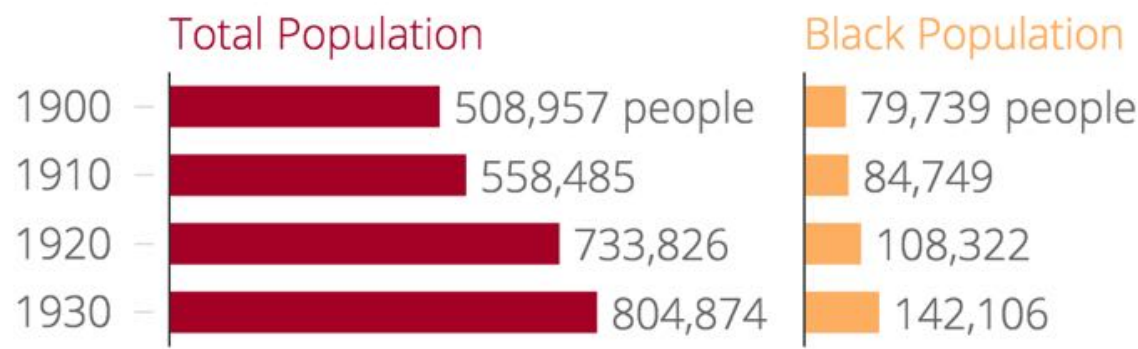


Introduction

Baltimore's urban landscape saw tremendous changes during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Following the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904, the city rebuilt the downtown. Adding to the momentum for growth, in 1915, the city dedicated a much-needed new sanitary sewer system after years of delay. In 1918, Baltimore annexed a large area of Baltimore County spurring the rapid expansion of neighborhoods along the city's numerous electric streetcar lines. Scores of new factories opened during World War I and the city's population boomed. But a growing and changing city did not always mean progress for African Americans. Black Baltimoreans fought against an aggressive effort to impose racial segregation on residential neighborhoods and struggled to get their fair share of benefits from the city's growth. African Americans experienced continued discrimination as black workers and woefully unequal conditions as black students and teachers in the city's public schools.



Data: U.S. Census

Chart: Baltimore City total population compared to black population, 1900–1930

As the city's overall population grew so did the black population. The overall population spiked from 508,957 in 1900 to 733,826 in 1920, and then to 804,874 people in 1930. The city's black population also saw large gains: from 79,739 in 1900 to 84,749 in 1910, 108,322 in 1920 and 142,106 in 1930.¹

Unlike northern and midwestern cities like New York, Chicago, or Cleveland, where the Great Migration brought large numbers of black migrants from the deep South, Baltimore remained a destination mostly for black migrants from Maryland and Virginia. In 1910, 87% of the city's black population was native to Maryland and migrants from Virginia made up the largest share (8.7%) of those born outside of the state. In 1920, the share of native Marylanders declined to 76% in sharp contrast to Detroit's 8.4% or Manhattan's 20.9%. By 1930, 59.4% of Baltimore's black population was native to Maryland, a decline of 17.1% since 1910.²



"Pay day for the stevedores", c. 1905. Detroit Publishing Company. [Courtesy Library of Congress](#).

While Baltimore's black community grew it also became increasingly concentrated in northwest Baltimore in what is now the Old West Baltimore Historic District. A smaller area of segregated black housing on the east side of the city. White elected officials and property owners used new policies of clearance and containment to isolate black neighborhoods from newer racially segregated suburbs like Guilford and Roland Park. Segregated public schools further reinforced the existing patterns of housing segregation.

Baltimore's Civil Rights activists in the late nineteenth century defended the rights black residents won following the Civil War but legal setbacks such as the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) encouraged new white supremacist campaigns attacking the rights of black voters, segregating residential neighborhoods and public accommodations, and restricting black students to underfunded public schools.³ After Mississippi passed a new state constitution in 1890 that disenfranchised black voters (the so-called "[Mississippi Plan](#)"), white Democratic Party leaders in a number of states (Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri) found a way to do the same by 1910.⁴ Popular books, plays, and movies reinforced the values of white supremacy with examples including *The Clansman* (1905) and *The Birth of a Nation* (1915).

In Maryland, and in most northern states, activists found little political support for Civil Rights from either the Democratic Party, then dominated by white supremacists, or the Republican Party, which although more accommodating was still hostile and segregated black party members at local meetings and conferences by 1910.⁵

African American voters made up a small share of Baltimore's voters even after the addition of black women to the pool of eligible voters following the ratification the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Historian Bruce Thompson describes how black voters lost influence as a share of the electorate in this period. In 1900, African American residents made up 15% of the voting-age population and 15% of registered voters. In 1932, it was 16% of the population but only 12% of the registered voters. Thompson continues:

Only in a few wards did the black vote make a difference in local elections. In 1931, four wards had a black majority and three others were evenly populated by blacks and whites.⁶

