem Labor Center, the Laundry Workers Union, the Federation of Colored College Students, and the Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World agreed to support and attend the MOW.[242] The coalition also included celebrities in the arts and entertainment world such as Langston Hughes, W.C. Handy, and Josh White.[243]

As Randolph had received overwhelming support from women's organizations for the BSCP, he included women's organizations among his coalition partners. One of the largest backers of the MOW was the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), a network of women's clubs and sororities that claimed a total membership of over 800,000. Affiliates of the NCNW had supported Randolph's protest from the start, immediately coordinating logistics. It also commenced a letter writing and call campaign to the White House, demanding an end to discrimination in the armed forces and defense industry. Further, the NCNW hosted a conference in Washington, DC, so that women from all over the country could convene before the MOW to

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[241] Philip Randolph Letter to President Roosevelt, May 29, 1941, *ProQuest History Vault,* Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 001608017077.
[242] William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights*, New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company 2014 (Kindle Edition), 33-35.
[243] David Lucander, *Winning the War for Democracy: the March on Washington Movement, 1941-1946*, Urbana, Ill,: University of Illinois Press 2014, 2.

discuss the role of women in protest. Women's grassroots organizations from all over the country attended and constructed a coordinated plan for protest in the future.[244]

Randolph assigned the logistics of the MOW to coalition partners who formed local committees. The coalition group in New York became the National March on Washington Committee. Thereafter, six local organizing committees were formed in the south, northeast and midwest.[245] According to David Lucander, the relationship between Randolph and the local committees was "symbiotic." The local committees drove the organization of the MOW which Randolph required for success and the local committees gained prestige through an affiliation with Randolph.[246] Randolph also ensured that he had logistical support in Washington, D.C. through an alliance he formed with Thurman Dodson, an activist and D.C. resident. Dodson rallied a group of people to work on the logistics of the MOW, including march deputies who were World War I veterans and Boy Scouts who would lead the participants to the Mall.[247]

Randolph decided to exert pressure directly on the President by writing to him.[248] In a letter to the President on March 14, 1941, Randolph highlighted the fact that the MOW Committee avidly supported Roosevelt's "social and labor policies" and "foreign policy" in providing aid to allies in the "struggle against totalitarian dictatorship and aggression."[249] He

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[244] William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (Kindle Edition), 33-35.
[245] William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (Kindle Edition), 33-35.
[246] David Lucander, "Beyond A. Philip Randolph, Grassroots Protest and the March on Washington Movement" in *Reframing Randolph,* Andrew E. Kersten and Clarence Lang eds. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2015, 199.
[247] David Lucander, *Winning the War for Democracy: the March on Washington Movement, 1941-1946*, Urbana, Ill,: University of Illinois Press 2014, 30.
[248] Philip Randolph Letter to President Roosevelt, March 14, 1941, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080090204.
[249] Philip Randolph Letter to President Roosevelt, March 14, 1941, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080090204.

also appealed to Roosevelt's sense of equity and justice, pointing out that it would be hypocritical to be the champion of democracy overseas but to permit inequality at home.[250] Supporting the Black population, according to Randolph, was a way to combat Hitlerism as "Hitler has already referred to Negros as 'half apes."[251] Ending on a pragmatic note, Randolph stated that the Black community realized Roosevelt could not abolish discrimination overnight, but it expected him to use his "high office to prevent race prejudice from being translated into discrimination by the government or by private concerns or agencies which are dependent upon the government."[252] Thus, Randolph continued to exert pressure on Roosevelt by reminding him of the power of the coalition he built. Roosevelt claimed to be an advocate for social justice, but the hypocrisy of fighting a war in Europe to preserve democracy and allowing blatant discrimination on the home front did not go unnoticed by Randolph and his coalition. The President did not respond to the letter.

Randolph sent a second letter and included his impressive coalition partners as signatories. The May 29 letter that listed an impressive array of prominent committee members, outlined the MOW demands for an end to discrimination in "national defense and all departments of the Federal Government"[253] Randolph informed Roosevelt that local marches would precede the MOW and invited the President, whom he deemed "the greatest living champion of the cause of democracy and liberty," to deliver an address to the marchers.[254]

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[250] Philip Randolph Letter to President Roosevelt, March 14, 1941, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080090204.
[251] Philip Randolph Letter to President Roosevelt, March 14, 1941, *ProQuest History Vault,* Philip Randolph Personal Papers, Folder 0016080090204.
[252] Philip Randolph Open Letter to President Roosevelt, March 14, 1941, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080090204.
[253] Philip Randolph Letter to President Roosevelt, May 29, 1941, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080090204.
[254] Philip Randolph Letter to President Roosevelt, May 29, 1941, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080090204.

