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Merline Pitre

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**BUILDING AND SELLING THE NAACP:
LULU B. WHITE AS AN ORGANIZER AND MOBILIZER**

by Merline Pitre

From its founding in 1909 until well past the mid 1940s, what highlighted the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) activities and dramatized its work were its efforts to secure for African Americans the constitutional and basic rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To carry out this mission, the organization depended heavily upon its various branches to raise funds and to increase membership. Membership dues provided the basic revenue for local branches and also for state and national operations. The salaries of all workers came from membership revenues. In a word, the organization's entire structure depended upon this source of income. In Texas, four branches – Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, and Marshall – were established prior to 1920. But from 1922 to 1937, these chapters experienced many obstacles in their quest for money, membership, and survival. This situation changed when a group of black Texans revived the four languished branches and established the Texas State Conference of Branches. Designed to direct the state civil rights movement, this organization served as a liaison between the local chapters and the national office of the NAACP. Additionally, the State Conference of Branches was charged with establishing and revising old branches, and filing lawsuits to bring about equity for blacks in voting rights, education, public accommodation and employment.¹

Of the men who participated in the above activities, we know a great deal. Those not so well known are the black women whose roles in building local branches has received scant attention from historians. One such individual was Lulu Belle Madison White. The tenth of twelve children, Lulu was born in Elmo, Texas, in 1900 to Henry Madison, a landowner, and Easter Madison, a domestic worker. Lulu received her early education in Elmo and Terrell public schools. Following her high school graduation, she attended Butler College for one year then transferred to Prairie View College where she received a bachelor's degree in English in 1928. In that same year she married a prominent Houston businessman, Julius White, a man with a great deal of capital and a long-time member of the NAACP who served as plaintiff in several white-primary cases. This marriage had both its advantages and disadvantages. Unable to find a teaching job in Houston Independent School District because of what some called "her husband's involvement in civil rights," Lulu White procured a position in Lufkin, Texas. After teaching school for nine years, White resigned her post and became an activist with the NAACP in the struggle to eliminate the Texas Democratic white primary.

It is important to note that Lulu White did not join the NAACP thoughtlessly or simply as an extension of her husband's involvement. While still a student at Prairie View, she was involved in almost every movement for social change on campus. When she became first vice president of her senior class, she stated that one of her major goals after graduation was to become a member of the biracial committee of Houston. Failing in this effort, White turned to the NAACP. In 1937 she was named Director of the Youth Council and in 1939 she became the acting president of the Houston Branch of the NAACP.²

Merline Pitre is a professor of history at Texas Southern University.

When White assumed the interim role as president in September 1939, the Houston chapter was beset with financial and management problems. There were accusations of misconduct and malfeasance against several leading officers. To remedy this situation (while attending the national NAACP convention in Richmond, Virginia), Lulu White spoke to Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP, concerning "some existing conditions in the branch quite out of line with the aims and purpose of the Association." When she returned to Houston she requested a visit from Walter White, stating "a visit from you would mean saving our branch." Rather than making the trip himself, Walter White sent national field worker Daisy Lampkin. Upon her arrival, Lampkin found the situation unbelievable and confirmed the reports that the Houston NAACP branch was being used "as political football by unscrupulous men." Without being specific, Lampkin informed Walter White that "the branch and Chamber of Commerce [Negro] have the same men as officers and there has been so much stealing and so many irregularities that each man is forced to support the other." In spite of the corruption, Lampkin found several honest and supportive persons, including William M. Drake, branch treasurer, and Lulu White, whom she described as "an honest and upright individual." After Lampkin's investigation was completed, a slate of officers was elected without Lulu White, who refused the nomination. Instead, she became a local field worker and director of the membership drive.³

In large part because of her field work experience with the NAACP, Lulu White became the first full-time, salaried executive secretary of the Houston Branch in 1943, making her the first woman in the South to hold such a post. Upon hearing the news that she had been selected for the position, she could hardly control her emotion. In a letter to Walter White, she exclaimed: "Give me five years and I'll be darned if I don't give you 5,000 members in Houston. I won't be a bit surprised if you won't move your headquarters here."⁴