Even in the absence of leadership from white elected officials, Civil Rights activists in Baltimore still continued to fight and, in some cases, win in the courts. At the national level, the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Guinn v. United States* (1915) outlawed grandfather clauses (used to disenfranchise black voters); *Buchanan v. Warley* (1917) abolished residential segregation ordinances (modeled after Baltimore's influential 1910 "Poe Law"); *Moore v. Dempsey* (1923) outlawed mob trials; and *Nixon v. Herndon* (1927) abolished the practice of white primaries. In Baltimore, between 1904 and 1918, African American residents successfully fought back efforts to expand segregation in transportation and housing and to disenfranchise black voters.⁷ Historian Bruce Thompson argued that these cases were distinct from earlier advocacy efforts by suggesting that the Brotherhood of Liberty in the 1880s and 1890s used the law to "defend black civil rights against encroachments by whites" but not "strengthen, re-establish, or expand black civil rights".⁸ Thompson writes:

These were important victories for the civil rights struggle because they showed that blacks could respond to segregation and the abridgement of rights and helped set the stage for the civil rights movement.⁹

As the city's black population grew in the 1920s, conditions for black workers and residents remained difficult. Some scholars have diminished the significance of activism in Baltimore during this early twentieth century and described the period between the 1930s and 1950s as a kind of "golden age" of civil rights activism for Baltimore. For example, Bruce Thompson suggests that, "Before 1935, blacks and the civil rights struggle were on the defensive, responding to segregation and the loss of rights."¹⁰ As a corrective to this approach, historian Dennis Doster has argued for the importance of an expansive definition for Civil Rights activism that includes "struggles for access to municipal and social services and struggles related to labor and employment." Using this definition, Doster highlights the importance of lesser-known organizations including the Federation of Parent-Teacher Clubs, the Women's Cooperative Civic League, the Independent Republican League, and the Baltimore Urban League.¹¹ This broader definition is key to understanding how the Civil Rights movement intersected with a variety of urban reform programs around health and housing in this period.

Other significant groups in this period included fraternal organizations such as the Monumental Lodge No. 3 and philanthropic groups such as the CYWCA (founded in 1896) and the Colored Fresh Air and Empty Stocking Circle (established in 1904 by Ida Cummings and other members of the CYWCA).¹² In 1927, the Maryland state legislature established a new Interracial Commission to create a framework for discussing Civil Rights policy issues.¹³

Prominent individual activists and leaders during this period included City Councilman Harry S. Cummings (1866–1917) and educator Ida Rebecca Cummings (1867–1958) (brother and sister); lawyers Everett J. Waring (1859–1914), Warner T. McGuinn (1859–1937), and George W. F. McMechen (1871–1961); pastor Rev. Dr. William Moncure Alexander (1852–1919); and newspaper editor Dr. Carl J. Murphy (1889–1967). Notable organizations included the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (established in 1909, with a Baltimore chapter beginning in 1912) and the Baltimore Urban League (established nationally in 1910, with a Baltimore chapter beginning in 1924). The *Afro-American Newspaper* under the editorial leadership of Carl Murphy (beginning with the death of John Murphy, Sr. in 1922) also became a vocal proponent of Civil Rights in Baltimore.¹⁴

These varied organizations and individual activists and leaders subscribed to a range of different beliefs about how black Baltimoreans could counter white supremacist attacks on their lives and communities. Historian Bruce Thompson contrasts the philosophies of Booker T. Washington and the accommodationist "Atlanta Compromise" with the "more radical" position of W.E.B. DuBois, writing:

For W. E. B. Du Bois, accommodation and uplift would not solve the problems blacks faced. He advocated the more radical position that blacks should oppose segregation and work for their political and civil rights.¹⁵

This range of philosophical and political debate at a national level influenced local Civil Rights activism in Baltimore and Baltimore influenced the national movement. On the spectrum closer to compromise, in 1905, Rev. Harvey Johnson and four other members of Baltimore's Brotherhood of Liberty were among the twenty-nine people from fourteen states who met near Buffalo, New York to form the Niagara Movement.¹⁶ Historian Bettye Collier-Thomas suggested that W.E.B. DuBois was in "close contact with members of the

Brotherhood... as he frequently traveled there to deliver speeches" between 1895 and 1910. Collier-Thomas noted that the Brotherhood "willingly shared twenty years of experience, strategy development and know-how with the founders at Niagara."¹⁷ The city also included supporters of Booker T. Washington as the [National Negro Business League](#) (organized by Booker T. Washington in Boston in 1900) held their Ninth Annual Convention in Baltimore in 1908.

For others in Baltimore, the Niagara Movement and, later, the NAACP did not go far enough. Pastor and educator Rev. James Robert Lincoln Diggs (1866–1922) at Trinity Baptist Church was a prominent supporter of the [Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League](#) (UNIA-ACL) (established in 1914, with an active Baltimore chapter by 1918).