The President did not answer either letter, but he viewed the MOW as a "credible security threat," as he launched an FBI investigation into the MOW after receipt of the May 29 letter.[255] According to historian Merl Reed, the government was not sure whether the MOW and its constituency would appeal to the public and the unknowns were "unsettling."[256] Herbert Hoover was concerned with communist ties to the MOW. Although Randolph had broken ties with the NNC, there was a chance in Hoover's mind that Randolph supported communism.[257] The government's biggest concern was the possibility that the march would turn into a march supporting communism.[258] It would appear that communism was of greater concern to the government than the economic rights of the Black community.

Randolph's timing of the MOW was strategic. According to David Lucander, "changing intellectual currents, and important foreign policy implications combined to join the ever-present struggle for black liberation."[259] Randolph struck the right balance for maximum leverage over the President because of his timing and the fact that the Black community was feeling comfortable to take a more militant approach. In light of the hypocrisy of the country in fighting a war to preserve democracy while permitting racism, "blacks were sick and tired of dying abroad for a freedom that had no reality at home," according to Lerone Bennett, Jr.[260] Randolph thus realized the nation was ready for change and he had the right strategy to achieve it. All of

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[255] Kenneth O'Reilly, "The FBI and the Civil Rights Movement," *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 54, No. 2, May, 1988, 201-232, 236.
[256] Merl E. Reed, "The FBI, MOWM, and CORE, 1941-1946," *Journal of Black Studies* 21, no. 4, 1991, 465–79, 465.
[257] Merl E. Reed, "The FBI, MOWM, and CORE, 1941-1946." *Journal of Black Studies* 21, no. 4, 1991, 465–79, 465 467.
[258] Merl E. Reed, "The FBI, MOWM, and CORE, 1941-1946." *Journal of Black Studies* 21, no. 4, 1991, 465–79, 465 467.
[259] David Lucander, *Winning the War for Democracy: the March on Washington Movement, 1941-1946*, 33.
[260] Lerone Bennett Jr., "The Day They Didn't," *Ebony,* February 1977, 128-136, 130.

these crucial elements combined to evoke fear in the government. Indeed, Joseph Rauh, close confidant of Roosevelt, revealed that Randolph "had scared the government half to death."[261]

While the President did not respond directly to Randolph, he understood the risks of ignoring the MOW. It would appear antithetical to his long established philosophies on social programs and assistance. He would also potentially lose the support of a coalition of the nation's strongest Black leaders. At the same time, Roosevelt had to tread lightly due to the disproportionate power of the Democratic Party's southern base."[262] Caught between these opposing forces, the President looked for ways to quietly remedy the problem of discrimination in the defense industry.

The President looked for a quiet solution to Randolph's demands from the Office of Production Management (OPM). The OPM Director, William Knudsen, responded that he would "quietly get manufacturers to increase the number of Negros on defense work." Knudsen cautioned not to set quotas to avoid a "dispute." He proposed "quiet work with the contractors and the unions."[263] When Randolph found out about the "quiet" plan, he got in touch with Dr. F.O. Williston, an influential Black leader in Washington, D.C. with whom Randolph had formed an alliance, and told Williston that the solution was unacceptable.[264] Williston conveyed Randolph's sentiments to the President. In response to the pushback, Roosevelt expressed his dismay that "several Negro organizations are planning to March on Washington on July first." He further cautioned "nothing that will stir up race hatred and slow up progress more than a

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[261] David Lucander, *Winning the War for Democracy: the March on Washington Movement, 1941-1946*, 33.
[262] David Lucander, *Winning the War for Democracy: the March on Washington Movement, 1941-1946*, 32.
[263] William S. Knudsen Letter to Franklin D. Roosevelt, May 23, 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Library Digital Collection, "Confront the Issue Roosevelt and Race."
[264] "Official File 93: Colored Matters," Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Library Digital Collection, "Confront the Issue Roosevelt and Race."

march of that kind."[265] Feeling the intensity of the pressure, Roosevelt had Wayne Coy, Head of the Office of Emergency Management, contact Mayor LaGuardia in New York to prevail upon Randolph to cancel the march. LaGuardia was known to be an avid supporter and personal friend to Randolph. He believed that it was essential for the President to meet directly with Randolph, a White House memorandum explained, because "nothing else will [prevent the planned march] except the President's presence and direction."[266] The President used every angle he could to stop Randolph, but Randolph and his MOW coalition refused to be thwarted by the government.