When Lulu White assumed the post of executive secretary of the Houston chapter in 1943, her job description included managing the office, conducting branch activities, helping to organize other branches, and especially directing membership and fund-raising drives. On a salary of \$89 per month and gasoline money for her automobile provided by her husband, White immediately set out to make Houston's branch one of the largest in the nation. Under her tutelage, the Houston branch grew from 5,679 members in 1943 to 10,705 in 1944 to 12,700 in 1945. Elated over Lulu White's performance, Daisy Lampkin wrote to her: "Each day, I marvel at the amount of work you are able to accomplish." A. Maceo Smith, executive secretary of the state branches, was equally pleased with White for winning first place in the national membership drive in 1943. Partly because of White's efforts, 23,000 new members enrolled in the national association between 1943 and 1945, thereby expanding the number of state branches from thirty-six to one hundred and four. This increase in membership enabled the Houston chapter to pay a subsidy to the national office for three consecutive years: 1945 - \$500; 1946 - \$700; and 1947 - \$500.⁵

White's role in helping to build the NAACP might be better understood by looking at it through what can be called "layers of leadership," or transcending leadership, by which leaders engage and create new "leader-followers." By engaging ministers and presidents of civic, political, professional and educational, labor and women's groups early in her career, the executive secretary was able to establish a "leader followership." It was mainly through White's

association and work with individuals such as these that she was able to keep the association healthy via membership and fund raising.

As White went about establishing local chapters, she carried with her the resources of the national organization and the experience and contacts necessary to bring in help from the state and national offices. It should also be noted that White performed her duties as executive secretary in an efficient manner despite personal illness, a meager budget, and lack of a support staff. As early as December 1945, Lulu White informed Walter White that due to a heart ailment, she might have to "give up her place as executive director." The doctors indicated that she needed to rest for six months and had to lose sixty pounds. But White's reply was "Could you imagine me not working for the NAACP?"⁶

Because of Lulu White's dedication to building the NAACP, as well as her record in membership drives, one could easily understand why A. Maceo Smith would ask her to become director of state branches on March 26, 1946. At the time of her appointment, White informed her good friend and national field worker, Ella Baker, that she was disabled to a small degree by a heart ailment.⁷ Six months later, she complained to Gloster Current of a "bad valve in the heart" and of the need for plenty of rest.⁸ This ailment aside, White continued to perform her duties with efficiency – working sometimes out of her home and at other times out of her office on a budget of \$275 per month. Out of this budget came her salary, now raised to \$100 per month, \$75 for a secretary, \$32.50 for rental of a building, \$30 for publicity and \$12 for telephones. White worked also as a file clerk and bookkeeper without any of the latest stenographic equipment. Only after the diagnosis of her heart ailment did she purchase an AB Dick monograph duplicator and hire Christia V. Adair as administrative assistant. Thus, monies for defraying the cost for telegrams, duplication, and administrative assistance depended on the Lulu White's fund-raising ability. Hearing from White about the steps she had taken to keep the office running smoothly, Ella Baker replied: "For a gal who has a leaking heart, you are certainly going strong. Don't overdo it, but of course this advice is more easily given than followed."⁹

Ella Baker was perceptive. Instead of allowing the heart ailment to slow her down, White doubled her efforts by launching two membership drives as executive secretary and as director of state branches. On March 20, 1946, she told Lucille Black, national membership chair, "Texas will make you proud of her ... We are not going to stop until we have one hundred thousand [members]. We are really trying to break a record with our Texas State Conference." Lulu White subsequently established chapters in Rosenberg and New Waverly with widespread interest from individuals in adjoining counties. Enjoying her work immensely, White told Ella Baker: "I get a big kick out of these people wanting branches, so I say get as many as fifty (members) and you may have a branch of your own and they start hustling for members."¹⁰ This kind of infectious charisma and knowing how to sell her product – the NAACP – enabled White to develop the loyal following so necessary to the movement in the mid 1940s. Setting her state membership goal at 100,000 in 1946, White urged Gloster Current to send whatever supplies he could to her: "Any kind of stuff you have is needed. We have grouped the people into 10-30 groups and the minimum number we are expecting is 100,000." White assigned a captain from each group. These captains recruited members from all walks of life – churches,

labor unions, postal workers, barbers, beauticians, professional and lay people, to name a few.¹¹