This section is organized around four themes that help us understand Civil Rights activism within this period:

- black opposition to white supremacist efforts to disenfranchise black voters and promote racial segregation in housing and public accommodations.
- local and national movements to stop lynchings, mob violence, and criminal injustice
- grass-roots activism to improve housing conditions and educational opportunities for African Americans in Baltimore
- the expansion of voting rights for women and the emerging role of black women as organizers and activists

Associated Places

At present, many buildings with important associations to this period in Baltimore's Civil Rights history survive within the Old West Baltimore National Register Historic District, an area that encompasses several historically African American communities in West Baltimore.¹⁸ Examples include the former St. Peter's P.E. Church (built 1868) purchased by Bethel A.M.E. Church in 1910; Public School No. 103 (built 1877) converted to use as black school the same year; the Druid Hill Avenue Branch of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) built in 1919; and the former Western High School building on McCulloh Street that beginning in 1928 housed the Coppin Normal School, Colored Junior High School, and offices for the Baltimore colored school administration.

Black occupancy (and associated activism) was not solely limited to West Baltimore. The Morgan Park neighborhood in northeast Baltimore, home to W.E.B. Du Bois and Dr. Carl J. Murphy, began development in 1917 when Morgan College moved nearby. In Baltimore County, growing African American communities included St. Stephens A.M.E. Church (which replaced its original 1878 church with a new building in 1907 that stood until 1972); the Big Falls community where an African American schoolhouse on Hereford Road remained in use until 1936; the Cuba Road community which grew around Gough United Methodist Church (erected in 1907 to replace an 1875 church and school building); and the Lutherville community where Colored School Number 24 opened in 1909 (making it the second oldest African American schoolhouse in Baltimore County).¹⁹

Opposition to disenfranchisement and segregation

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, prominent white political leaders, especially within the Democratic Party, championed white supremacist policies of disenfranchising black voters and segregating housing and public accommodations. Some contemporaries argued that segregation was a "solution" to the disturbing violence of lynchings. Recent historians (notably Grace Elizabeth Hale) have illustrated how segregation was a key part of how, after the Civil War and the end of Reconstruction, white Americans reasserted their dominance in the South through a cultural system based on violence and physical separation.²⁰ Historian Carl Nightingale, echoes this analysis writing:

Jim Crow ordinances segregating rail and trolley cars, theaters, restaurants and other public amenities signaled Southern whites' final rejection of physical proximity as a method of social control, and their embrace of distance.²¹

In Maryland, the state legislature passed a law in 1904 to require segregation on all railroads and, in 1908, extended the law to include electric trolley lines and steamboats. Black opponents in Baltimore secured "an exemption [from the law] for travel within Baltimore, but outside the city limits all blacks suffered the ignominy of being separated."²² Baltimore lawyer W. Ashbie Hawkins argued a test case against the racist transportation ordinance in 1920 without success and the law remained on the books up until 1951.²³

The segregated character of city life during this period was later recalled by Thurgood Marshall who grew up in Baltimore in the 1910s and 1920s, "The only thing different between the South and Baltimore was trolley cars. They weren't segregated. Everything else was segregated."²⁴

The state legislature also promoted the disenfranchisement of black voters in a series of proposals between 1905 and 1910. The three primary disenfranchisement were amendments to state legislation and known as the Poe Amendment (1905), Strauss Amendment (1908) and Digges Amendment (1910). By restricting the ability to vote based on ancestry (whether a person's forefathers were free as of 1869) and on property ownership, these pieces of proposed legislation would have foreclosed the right to vote to thousands of black Marylanders. A coalition of African American activists and recent European immigrants worked together under the banner of the Maryland Suffrage League to defeat all three. White Republican party leaders like prominent Baltimore lawyer Charles J. Bonaparte also played an role in rallying opposition to these proposals, as historian Jane L. Phelps described Bonaparte's opposition to the Poe and Strauss Amendments in 1905 and 1908.²⁵ Ultimately black and white opponents to the disenfranchisement campaign succeeded, defeating the Poe Amendment with 104,286 to 70,227 votes in 1905, the Strauss Amendment 106,069 to 98,808 votes in 1908, and the Digges Amendment by 84,000 to 46,000 votes in 1910.²⁶

Not long after on December 19, 1910, Baltimore City passed a new law require the racial segregation of residential blocks in Baltimore. Known commonly as the West Ordinance after the bill's proponent Councilman Samuel T. West, the bill was inspired by the purchase of a rowhouse on the 1800 block of McCoullough Street several months earlier. As the first residential segregation law in the country, the ordinance has been the subject of detailed scholarly study over the past thirty years.²⁷ Historian Bruce Thompson described how the 1910 housing segregation ordinance worked, writing:

This ordinance prohibited blacks from purchasing or occupying houses on blocks in which fifty-one percent of the dwellers were white. Similarly, whites could not move into blocks that were predominantly black.