Concerned by the imminent MOW but still unwilling to take direct action, President Roosevelt turned once again to the OPM. He prepared a memorandum to William Knudsen and Sidney Hillman of the OPM outlining the problem in the defense industry. In the memorandum, the President emphatically noted that "Our Government cannot countenance continued discrimination against American citizens in defense production" and that it was incumbent on industry to open "the doors of employment to all loyal and qualified workers regardless of race, national origin, religion or color."[267] The President called for immediate action by the OPM to take steps to rectify the situation. Roosevelt's second attempt to rely on the OPM was unsuccessful as the OPM did not have solutions that would satisfy Randolph.[268]

Randolph hoped that Mayor LaGuardia would pressure the President to meet the demands of the MOW coalition. Cognizant of the New York mayor's close ties to the President, Randolph wrote to LaGuardia in early June to alert him to the "mobilization" of up to 50,000

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[265] President Roosevelt Memorandum to Marvin McIntyre, June 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Library Digital Collection, "Confront the Issue Roosevelt and Race."
[266] Edwin M. Watson Memorandum to President Roosevelt. June 14, 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Library Digital Collection, "Confront the Issue Roosevelt and Race."
[267] President Roosevelt Memorandum to William S. Knudsen and Sidney Hillman, June 12, 1941, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080090204.
[268] David Lucander, *Winning the War for Democracy: the March on Washington Movement, 1941-1946*,, 32.

people to march on Washington. The letter was similar to the one sent to the President in May as it outlined all of the coalition partners who were prepared to participate in and who endorsed the MOW. It also contained a request for the Mayor to address marchers who would be at City Hall on June 27th.[269] Randolph was using the alliance he built with LaGuardia years earlier to facilitate the goals of the MOW.

Like LaGuardia, Eleanor Roosevelt acted as an informal mediator between Randolph and the President.[270] Eleanor Roosevelt wrote and spoke frequently on the subject of civil rights. In the 1930s, she toured the nation to meet with civil rights advocates. She specifically met with representatives of the NAACP.[271] During her tenure as First Lady, according to historian Beth Waggenspack, "she was recognized as a champion for overturning racial discrimination and violence."[272] The First Lady also advocated for equality in education and in the workplace. She was often the subject of praise in African American newspapers.[273] It was not uncommon for the First Lady to hold receptions at the White House for black leaders.[274] Her commitment to social justice placed her in the role of advisor to the President on racial issues and as observed by Waggenspack, her "stands reaped political dividends for FDR's administration."[275] The President's wife was a close friend and associate to Randolph as well as many of the other MOW

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[269] Letter from Philip Randolph to Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, June 4, 1941, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080220352.
[270] Letter from Philip Randolph to Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, June 4, 1941, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080220352.
[271] Beth M. Waggenspack, "Eleanor Roosevelt: Social Conscience for the New Deal," *American Rhetoric in the New Deal Era, 1932-1945: A Rhetorical History of the United States,* East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2006, 157-210, 174
[272] Beth Waggenspack, "Eleanor Roosevelt: Social Conscience for the New Deal," 174.
[273] Beth Waggenspack, "Eleanor Roosevelt: Social Conscience for the New Deal," 178.
[274] Beth Waggenspack, "Eleanor Roosevelt: Social Conscience for the New Deal," 174.
[275] Beth Waggenspack, "Eleanor Roosevelt: Social Conscience for the New Deal," 180.

leaders. She tried to discourage Randolph from moving forward with the march which she warned would be a "very grave mistake" that "may engender too much bitterness."[276]

On June 13, 1941, she traveled to New York for a meeting with Randolph, White, and LaGuardia. She expressed urgency to the issue of canceling the march and repeated her admonitions that it would just slow the progress of Black workers. The urgency of the meeting had the opposite of its intended impact on Randolph and White. The meeting fueled them to keep going because they sensed that they could place more pressure on the President to get the executive order they desired. LaGuardia and the First Lady were not offering any legislation; they were only trying to convince Randolph and White that if they canceled the march there could be further discussions with the President. After the meeting, the National MOW Committee resolved to "'redouble'" its efforts.[277] As for Randolph and White, they politely thanked the First Lady calling her a "fine spirit" and "a real and genuine friend of the race," but they declined to take her advice.[278] On June 16, 1941, Randolph sent a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt for the President's urgent attention, outlining the demands of the MOW Committee. Attached to the letter was a list of points that the Committee wanted the President to incorporate into an executive order.[279] The White House response, a request for a meeting, suggested that Randolph had sufficient pressure to force a compromise.

In an attempt to reach a compromise to avoid the MOW that the government so feared, it scrambled to devise a solution. Following up on LaGuardia's previous observation that an in

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[276] Eleanor Roosevelt Letter to Philip Randolph, June 5, 1941, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080220352.
[277] William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights*, 37.
[278] William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights*, 37.
[279] Philip Randolph Letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, June 16, 1941, FDR Library President's Official File, Franklin D. Roosevelt Day by Day, June 1941.

person meeting with Randolph was necessary, Eleanor Roosevelt arranged a meeting between the President, Randolph, and the NAACP's Walter White. At the meeting, Randolph demanded an executive order precluding discrimination in the defense industry. He prepared a memorandum for the meeting that listed the items he and White were demanding. The key points included: an "order forbidding the awarding of contracts to any concern, Navy Yard or Army Arsenal which refuses employment to qualified persons on account of race, creed, or color." The memorandum further provided that if there is an act of discrimination, the penalty would be a government takeover of the offending company under the President's authority as Commander-in-Chief.[280] Finally, the memorandum demanded that the order ban segregation in all departments of the federal government and military.[281]