It should not come as a surprise that Lulu White capitalized on the foundation laid by the Rev. A.A. Lucas, president of the Houston chapter, in soliciting membership from the churches. As an organizational tool in the struggle for civil rights, the church was second to none. It provided informational networks and furnished the meeting places and fund-raising machinery. The church was the oldest and most respected institution in the black community. Central to black culture, the symbol of black historical experience and the expression of African Americans hopes and aspirations, the church gave blacks a sense of solidarity, self-identity, and self-respect. And when it came to arousing and manipulating an audience, the combination of black preachers and Lulu White had few rivals.

White's effectiveness in soliciting memberships and monies was connected to the transcendent leadership styles of black ministers. These ministers developed a "behind the scenes" local leadership cadre whose style was the antithesis of the "out front" style of Lulu White. The Texas civil rights movement is replete with the image of Lulu White up at the podium and black ministers and labor leaders down in the trenches organizing. The ministers were effective organizers because they knew their clients, knew how to motivate them, how to recognize local leadership, and how to put it out front. They knew how to delegate responsibilities by placing members of their congregations over an auxiliary and giving them a sense of "somebodiness," while simultaneously extracting loyalty and work from them. It was through these church members that many ministers gained a sense of efficacy and through these ministers that Lulu White gained some of the necessary tools for reaching the rest of the black community.

White applied the same model to her relationships with labor unions and fraternal organizations. So, with a cadre of labor unions, fraternal, political, social, and church leaders going from door to door spreading the word about the NAACP and seeking new recruits, the task of soliciting membership became easier for White. From the beginning, such organizing efforts were the keys to the success of the movement and to Lulu White's leadership. As a result, whenever the NAACP called a rally to discuss an issue, much of the work was already done. The ministers, union leaders, and fraternal and social organization presidents provided an audience, generated enthusiasm, and brought legitimacy to the movement that White so ably articulated.

More often than not, this model in membership and fund-raising drives worked well for White. On occasion, however, her endeavors were obscured by distractions. For example, when White accepted the post of director of state branches, she not only suffered from a heart ailment, but also experienced internecine fighting in her own local chapter. There were times when the latter impediment seemed too much to bear. Writing national membership director Lucille Black in November 1946, she said: "I am not sure I will keep this position. I am not happy as I have been in my work [with the NAACP] ... Happiness is about all I could call myself getting out of it and knowing that some good was actually done." White continued, "I love the NAACP ... I would like to be part of it, but it is not necessary to keep on and not be happy." Black responded with wisdom and encouragement: "Personally I can think of

no one who could do a better job than you ... I know there are times when most of us feel like throwing in the towel, but we don't because we know that the cause for which we are fighting is bigger than all the petty annoyances. We certainly cannot afford to lose your service."¹² With this kind of moral support coming from her superior, White pressed forward with the work of the NAACP. She attended the Louisiana-Texas Leadership Training Conference for branch secretaries in Shreveport, Louisiana and gave a presentation on "Making Branch Committees Work." When she returned from the conference, she successfully applied what she had learned. She moved across the state organizing branches in Palacios, Bryan, Taylor, and other locations. Additionally, she sought advice from Gloster Current, national director of branches, who gave her all the information he could "to make the NAACP go forward in Texas." Elated, White responded in kind: "No program should do any better than a well-planned program for the NAACP."¹³