Thompson continues to note:

In less than one month, twenty-six cases were on the court docket. In the very first case, the presiding judges ruled that the law was invalid because it was drawn incorrectly.²⁸

After the court overturned the first ordinance, the City Council passed a similar ordinance on April 7, 1911. The Council then quickly repealed and replaced the bill with a third segregation ordinance on May 15, 1911, entitled:

an ordinance for preserving peace, preventing conflict and ill feeling between the white and colored races in Baltimore city, and promoting the general welfare of the city by providing, so far as practicable, for the use of separate blocks by white and colored people for residences, churches and schools.²⁹

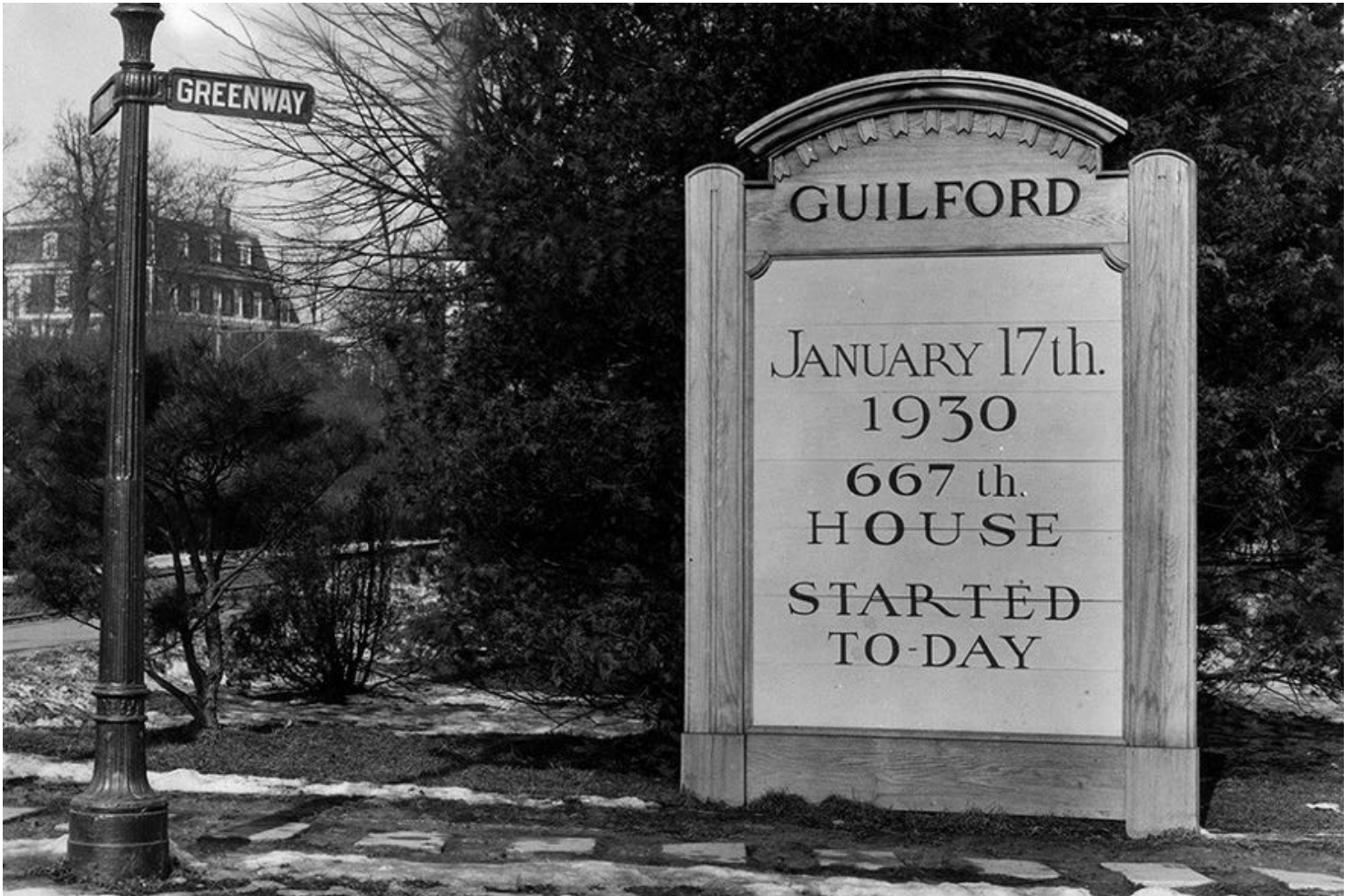
In 1917, the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Buchanan v. Warley* (1917) declared racial segregation ordinances (including Baltimore's) unconstitutional. While the decision limited the enforcement of Baltimore's segregation ordinance to less than seven years, the measure had a lasting effect, as Dennis Halpin notes:

By the end of the 1910s, black Baltimoreans' resistance to the ordinances remade the city's racial geography. Nevertheless, they struggled to challenge the strategies segregationists used in the wake of the laws' demise.³⁰

Dennis Doster suggests that the NAACP's national advocacy around residential segregation has roots in the fight over segregation in Baltimore.³¹ As Halpin and others argue, deed restrictions, racist practices by professional realtors, and urban design and planning (described by some as "clearance and containment") all contributed to the persistence of segregation even after the 1917 decision.