In response to Randolph's demands, all the President offered was a personal request to defense industry employers to change their hiring practices.[282] While Randolph was negotiable about the demands relating to the military, he refused to withdraw the march without an order outlawing discrimination in the defense industry.[283] He reminded the President of the strength of 100,000 marchers, and the President then indicated that he would consider creating a board to hear grievances concerning employment in the defense industry.[284] The breadth of Randolph's request brought negotiations to a standstill because the President refused to issue any order with

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[280] "Memorandum reflecting Proposal of March on Washington Committee," Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Library Digital Collection, "Confront the Issue Roosevelt and Race."
[281] "Memorandum reflecting Proposal of March on Washington Committee," Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Library Digital Collection, "Confront the Issue Roosevelt and Race."
[282] David Welky, *Marching across the Color Line: A. Philip Randolph and Civil Rights in the World War II Era*, 73.
[283] David Welky, *Marching across the Color Line: A. Philip Randolph and Civil Rights in the World War II Era*, 73.
[284] David Welky, *Marching across the Color Line: A. Philip Randolph and Civil Rights in the World War II Era*, 74.

sweeping language that banned discrimination in the federal government and the military.[285] The President eventually indicated that he would agree on the defense industry point, but he adamantly refused to support such a broad order banning discrimination in the government and military. Randolph realized he was not going to get the order he envisioned, but he did not want to risk the possibility that he might not get any immediate relief from the government. He agreed to work with LaGuardia to draft an outline of the content for a compromise executive order banning discrimination in the defense industry.[286] Once Randolph and LaGuardia put together a draft, it was handed over to Joseph Rauh, an attorney, to prepare an executive order.[287]

President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802 on June 25, 1941. The key takeaway was Section 2 which ordered that "All contracting agencies of the Government of the United States shall include in all defense contracts hereafter negotiated by them a provision obligating the contractor not to discriminate against any workers because of race, creed, color, or national origin."[288] The order also established a Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) under the umbrella of the Office of Production Management. The purpose of the FEPC was to "investigate complaints of discrimination in violation of the provisions" of the Order. The FEPC was also empowered to take steps "to redress grievances" that it found valid.[289] While Randolph did not get all that he demanded, it was enough for him to call off the MOW. Some detractors said that

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[285] Official File 391: Marches on Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Library Digital Collection, "Confront the Issue Roosevelt and Race."
[286] David Welky, *Marching Across the Color Line*, 74; "The Civil Rights Act of 1964: A Long Struggle for Freedom A. Philip Randolph Challenges President Franklin Roosevelt." Library of Congress. AFL-CIO. https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/multimedia/randolph-challenges-fdr.html.
[287] David Welky, *Marching across the Color Line: A. Philip Randolph and Civil Rights in the World War II Era*, 75.
[288] *Executive Order 8802*, June 25, 1941, General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives.
[289] *Executive Order 8802*, June 25, 1941, General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives.

Randolph achieved far less than he demanded and should not have called off the MOW. Randolph believed his decision was warranted because thousands of Black people would have access to defense industry jobs. Further, he felt that the Executive Order would pave the way for legislation in the future banning discrimination in the private sector.[290] Most importantly, as historian Lerone Bennett, Jr. observes, the "Order was the first decisive act by the government to end discrimination since the Reconstruction Period."[291]

In a letter to the President dated June 30, 1941, Randolph expressed his gratitude to the President as well as his concern over the composition of the FEPC.[292] He requested that Walter White be appointed to the Committee. While White was not appointed, two Black members were, BSCP vice president Milton Webster and Chicago alderman Earl Dickerson.[293] As Randolph continued to have concerns over the efficacy of the FEPC, he used the possibility of reinstating the MOW as a means to ensure that the FEPC would enforce the provisions of the Executive Order.[294]

Randolph would not withdraw his demands, leaving the President in a position to either compromise or suffer the consequences of the MOW. In an interview years later, Randolph told interviewer Thomas Baker that Roosevelt opposed the march because he was concerned that the

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[290] "Randolph's Speech Explains Why He Called Off March," *The New York Amsterdam Star News,* July 19, 1941, 6.
[291] Lerone Bennett Jr., "The Day They Didn't," *Ebony,* February 1977, 128-136, 136.
[292] Philip Randolph Letter to President Roosevelt, June 30, 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Library Digital Collection, "Confront the Issue Roosevelt and Race."
[293] Official File 391: Marches on Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Library Digital Collection, "Confront the Issue Roosevelt and Race."
[294] David Lucander, "Beyond A. Philip Randolph, Grassroots Protest and the March on Washington Movement" in *Reframing Randolph,* Andrew E. Kersten and Clarence Lang eds. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2015, 197; Philip Randolph, "Keynote Address to the Policy Conference of the March on Washington Movement," Detroit, Michigan, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080340551.

march would set a precedent for other groups and there "would be no end to it."[295] Roosevelt further remarked that Randolph was "embarking on a dangerous course."[296] This language substantiates the power of mass protest in Roosevelt's mind. The President was effectively telling Randolph that he opposed the concept of mass protest because future groups would be able to force the government to meet their demands. Reading between the lines, it would appear that the President felt threatened by a group of Black marchers exercising their First Amendment rights. The comments were also likely driven by Roosevelt's fear of the southern segregationist Democrats.