White did a good job as director of state branches, working with local leaders to mobilize the community, organizing new branches, and disseminating information from the national and state offices to their affiliates. Yet, despite the service that Lulu White rendered as state director, her work was affected to a great degree by her position as executive secretary of the Houston chapter. By November 1946, the quarrel between Lulu White and Carter Wesley had reached an impasse over the integration of the University of Texas vis`a vis the establishment of Texas State University for Negroes. This fight had a great deal to do with White's uncompromising stance on integration. She wholeheartedly believed that there could be no equality in segregation. This position was opposed by Carter Wesley, who thought the government could make separate equal. Because of White's disagreement, Wesley began an attack which caused her to attempt to resign on three occasions. On December 31, 1946, White informed her superiors, Albert A. Lucas, President of the Houston chapter, Walter White, executive secretary of the National Office, and Thurgood Marshall, NAACP counsel, of her intention to resign from her post as executive secretary at the request of her husband, Julius, who was disgusted with Wesley's attacks on her. Complaining of Wesley's recent article, Lulu White told Roy Wilkins: "When Julius saw this article, he went to pieces." While her husband was of the opinion that it was not necessary for her to continue to be subjected to Wesley's pen, she felt otherwise. "I would rather drop dead than give up at this stage of the game, [but Julius] cannot stay out of the mess when personalities enter," wrote Lulu.¹⁴

Hearing of Lulu White's intention to leave the local office branch, A. Maceo Smith and other leaders began to speculate if White also would resign as director of state branches. White's letter of resignation, however, indicated that she was hesitant about making good on her promise to leave: "I would not quit for anything," said White, "but Julius demands it." It appears that White was trying to find some way to justify remaining as executive secretary. She got her wish when Thurgood Marshall wrote, "I have heard of your resignation, and I for one deeply appreciate your position, but we need people like you and Julius in the work of the NAACP. I have been accused of giving aid and comfort to you in your stand against segregation, so I might as well repeat that I think you are absolutely correct in your stand opposing segregation of any kind in Texas." Toward the end of his letter, Marshall was more forceful in his plea: "The reason I think you are right is not only because I believe in you personally,

but I don't believe the long fight of the NAACP against segregation is wrong." This letter changed Julius' mind. On February 4, 1947, Lulu White wrote Marshall, saying that "Julius has decided that even though I am still being attacked by Mr. Wesley in his *Informer*, I still can work. This is how much we both appreciate your letter."¹⁵

Partially because of Marshall's letter and partially because the Houston chapter refused to accept her resignation and instead gave her a vote of confidence, White continued as executive secretary and director of state branches. She went forward with organizing and reorganizing branches, soliciting memberships, and raising freedom money for the NAACP. She continued to make frontal attacks on segregation, to organize cultural events, and to recognize black history. White performed all of the above tasks for two years without a paycheck – only to be reminded by her husband, when one did come in 1948, that it was not enough to pay for gas.¹⁶

When weighing her pleasant moments against the bad publicity that she and the NAACP received because of Carter Wesley, the nagging question that was uppermost in Lulu White's mind from 1946 to 1948 was whether to continue to fight as executive secretary. Though she had another major arena in which to fight, namely that of director of state branches, White was totally committed to the local chapter. As she indicated, "[she] had allowed herself to become too engrossed in its work." Yet, White began to weaken in her resolve to stay. On April 10, 1948, she wrote the executive board – L.H. Simpson, president, James E. Robinson, treasurer, Sid Hilliard and J. H. Jemison – of her intention to resign. They turned a deaf ear to her request, but White persisted. When the board convened for its last meeting of the year, she insisted that it take action on her resignation. Again the board skirted the issue. On January 5, 1949, she told Roy Wilkins: "I hate to give up the work here [but] I am tired of fighting within and without. This Branch has not had confidence in itself since Mr. Wesley's tirades on me and Thurgood." After venting her frustration, White decided to draft still another letter of resignation to the executive board, but again to no avail. At this point White was in a quandary. She was reluctant to step down, but was at the same time fearful that if she did not leave, Julius would physically hurt someone. There had been oral reports that Julius had broken the butt of his gun on Carter Wesley's desk in protest of his attack on Lulu White. He did so with the warning that if Wesley continued such attacks on his wife he would break the butt of his gun on Wesley's head.¹⁷