With exceptions black suburban neighborhoods of Morgan Park and Howard Park in northeast Baltimore, local builders and developers almost never erected new homes for black buyers in the first half of the twentieth century. Roland Park, developed beginning in 1891, Guilford (developed beginning in 1913) and Homeland (developed beginning in 1924) served as models of racial exclusion for developers around the country. The developer, the Roland Park Company:

...used deed restrictions as the cornerstone of a broader attempt to manufacture a dichotomy between suburban and urban space in order to sell a new spatial and social arrangement to a status-conscious white middle class. Other developers frequently requested copies of its deed restrictions.³²



This sign commemorates the groundbreaking of the 667th house in Guilford, on January 17, 1930. *Courtesy Sheridan Libraries Special Collections, Johns Hopkins University.*

Historian Paige Glotzer notes that at the national level, the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB) adopted a Code of Ethics in 1913, the same year the Roland Park Company began using racial restrictions in deeds, and then revised the code in 1924 to prevent any realtor from:

introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individual whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood.³³

The Roland Park Company also planned physical boundaries between their developments and nearby properties occupied by black Baltimoreans. For example, the company planted "a long hedge to cut off sightlines of a predominantly black settlement down the hill, the same settlement where it later located its sewage disposal field."³⁴

Some white Baltimoreans promoted a similar approach in the area of Mount Royal Avenue where, in 1909, Colonel C. Baker Clotworthy, commander of the Fifth Regiment, wrote to the *Sun* advocating for the extension of Howard Street north of the Richmond Market as a way of tearing down homes occupied by African Americans:

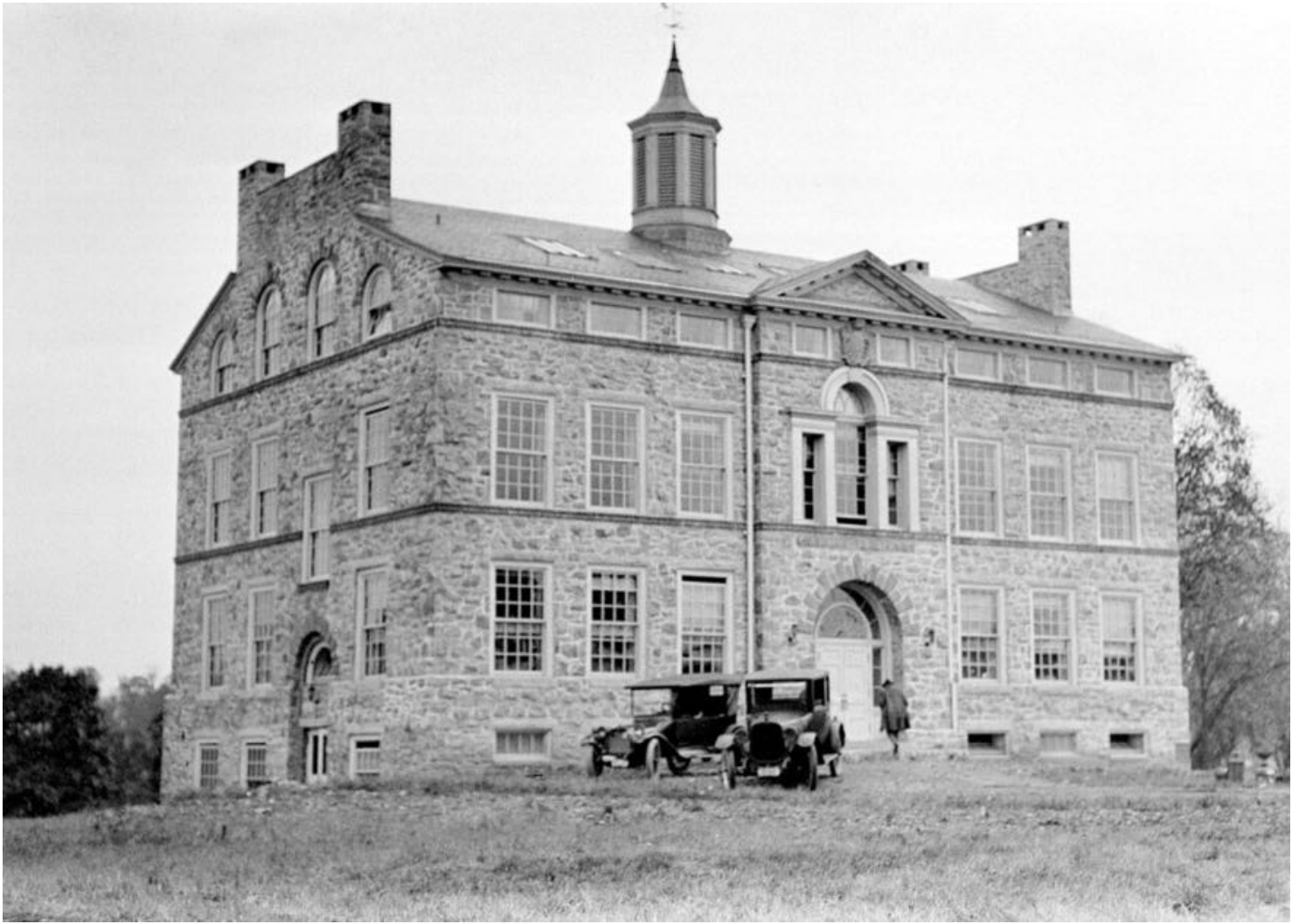
I would be deeply interested in this improvement because it means so much more than simply tearing down some houses and opening a street. Everyone in the city is familiar with the steady decrease which has taken place in the value of property in this neighborhood for the last 20 years. All about Richmond Market, and extending north, there are hundreds of undesirable houses and, in many cases, huts. This sore is spreading rapidly. A great many negroes, not of the best class, gradually tenant the houses on the edge of this district and immediately the white people move from the block invaded. If this continues no one knows where it will stop.³⁵