In the aftermath of the cancellation of the MOW, it became a model for effective mass protest. Randolph created a coalition that encompassed all of the prominent Black leaders of the time. He was also strategic in his timing because the nation was at war, there were labor shortages, and the Black population was incensed over the fact that the country was fighting a war against Hitler but did not see a problem with discrimination at home. These elements came together to force the President to negotiate with Randolph. Even though the march was canceled, it demonstrated the importance of coalition building and the force of mass protest to encourage reform. As historian Lucander observes, the threat of the MOW "established a precedent for successful protests that used coalitions, mass mobilization, and explicit confrontation in order to press for moderate reform through aggressive tactics."[297] In staging the MOW as he did, Randolph exploited the power of the immense coalition he built around labor to bring about a

[295] Thomas Baker, "A. Philip Randolph Oral History Interview I," Transcript, October 29, 1969, National Archives and Records Service Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, 4.
[296] Thomas Baker, "A. Philip Randolph Oral History Interview I," Transcript, October 29, 1969, National Archives and Records Service Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, 5.
[297] David Lucander, *Winning the War for Democracy: the March on Washington Movement, 1941-1946*, Chicago, Ill,: University of Illinois Press 2014, 1.

result that had never been achieved before: legislation that acknowledged and was framed to remedy discrimination.

Labor advocacy for union recognition expanded through strategic alliances formed over a period of sixteen years and grew into a movement. The MOWM that was formed to organize the MOW continued to work for labor equality after the march was canceled. Initially, the MOWM consisted of groups around the country dedicated to ending discrimination in the workplace. However, in addition to labor equality, the agenda of the MOWM grew to include efforts to end discrimination in public utility companies.[298] Through Randolph's coalitions, he had built a network of nationwide groups much in the way he built the nationwide chapters of the BSCP. While the mission of the MOWM was not as urgent as it was prior to the MOW, the local chapters continued to work to meet the organization's mission of labor equality and full citizenship rights throughout 1941 and beyond.[299] The MOWM was also used to create community centered grassroots activism to advocate for job equality.[300] Discrimination in the defense industry continued under the watch of the FEPC. As a result, the MOWM aided in the effort to enforce Executive Order 8802.[301]

While the MOWM by some accounts hit its peak in 1941, it did continue for a few years after. However, Randolph was not able to devote his full attention to it, so it lost its

[298] David Lucander, "Beyond A. Philip Randolph, Grassroots Protest and the March on Washington Movement," 199.
[299] David Lucander, "Beyond A. Philip Randolph, Grassroots Protest and the March on Washington Movement" in *Reframing Randolph,* Andrew E. Kersten and Clarence Lang eds. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2015, 196.
[300] David Lucander, "Beyond A. Philip Randolph, Grassroots Protest and the March on Washington Movement," 199.
[301] David Lucander, "Beyond A. Philip Randolph, Grassroots Protest and the March on Washington Movement," 199.

momentum.[302] But, its significance cannot be diminished by its short lifespan because it demonstrated the immeasurable power of coalition building and set out a blueprint for effective mass protest. As Welky observes, "It aroused African Americans to understand that mass protest, and even the threat of mass protest could affect national policy."[303] Most importantly, it showcased the profound force of Randolph's strategy. He slowly built alliances with powerful organizations and leaders. Depending on the result he was trying to achieve, he would group the coalition partners together. Once he won recognition for the BSCP, he expanded his labor agenda and added coalition partners. He then assembled them to achieve an unprecedented result for Black labor.

The 1941 March on Washington was therefore a defining moment for Randolph, the labor movement, and all movements for change. The MOW exemplified the profound impact of Randolph's coalition building. Randolph realized the timing was right to raise defense industry labor grievances and military grievances as World War II consumed the nation. On the war front, the United States and its allies were fighting to preserve democracy and freedom from tyranny. But, at home, oppressive discriminatory practices were acceptable. The hypocrisy was inescapable. Labor was at the core of Randolph's agenda, and it created a common ground that could be universally embraced. He built a coalition representing the Black community that was impossible for the President to ignore. He then created a threat of a mass protest of enormous proportions to exert unrelenting pressure on the government. The formula led to a tangible result, Executive Order 8802. The MOW was thus a blueprint to impact change. Perhaps more

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[302] David Welky, *Marching Across the Color Line*: *A. Philip Randolph and Civil Rights and the WWII Era,* 131.
[303] David Welky, *Marching Across the Color Line*: *A. Philip Randolph and Civil Rights and the WWII Era,* 111.

importantly, “the most famous demonstration that never happened” became Randolph’s legacy to all disempowered groups.[304]

[304] David Lucander, *Winning the War for Democracy: the March on Washington Movement, 1941-1946*, 2.