Unmoved by Julius White's threat, in his editorial June 11, 1949, Wesley reiterated his charge that White was a communist, citing her signature on a petition to protest the jailing of the editor of the *Daily Worker* in a New York conspiracy trial. Two days after the publication of this editorial, White tendered her resignation and demanded that the board accept it. In her letter, she admonished her colleagues to keep the faith in their struggle for equality. "This effort of Mr. Wesley to kill my influence ... is not without intention [but] my wound is not so great that it will not heal. Let us all rededicate ourselves to the full emancipation of our people," said White. Relieved of the pressure from within and without, White wrote Roy Wilkins on June 22, 1949, and proclaimed: "Home for sure this time, can't have trouble with Julius about it." But White had mixed feelings about stepping down from the power base that she had created. She suggested as much in her letter of resignation: "I will be standing by if there can be any reconciliation for the great cause by my husband,"

said White. After all, the local branch was familiar territory. White knew the people. She socialized with them. She knew the leaders and who was in the trenches. Arguably, in Houston, Lulu White was larger than life. As one of her friends said, "when Lulu walked into a place, everyone knew that the NAACP was there." In a word, Lulu was the NAACP and the NAACP was Lulu, and she came to believe it.¹⁸

Almost immediately, the national office of the NAACP tapped White to become a national field worker. A. Maceo Smith told Roy Wilkins that Lulu White would be a strategic addition to the Southwest staff for a nationwide membership campaign in 1950. Wilkins acknowledged that while White's service in Houston would not be good at that time, she possessed a variety of qualities that would be most helpful in other cities. Citing White's successful civil rights mobilization rally in Houston in 1950, her unquestioned loyalty to the NAACP, and her work as chair of the Regional Advisory Committee, Smith reminded Wilkins that White had "the respect of a great many leaders in the region." Wilkins concurred, and after the consultation with and approval by A. Maceo Smith, executive director of state branches, and Lucille Black, director of membership, White was placed on the national staff in the Branch Department at a salary of \$24.00 per week from February 15, 1950 to June 8, 1950.¹⁹

With her new assignment, White no longer directed the Association's activities from within the state, but became an initiator of action outside the state. One of her first assignments as special field agent was in Lake Charles, Louisiana. After receiving words of encouragement from Lucille Black, White went about her work with fervor. Within one week of her arrival, White, along with Reverend A. Washington, the local branch president, had developed a "leader-follower" cadre. White was an intelligent leader whose unfamiliarity with the people of Lake Charles led her to rely upon the leadership of black ministers. Wisdom born of experience had taught her that this method would yield results. In areas where a branch was dead or dying, it was necessary to arouse the ministers before they could stimulate their congregations. That burden fell on White's shoulders, but this task was not particularly difficult because she had experience in articulating blacks' concerns and was uncompromising in her attacks against Jim Crow. This was especially true in Lake Charles. In less than two weeks her followers had enlisted over 100 new recruits. Upon her departure, many board members expressed their gratitude to White for being so "neighborly in helping to revive a dying branch."²⁰

Lulu White left Lake Charles for St. Louis, Missouri, to boost a sagging membership in that city. St. Louis had been one of the largest branches in the country in the 1940s, but in recent years interest and participation in the movement had waned. What St. Louis needed was a motivator. In Gloster Current's opinion, White was "just the right kind of person with the proper personality and knowledge of the NAACP to handle the St. Louis situation." Current reaffirmed his confidence in White's ability to her husband, Julius: "We want you to know how much we appreciate Lulu's help, how greatly she is needed in helping to conduct this membership campaign for the NAACP."²¹

After settling in St. Louis, White immediately took steps to rejuvenate an ailing branch. Relying on that "transcendent" leadership model which she had used so effectively in Houston and Lake Charles, White assured Gloster Current that everything would be all right: "I guarantee this will be a campaign. I am

getting the organization of it completed this week and then we will hit the field with the campaign and the workers." White placed the workers into five groups with a minister as captain of each. One could argue that White trapped these ministers into leadership positions; if they dropped out of the campaign, they would be branded as cowards and traitors. If the membership increased, they would enjoy the role of coordinators. In stirring these ministers to action, she often pointed out that each repressive act by whites tightened the bonds of pride and trust between the preachers and the people. To reinforce this bond between leaders and followers, White secured the services of people across class lines. She offered merit certificates as incentives to anyone who brought in more than fifty members. White's efforts paid off: the membership increased and the St. Louis Branch returned to the respectable position it had occupied in previous years.²²