While the extension of Howard Street, the construction of the Mount Royal Viaduct, and the erection of the Howard Street Bridge, projects that demolished black housing that Colonel Clotworthy advocated, were all delayed until they received funding from the Public Works Administration in the 1930s, the Mount Royal Protective Association fought and won an effort to demolish a block of African American occupied homes around the Fifth Regiment Armory building for the creation of a plaza (around 1930). The improvement association boasted of its efforts to secure and enforce racial covenants from local property owners, noting the group's "greatest achievement... has been the subjecting of the property in its area to a restriction for white occupancy only."³⁶

Not all older neighborhoods could create the physical barriers employed by the Roland Park Company but they could use racial covenants. In January 1924, two hundred members of six West Baltimore protective associations met at the Fulton Avenue Presbyterian Church (at Fulton and Monroe Streets) to fight the movement of African American households into these western neighborhoods. The *Baltimore Sun* quoted Dr. C.P. Woodward, City Councilman for the 5th district, saying:

The principal function of any organization is to acquire everything of benefit to the community and to keep away everything undesirable. It is a pity that law-abiding citizens who do not receive sufficient protection from the law to keep out undesirables must form protective associations to do so.³⁷

The meeting sparked a campaign to seek signed commitments from 1600 property owners in an area bounded by North Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue and Bentalou Street willing to promise not to sell to African Americans. The *Baltimore Afro-American*, also reported on the meeting and summarized the sentiment of the speakers as, "Negroes should be put in a bag and pitched overboard."³⁸



Photograph of Carnegie Hall at Morgan College (now Morgan State University) by Jackson Davis, 1921 November 3. *Courtesy University of Virginia*, [330943](#).

When proponents of segregation took legal action to promote segregation policies, their efforts were less successful. For example, in 1918, a group of white residents in Lauraville attempted to have the 1917 sale of the Ivy Mill property to Morgan College revoked by the circuit court in Towson. The court dismissed the case and, after the Lauraville residents appealed, the state court upheld the lower court's decision.³⁹

Movement to stop lynchings, mob violence, and criminal injustice

Segregation and disenfranchisement were not the only consequences of the broad political support for white supremacy in the early twentieth century. While the number of lynchings peaked nationally in the 1890s, lynching remained a major concern for African American Civil Rights advocates in Baltimore through the 1940s.⁴⁰ For example, in 1918, the new local chapter of UNIA was so concerned about the threat of lynchings that it organized an event at Bethel AME Church featuring Marcus Garvey and famed anti-lynching advocate Ida B. Wells-Barnett. As reported by:

Rev. William Sampson Brooks cosponsored an event at Bethel with the Baltimore division of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, led by William D. Rankin, on December 18, 1918 featuring Marcus Garvey and Ida B. Wells-Barnett as speakers.⁴¹

Mob violence, such as the wave of riots that affected many American cities in 1919 known as the [Red Summer](#), was also a source of major concern for local activists. A riot in East St. Louis, Illinois in July 1917 prompted a mass meeting at Bethel AME Church that sent a delegation (including Dr. Carl J. Murphy) to meet with President Woodrow Wilson and urge him to investigate the riot and take action to address the issue.⁴² Baltimore activists saw their proximity to Washington, DC as an obligation to support national efforts to lobby federal officials over lynching and related issues.⁴³

The physical violence of the period took place concurrently with the local and national resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. For example, on October 10, 1922, the Klan held a rally in Annapolis and, that same year, also rallied in Frederick and Baltimore.⁴⁴ In early 1923, the Klan presented a charity circus in Hazazer's Hall at 111 W. Franklin Street (the present site of the Enoch Pratt Library Central Branch) to publicize the organization's endorsement of Protestantism. After the circus, Klan members visited the United Brethren Church and the Roland Avenue Methodist Church at 40th Street and Roland Avenue. The pastor at Roland Avenue accepted a \$25 donation from the visitors, remarking, "I, for one, am glad to get it." Although the Klan stayed active that year, not everybody embraced them. In March 1923, for example, a Klan meeting at the Brooklyn First Baptist Church at 3801 5th Street was "almost broken up by an angry mob."⁴⁵