Epilogue

During the years following the MOW, Randolph continued to support the BSCP and remained a staunch labor activist. As rail ridership declined, the BSCP's membership declined. In 1978, it merged with another union, the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks.[305] From 1955-1960, Randolph served as Vice President of the newly merged AFL-CIO. While serving as Vice President, Randolph grew impatient with the AFL-CIO's lack of progress in denouncing and eliminating its internal racial discrimination.[306] Because he was dissatisfied with the AFL-CIO, he formed a new labor group whose purpose was to place pressure on the labor movement to end discrimination.[307] The organization was known as the Negro American Labor Council (NALC). The NALC's mission was to provide protection to Black union members so that they could enjoy full citizenship rights, meaning that they would enjoy equality in all facets of life.[308] The membership of the NALC grew to 500,000 under Randolph's leadership.[309] Realizing that the strength of the NALC would be founded on coalition building, Randolph resolved to work closely with trade unions. To do otherwise "would be folly," according to Randolph.[310] Thus, Randolph continued to maintain his strategic alliances, a plan that worked for him throughout his years of labor activism.

Soon after formation, the NALC put pressure on the AFL-CIO to end discrimination with a goal towards "industrial integration."[311] Randolph publicly attacked the AFL-CIO's

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[305] "The A. Philip Randolph Pullman Porter Museum." The A. Philip Randolph Pullman Porter Museum. https://aprpullmanportermuseum.org/.
[306] Paula F. Pfeffer, *A. Philip Randolph, Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement,* 206.
[307] "Randolph Calls for Revolution Against Race Bias in Unions," *Jet*, November 5, 1959; "Editorial," *Black Worker,* October 1959, 2.
[308] "Editorial," *Black Worker,* February 1960, 1-3.
[309] Paula F. Pfeffer, *A Philip Randolph, Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement,* 47.
[310] Thomas H. Patten, Jr. "The Industrial Integration of the Negro," *Phylon,* 24, no. 4, 1963, 334–52, 341.
[311] Thomas H. Patten, Jr. "The Industrial Integration of the Negro,"334–52, 340; "Negro Pressure on Unions" *Businessweek*, No. 1595, April 30, 1960, 138-141.

discrimination, arguing the conduct was condoned within the context of collective bargaining agreements and policies to segregate Black locals.[312] He asserted that trade unions were precluding Black laborers from apprenticeships in the construction industry and that the government permitted such actions.[313] As progress toward workplace equality continued to move at a slow pace, when the NALC gathered for its annual convention in 1961, Randolph proposed that it might be time to call for a March on Washington.[314] While the NALC did not immediately act on the idea, it began to explore the possibility.

Randolph finally proposed a March on Washington at an NALC national executive board meeting in March 1963, just months before it would ultimately take place. During the meeting, Randolph initiated a board resolution to plan a march entitled "Job Rights' March and Mobilization."[315] The resolution passed, and Randolph began to organize the march. First among the people he contacted for assistance was Bayard Rustin, a civil rights activist and close advisor to Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Randolph viewed Rustin as a skilled organizer, and he believed his participation would be an essential component of the march's success.[316] He also sought a partnership with the NAACP and the National Urban League (NUL), two organizations with which he had well established relationships. He enlisted some relatively new groups actively involved in nonviolent protest. The most prominent among them was the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). It was headed by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. who was one of

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[312] "A. Philip Randolph Replies to AFL-CIO Report," *Black Worker,* November 1961, 4-6.
[313] Minutes of the Emergency Meeting of the Executive Board, Negro American Labor Council, May 6, 1961, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080190711.
[314] Minutes of the Emergency Meeting of the Executive Board, Negro American Labor Council, May 6, 1961, *ProQuest History Vault,* Philip Randolph Personal Papers, Folder 0016080190711.
[315] The name of the march was changed to the March for Jobs and Freedom once Randolph joined forces with Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.
[316] Paula F. Pfeffer, *A Philip Randolph, Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement*, 147-8.

the most notable figures of the civil rights movement and the first president of the SCLC.[317] Through the SCLC, King relied on nonviolent protest to promote civil rights.[318] It was especially important for Randolph to partner with the King and the SCLC, since they were also considering a march to advocate for the passage of civil rights legislation.[319] The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was also asked to be a coalition partner. It was formed twenty years earlier with a mission to address race relations and to combat discrimination through nonviolent protest.[320] The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was also invited. It was a new group founded in 1960 that achieved national prominence almost immediately.[321] Its founders included Diane Nash, John Lewis, Marion Barry, Bernard Lafayette, and James Bevel.[322] It grew out of the famous Greensboro sit-in where Black students sat in the white section of a Woolworth counter. Inspired by the attention to the sit-ins, it also staged freedom rides.[323] In building the coalition as he did, Randolph covered a variety of protest strategies and age demographics. He strategically assembled his partners to ensure the highest possibility that the 1963 March would attract a wide audience.