After completing her work in St. Louis, Lulu White decided to attend the Association's annual national convention, a convention for which she would maintain perfect attendance for twenty years. Since she did not have credentials, she wrote Gloster Current and offered her service gratis in exchange for a pass into the Boston meeting. Current accepted this offer and, while at the convention, convinced White that the national office needed her services in Arkansas. White was prepared to go to Arkansas in August 1950, but due to financial exigencies of the branch, she did not leave until September 1950. Employed for four weeks, White's stay cost \$340.00. This included living expenses, travel, postage, stationery, and the printing of leaflets. All expenditures were paid by the National Office because Arkansas's state branch was in a deficit. Part of White's assignment was to conduct a fund-raising campaign with the understanding that the yield of the drive would be used to reimburse the National Office.²³

Lulu White arrived in Little Rock, Arkansas, on September 21, 1950, to face what could be described only as a "grand mess." There was dissension within the branch, divisions along class lines, and alleged embezzlement of funds by some members. This situation prompted White to write Gloster Current: "Boy-O-Boy, you guys can give me really tuff (sic) assignments. I thought St. Louis was tough enough, but it was as sweet as a lamb. That tells you what this is like." Unlike branches she had established or revived in Texas, Louisiana, and Missouri, White had little or no cooperation from native Arkansans. In fact, she began working under conditions that one described as "so bad, words are unable to explain them." Still White set out to do the impossible and make something out of nothing – to mobilize troops who had defected.²⁴

White's first task was to help Arkansas become financially solvent. "The work of the NAACP in Arkansas is at its lowest ebb," wrote Lucille Black to Lulu White. "In order to continue, we must raise at least five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00) at once." In keeping with this directive, White sent two letters to members and friends soliciting funds. The first letter was one of consciousness raising. Calling upon the members to "form a united front against Jim Crow," White said that the lack of funds in the branch treasury prevented it from litigating court cases. The second letter was more to the point. It emphasized the urgency of the situation: "This letter to you is an emergency!" wrote White. "We must raise at least five thousand dollars at once. Time is of the essence. Act now . . . We need money now."²⁵

When White took to the field to make personal contacts with prospective members, she encountered friction within the black community. "Every black person is in a different class and he/she does not want to work with someone out of his/her class," wrote White to Current. "They even have what is called First Families of Arkansas," continued White. "But when I get through with them, they will at least know that there is one organization in Arkansas in which they all may take part. I hope to net about \$2000 bucks." In hindsight, one knows that given the lack of cooperation and the division that existed among African Americans in Little Rock, it was wishful thinking for White to assume that she would raise \$2000 or that she would change the attitudes of blacks about themselves or about the NAACP. Acknowledging the difficulty and disappointments she encountered, and writing Gloster midway through the campaign, she said: "I have never worked so hard in all of my life. This is a tuft (sic) one. But by all the devils in torment, I am going to get the job done."²⁶

However noble White's plans might have been, she was unable to reach the goal of raising \$5000 during her four-week stay. In fact, she raised only \$1500 by the time of her departure. Yet, she set in motion the mechanism and energy, and Arkansas finally achieved its goal in November, one month after White's departure.²⁷ The fact that White did not accomplish her objective had a great deal to do with a lack of cooperation from black ministers who hindered her efforts in mobilizing the foot soldiers of the movement. Also, White was not as successful as she had hoped because of her short tenure in the area. Without firm roots in the community and without a strong "leader-follower" cadre, four weeks was simply too short to accomplish much.