While the majority of lynchings in Maryland took place on the Eastern Shore and in Southern Maryland, black residents in Baltimore did face an immediate threat of police violence and a broader challenge of criminal injustice. Noted incidents of police violence in this period include a police officer beating a black WWI soldier (an action criticized in February 1918 by Judge Robert F. Stanton who later served as Police Commissioner from 1938 to 1943); the police shooting of a black man on Pennsylvania Avenue on June 1, 1918; Baltimore police officer James O. Jones "beating up" Henry Boyer in 1926; and a police officer clubbing Henry Simuels in 1927.⁴⁶ Black residents responded to these incidents with letters of protest, mass meetings, and other forms of organized activism. As a student at the the Colored High School on Pennsylvania Avenue in the early 1920s, Thurgood Marshall had a close-up view of how Baltimore's police officers treated black suspects at the Northwestern District Police Station next door. In *Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary*, Juan Williams quotes Marshall's recollection of what he heard, writing:

We could hear police in there beating the hell out of people, saying, "Black boy, why don't you just shut your goddamned mouth, you're going to talk yourself into the electric chair."⁴⁷

Black residents in Baltimore experienced the dual challenges of being both overpoliced and underprotected as white people who committed crimes against black people could expect much lighter penalties for their actions. For example, in February 1921, five hundred people gathered at Trinity Baptist Church at Druid Hill Avenue and Mosher Street to protest the release of a white man, Harry Feldenheimer, on a \$500 bail after police arrested him for an attempted assault on a ten-year-old black girl named Esther Short. The *Afro* reported that participants in the meeting criticized the "brutality of the local police, exclusion of qualified men from the police force and from juries in the city, and the Jim Crow arrangements for colored people in the Criminal and Juvenile Courts".⁴⁸ A 1926 report from the *Afro* called attention to racism in the use of capital punishment in Maryland. Observing that between 1903 and 1926, nine of the ten men executed in Maryland for murder or rape were black, the newspaper called for an end to the death penalty.⁴⁹

Activists sought to address these problems through stronger oversight of the police and the appointment of black police officers. In 1925, the Conference of AME Ministers set up a committee to consider the best way to place black officers on the police force.⁵⁰ Although such efforts were largely unsuccessful in this period, the work by activists led to forcing the city and state to begin to address their concerns in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Activism to improve housing and educational conditions for African Americans

In northern cities, public debates around poverty and difficult living conditions took place in the context of the Great Migration. The National Urban League was established in New York City as the Committee on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, on September 29, 1910, and focused on the needs of new migrants to the city. Although the proportion of migrants to Baltimore was much smaller than New York, conditions for many black Baltimoreans were still difficult. Historian Samuel Kelton Roberts noted the challenges for black students attending the city's segregated schools, writing:

Baltimore's black public schools were crowded and in disrepair, housed in the cast-off buildings left behind as whites moved to better facilities. ... Despite the reorganization of the city government and the educational system, no new black schools were built between 1898 and 1915.⁵¹

Efforts to address poverty in Baltimore's black community began to expand in the late nineteenth century. Baltimore's Colored Young Men's Christian Association organized in 1893 (following an 1891 meeting on the topic hosted by the Brotherhood of Liberty with William A. Hunton, the first YMCA executive of color in the United States).⁵² In 1896, a group of African American women founded the Colored Young Women's Christian Association (CYWCA), likely inspired by the movement to promote "racial uplift activity associated with the emergence in the mid-1890s of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs."⁵³ Another example is the Women's Cooperative Civic League that formed in 1913 "at the request of a group of white citizens to address housing, health, sanitation, and educational problems resulting from the rapid urban growth." Led by Sara Fernandis, the organization divided responsibility for different wards of the city among a group of community activists and grew their membership to 130 by 1914.⁵⁴

One of the most significant of these organizations was the interracial Baltimore Urban League. Historian Ralph L. Pearson quotes a 1950 Urban League publication that traces the group's founding to the 1919 Hague Conference on World Friendship "which was the first volunteer gathering of representatives from the warring nations after World War I."⁵⁵ As the group began to organize, it enlisted the assistance of the National Urban League's Department of Research and Investigations to conduct a three-month study of Baltimore industries and black workers beginning in March 1922.⁵⁶ The study found that 62 of the 175 industrial plants that were investigated, employing 20,735 people, refused to hire African American workers. The study led to a meeting at the Emmanuel Church Parish House on May 7, 1924 to formally establish a local Urban League chapter.⁵⁷ Over the next few years, the new organization directed by R. Maurice Moss, a white social worker, helped to promote the development of Provident Hospital; conducted a survey of housing conditions in the area bounded by Druid Hill and Pennsylvania avenues, Biddle and Preston streets (the so-called "Lung Block" for its high tuberculosis rate); and organized a black division of the Playground Athletic League.⁵⁸