Randolph felt support from the White House would be an important ingredient for a successful march. Therefore, he set up a meeting with President Kennedy to discuss the march

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[317] Yohuru Williams, *Rethinking the Black Freedom Movement*, 9-10.
[318] Yohuru Williams, *Rethinking the Black Freedom Movement,* New York, 9-10.
[319] Anna Arnold Hedgeman, *The Trumpet Sounds: a Memoir of Negro Leadership*. Holt, New York, NY: Rinehart and Winston, 1964, 169-170.
[320] Yohuru Williams, *Rethinking the Black Freedom Movement,* New York, NY: Routledge 2016, 27.
[321] Philip Randolph Memorandum, March 26, 1963, Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016060301277; Philip Randolph Letter to Whitney Young, Jr., April 4, 1963, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080210689; Philip Randolph Letter to James Farmer, March 26, 1963, Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016060301277.
[322] Yohuru Williams, *Rethinking the Black Freedom Movement*, 29-30.
[323] Yohuru Williams, *Rethinking the Black Freedom Movement*, 29-30.

and its goals.[324] This decision is demonstrative of the fact that he was following his blueprint from the MOW as he met with President Roosevelt in 1941. Relying on his strategy to lobby as well, Randolph decided to assemble a group of black youth from the SNCC to lobby members of Congress. He reasoned that the young students would demonstrate to members of Congress that education was essential in a job market where technology was responsible for the obsolescence of unskilled jobs.[325] Randolph's gift for strategy was therefore as strong as ever when he organized the 1963 March.

After assembling his core coalition group, Randolph appealed to a wide variety of religious groups and unions. In advance of the march, leaders of these groups convened in New York to discuss the strategy of the march. The participant groups at the New York meeting included the National Council of Churches, the American Jewish Congress, and the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice.[326] Throughout his coalition building history, religious leaders were always integral to Randolph's strategy. Perhaps he personally understood the importance of the clergy in shaping belief systems since his father was a minister.[327] He often credited his father with building his racial awareness and inspiring a life of activism.[328] Randolph therefore understood that community activism was heavily tied to religious support.

Following through on his strategy to consult President Kennedy, Randolph met with Kennedy along with other march leaders. The President was encouraging but expressed concerns over crowd control.[329] He also confirmed the wisdom of Randolph's strategy, agreeing that

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[324] Philip Randolph Telegram to President Kennedy, March 26, 1963, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080210689.
[325] Paula F. Pfeffer, *A Philip Randolph, Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement*, 141.
[326] Paula F. Pfeffer, *A Philip Randolph, Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement,* 246.
[327] Cornelius Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, 5.
[328] Cornelius Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, 41.
[329] Thomas Baker, "A. Philip Randolph Oral History Interview I," Transcript, October 29, 1969, National Archives and Records Service Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, 2.

protest would likely bring results from Congress.[330] Unlike his experience with President Roosevelt in 1941, Randolph received the seal of approval from the President. The President's approval of the march represented progress in comparison to Roosevelt's fear based response to the MOW.

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom once again placed Randolph in a position of prominence. At the march, Randolph delivered the opening remarks. His short speech reiterated the core of his message over the past forty plus years and demonstrated the key to his success as an activist. Labor was central to his words as he opened by identifying the march as an "advance guard of a massive moral revolution for jobs and freedom."[331] He alluded to his years of reliance on direct protest that originated with his labor advocacy. "And so we have taken our struggle into the streets," he noted "as the labor movement took its struggle into the streets."[332] Acknowledging the long road ahead he predicted: "The March on Washington is not the climax of our struggle, but a new beginning not only for the Negro but for all Americans who thirst for freedom and a better life."[333] Calling attention to civil rights opponents–"Dixiecrats" and "reactionary Republicans"-- he admonished the audience to "[l]ook for the enemies of Medicare, of higher minimum wages, of social security, of federal aid for education and there you will find the enemy of the Negro."[334] Randolph's opening remarks echoed his labor goals for the 1941 march, and the vision conceived two decades earlier became a reality.