Lulu White's travel, both as a special field agent and as director of state branches, took her away from her home for almost the entire year of 1950. But after the Arkansas campaign, she returned to Houston, became involved in the day to day operation of the local chapter and the membership drive of which she became chairperson in 1954. Coupled with those responsibilities, White continued to be an advocate and a gadfly for the civil and political rights of blacks until her death in Houston July 7, 1957.²⁸

In sum, it can be said that Lulu B. White was admired by a large number of blacks as she traveled in and out of Texas organizing and reviving branches. Noted for her dynamic speaking because of her capacity to impart courage and to chase timidity, White literally moved people to action. She motivated crowds to fight for civil rights and to develop strategies with branch presidents and executive boards to achieve the desired results. She mobilized existing networks around the organizing goals of the NAACP, conveying information to and coordinating the activities of the branches. In her capacity as builder and salesperson, White was the quintessential wheelhorse and to a certain extent a team player for the NAACP. She dominated not only the affairs of the NAACP in her native city and state, but also to some degree those of the Southwest. Under her direction, the Houston branch of the NAACP overcame difficult times. During the war years, the organization's membership and prestige grew. As director of state branches, White was one of the national office's main source of information and advice concerning the welfare of blacks in Texas. Similarly, she promoted the cause of the NAACP with an evangelical zeal when she served as national field worker.

The success of the NAACP in breaking down racial barriers during the

1940s and 1950s required the mobilization of the black community and leaders capable of speaking persuasively to articulate African Americans' concerns to the white power structure. Lulu White's attributes and wide range of skills prepared her to meet the internal and external demands of the civil rights movement. Her understanding of the black world came from her day-to-day involvement in the community, her access to its institutions, and her regional and national network within the NAACP. It may be that White's greatest strength as a leader was her ability to mobilize the black community – its people, financial resources, and leaders, and to sell her product (the NAACP) by bringing in new members to the organization. White also gained the respect of many self-reliant grassroots leaders, many of whom were unconcerned with who got the credit for success. Their triple devotion to civil rights, the NAACP, and Lulu White contributed mightily toward abolishing the Texas White Democratic statute, eradicating some forms of job discrimination, and desegregating the University of Texas.

In her capacity as a leader, White was egocentric and at times vindictive when she believed her authority was being questioned. Conversely, she could be kind, gracious, and even self-deprecating when circumstances seemed to require it. Still, it was White's interpretation of the NAACP philosophy, and her link to persons of influence within the organization, that determined the direction of her leadership and her response to African Americans' social, political, and economic conditions of the 1940s and 1950s. Conversely, the NAACP's status was enhanced by White's willingness to associate its cause with the federal government's initiative and her close identification with liberal reform and reform liberalism.

NOTES

¹NAACP, Minutes of the State Conference of Branches, June 18 and 19, 1937; State Conference Constitution and By-Laws, 1940; "Resolution of the State Conference of Branches" in NAACP files, Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress; August Meier and John Bracey Jr., "The NAACP as a Reform Movement, 1909-1965: To Reach the Conscience of America," *Journal of Southern History* 59 (February 1993), pp. 1-19. See also Kenneth W. Goings, *The NAACP Comes of Age: The Defeat of Judge John Parker* (Bloomington, 1990); Elliot Rudwick and August Meier, "The Rise of the Black Secretariat in the NAACP, 1909-1935," in Meier and Rudwick, *Along the Color Line: Explorations in the Black Experience* (Urbana, 1976), pp. 94-127; John Bracey Jr., and August Meier, "Allies or Adversaries? The NAACP, A. Philip Randolph and the 1941 March on Washington," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 74 (Spring 1991), pp. 1-17.

²U.S. Bureau of the Census, 13th Census of the U.S., 1910; Population, Kaufman County, Texas, Elmo Supervision, District 3, National Archives Microfilm Publications (Washington, D.C., 1936), in the Clayton Genealogical Library; Johnnie Jordan, interview by Merline Pitre, February 7, 1987, Houston, Texas. See also Lulu White's Scrapbook in the possession of Johnnie Jordan.

³Daisy Lampkin to Walter White, October 30, 1939. See also Lampkin to Richetta Randolph, October 31, 1939, NAACP Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Unless otherwise indicated, all letters in this article are taken from this source.

⁴Lulu B. White to Walter White, April 13, 1943.

⁵Annual Report, Houston Chapter 1945-1947, NAACP Papers.

⁶Lulu White to Walter White, December 4, 1945; Walter White to Lulu White, December 12, 1945; Lulu White to Thurgood Marshall, February 4, 1947.

⁷Lulu White to Ella Baker, March 1, 20, 1946; Lulu White to Lucille Black, May 17, 1946.

⁸Lulu White to Gloster Current, November 27, 1946.

⁹Ella Baker to Lulu White, March 20, 1946.

¹⁰Lulu White to Ella Baker, March 1, 1946, April 24, 1946.

¹¹Lulu White to Gloster Current, December 7, 1946; See also Lulu White to Current, May 9, 1948; Lulu White to Ella Baker, March 18, 1946.

¹²Lulu White to Lucille Black, November 22, 1946; Black to Lulu White, February 7, 1947.

¹³Lulu White to Current, March 1, 1946, Dec. 7, 1946.

¹⁴Lulu White to A.A. Lucas, December 31, 1946; Lulu White to Walter White, January 2, 1947; Memo: Thurgood Marshall to Walter White, December 30, 1946; *Houston Informer*, December 23, 31, 1946; Lulu White to Roy Wilkins, January 14, 1947.

¹⁵Lulu White to Marshall, January 14, 1947; Marshall to Lulu White, February 4, 1947; See also Lulu White to Gloster Current, December 7, 1946.

¹⁶Lulu White to Wilkins, December 8, 1947.

¹⁷Lulu White to L. H. Simpson, Executive Board *et. al.*, April 10, 1948; Lulu White to Simpson, Executive Board *et. al.*, January 5, 1949. Interview by Pitre with George McElroy, February 10, 1987.

¹⁸Lulu White to Roy Wilkins June 22, 1949; Lulu White to Simpson, June 13, 1949. See also Lulu White to Gloster Current, June 12, 22, 1947; Lulu White to Simpson, June 13, 1949.

¹⁹A. Maceo Smith to Roy Wilkins, January 30, 1950; Donald Jones to Roy Wilkins, February 5, 1950; Donald Jones to Gloster Current, January 3, 1950. See also Jones to Gloster Current, January 3, 1950; Current to Jones, September 27, 1950; The Southwest Regional Office consisted of Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma. See also Michael Gillette, "The Rise of the NAACP in Texas," *Southwest Historical Quarterly*, 81 (April 1978), p.149.

²⁰Lucille Black to Lulu White, March 8, 1950; Lulu White to Lucille Black, March 20, 1950. See also memo from Mrs. Williams to Mrs. Lulu White, May 8, 1950; A. G. Washington to Roy Wilkins, April 14, 1950.

²¹Gloster Current to Julius White, April 12, 1960; Current to Lulu White, April 13, 1950; Lulu White to Current, April 19, 1950.

²²Lulu White to Current, April 19, 1950; Donald Jones to Current, August 13, 1950; Memo from Current to Wilkins, August 21, 1950; Memo from Wilkins to Current, August 28, 1950; Lulu White to Current, September 13, 1950; Current to Lulu White, September 20, 1950.

²³Current to Wilkins, June 18, 1957.

²⁴Lulu White to Current, September 16, 1950.

²⁵"\$5,000 Fund Drive for Freedom," Lulu White's Circular Letter, September 15, 1950, NAACP files; Lucille Black to Lulu White, September 16, 1950; Thaddeus D. Williams to Gloster Current, November 7, 1950.

²⁶Lulu White to Lucille Black, October 3, 1950; Lulu White to Current, September 16, 1950; Current to Lulu White, September 20, 1950.

²⁷Thaddeus D. Williams to Current, November 7, 1950.

²⁸*Houston Informer*, July 13, 1957; Lulu White is Interred in Paradise South Cemetery in Houston, Texas.