The 1963 March reflected Randolph's strategy that had begun in 1925. He organized a coalition around a common issue, jobs and freedom, to create an effective mass protest of

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[330] Thomas Baker, "A. Philip Randolph Oral History Interview I," Transcript, October 29, 1969, National Archives and Records Service Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, 2.
[331] Philip Randolph, "Address at the 1963 March for Jobs and Freedom," in *For Jobs and Freedom*, 261.
[332] Philip Randolph, "Address at the 1963 March for Jobs and Freedom," in *For Jobs and Freedom,* 263.
[333] Philip Randolph, "Address at the 1963 March for Jobs and Freedom," in *For Jobs and Freedom*, 262.
[334] Philip Randolph, "Address at the 1963 March for Jobs and Freedom," in *For Jobs and Freedom*, 263.

proportions never before achieved. The march was a success and Randolph considered it to be "a high point" of the civil rights movement and his career.[335] The common issue that drove the march was a demand for passage of civil rights legislation. According to Randolph, he used his coalitions to organize the march to "develop a consensus of opinion in this country on the question of civil rights."[336] While the march did not achieve an immediate result as the 1941 March had, eventually the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were passed.[337] Scholars dispute whether the 1963 March led to the 1964 Civil Rights Act.[338] However, while it might not have been the only factor responsible for the legislation, it contributed to its passage.[339] The 1964 legislation prohibited segregation in public facilities and employment discrimination. The 1965 Voting Rights Act prohibited discriminatory practices related to voting such as literacy tests. While the legislation did not go nearly far enough, it certainly represented progress in comparison to Executive Order 8802, which only prohibited employment discrimination in the defense industry. Randolph's belief that labor rights were at the heart of civil rights proved to be true as he observed that "the labor movement played a

[335] Lucy Barber, *Marching on Washington: The Forging of an American Political Tradition,* Los Angeles, Ca: University of California Press, 2002, 177.
[336] Thomas Baker, "A. Philip Randolph Oral History Interview I," Transcript, October 29, 1969, National Archives and Records Service Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, 3.
[337] *Civil Rights Act of 1964,* 42 U.S. Code § 2000, 1964; Voting Rights Act of 1965 52 U.S. Code §10101, 1965.
[338] Compare Juan Williams, "The 1964 Civil Rights Act: Then and Now." *Human Rights* 31, no. 3, 2004, 6–15, 14 (Williams notes the lapse in time between the march and the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and concludes that the march was not responsible for the legislation; Thomas Sugrue, "For Jobs and Freedom: An Introduction to the Unfinished March." Economic Policy Institute, August 13, 2013. https://www.epi.org/publication/introduction-unfinished-march (Sugrue argues a direct link between the march and the 1964 Civil Rights Act).
[339] Thomas Sugrue, "For Jobs and Freedom: An Introduction to the Unfinished March." Economic Policy Institute, August 13, 2013. https://www.epi.org/publication/introduction-unfinished-march (Sugrue argues a direct link between the march and the 1964 Civil Rights Act).

tremendous role" as the driving force of the march.[340] Reflecting on the event in an interview years later, Randolph revealed that the 1941 MOW was the "blueprint" for the 1963 March.[341]

Throughout his life as a labor activist, Randolph was very calculating and consistent in his approach. His mastery of coalition building was responsible for the amendment of the Railway Labor Act in 1934, the collective bargaining agreement he won for the BSCP in 1937, and the executive order Roosevelt issued in 1941. It also provided a foundation for the civil rights legislation signed into law by President Johnson in 1964 and 1965. Randolph's success cannot be measured by his achievements alone. If his legacy is to be properly understood, his coalition building strategy and his plan for effective mass protest must be understood as well.

Randolph's legacy is especially significant today as our country is afflicted by gun violence. A year ago, the Atlanta community was mourning over the shooting of six Asian women shot by a man who uttered poisonous hate speech. In 2018, there was a hate driven mass shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. In the same year, 17 students and faculty at Stoneman Douglas High School were killed due to the plague of gun violence. These are a few of too many examples of tragedies. It seems society has become complacent. Gun violence dominates the news but little is being done to devise immediate solutions. Protests surge after a deadly event and then interest is lost. In 2018, coordinated marches were organized around the country in the March for Our Lives protest. While the marches drew over a million people, one march was not enough. It is time for Randolph's blueprint to be used over and over again until the President and Congress act to combat gun violence through legislation. Randolph's words

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[340] Philip Randolph, "Today's Civil Rights Revolution," Address at the Fifth Constitutional Convention of the Industrial Union Department, AFL-CIO" November 8, 1963, *ProQuest History Vault,* Personal Papers of Philip Randolph, Folder 0016080220352, 13.

[341] John Slawson, "Recorded Interview with A. Philip Randolph," Transcript, April 20, 1970 American Jewish Congress, 2.

from 1963 still remain true: the 1963 March was not the "climax" for struggle "but a new beginning."[342] We must continue to march on.

[342] Philip Randolph, "Address at the 1963 March for Jobs and Freedom," in *For Jobs and Freedom*, 263.

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