Improving housing conditions in black neighborhoods

This period also included significant discussion around how to improve housing conditions in increasingly overcrowded, segregated black neighborhoods. Residents pushed for In 1906, an influential report on housing conditions by Janet Kemp sparked a series of early reform efforts.⁵⁹ However, the design of the local housing reform agenda was clearly shaped by white interests as with the large-scale clearance of the blocks of housing along Saint Paul Street (largely occupied by African American residents) to make way for the development of Preston Gardens in the 1910s.⁶⁰

Improving conditions for black teachers and students

One important example of the changes that took place in this period was the efforts that led to the publication of the Strayer Survey evaluating the condition and management of Baltimore schools, both white and black. The Strayer Survey was a comprehensive look at the problems of Baltimore's public schools: overcrowding, inadequate facilities, poor curriculum, and out-dated management practices.⁶¹ When the report was published in 1922, it offered the possibility of "a real opportunity for the segregated schools to participate in much needed school reform".⁶² Among the recommendations was the suggestion that the schools open all trade and apprenticeship programs to black students.⁶³ Although the white school leadership did not promise any immediate action, the report did result in the hiring of the first black director of the Baltimore City Division of Colored Schools, Dr. Francis Russell, in 1923.⁶⁴ After Russell was denied the resources for the administration of his program, he resigned in August 1924. Angelina Johnson describes the appointment of Russell's successor:

On August 1, 1925, Francis Marion Wood was appointed supervisor of all African American schools of Baltimore City; he would stay in the position until 1943, overseeing many changes. With a starting salary of \$4200 per school year, Wood relocated to Baltimore with his wife Nellie and their four children. Wood's position included the responsibility for implementing and overseeing the recommendations of the Strayer Report. Supervisor Wood reported to David Weglein, who was Superintendent of Public Instructions and who reported to the nine members of the Board of School Commissioners, the Mayor, and the Baltimore City Council.⁶⁵

At the same time the Baltimore school system began hiring African American educators, the Defense League (a group of black activist lawyers) won a temporary injunction from a Baltimore court in June 1925 to require equal salaries for white and black teachers. This decision was later overturned by a higher court but prompted a promise from Mayor Howard Jackson in October 1926 to begin equal salaries in the 1927 school year.⁶⁶

Advocates for black students won a key fight for the city to hire black teachers with the appointment of Roberta B. Sheridan, a black educator, in 1888 and, by 1907, not a single white teacher worked in the Baltimore City Division of Colored Schools.⁶⁷ However, many of the city's segregated black schools operated out of older buildings with fewer resources than white schools. Of the eighteen schools open to African American students in 1900 many were built before the Civil War, including School No. 116 at Druid Hill Avenue near Biddle Street (1842); School No. 109 at Fremont and King Streets (1843); and School No. 101 at Jefferson Street near Caroline Street (1855).⁶⁸

Another improvement in education came as the Maryland State Teachers Association (also known as the Maryland Progressive State Colored Teachers Association) campaigned in 1915 to extend the school year for black students who had a shorter school year than white students.⁶⁹

Some observers saw the absence of any African American members of the Baltimore City School Board as a barrier to addressing unequal pay and lack of training for teachers and the inadequate school buildings they worked in. In 1919, when the editors of the *Baltimore Afro-American Newspaper* demanded Charles Koch, the superintendent of schools, hire an African American superintendent, Koch responded that:

Blacks were not far enough developed to have a school board member, but would do well as members of the street cleaning force.⁷⁰

Expansion of voting rights and organizing and activism by black women

The ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 marked new era in the history of the Civil Rights movement in Baltimore and around the country. However, winning the right to vote was just one of the ways that black women grew in power and visibility as activists and organizers during this period. The opportunities black women won through their own activism and political victories helped shape the Civil Rights movement throughout the twentieth century.

The road for black women activists was a rocky one from the start. Following the 1890 merger of the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association, an alliance that formed the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), the broader national suffrage movement began to systematically exclude black women in a bid to win more support from Southern white women and political leaders. The segregation of the suffrage movement encouraged the organization of independent groups for black women beginning with the Colored Women's League in Washington, D.C. in June 1892. In another example of black women organizing for suffrage, in 1896, the Colored Women's League merged with the National Federation of African American Women to form the National Association of Colored Women.

As at the national level, in Maryland the women's suffrage movement, led by groups such as Bassie Ellicott's Equal Suffrage League of Baltimore and Emma Maddox Funck's Maryland Suffrage Association, faced stiff opposition in the state legislature. A number of white-led suffragist organizations, Carrie Chapman Catt's League of Women Voters and the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage (late known as the National Woman's Party) led by Alice Paul, sought to build support for women's suffrage among southern white political leaders and argued that suffrage for women would not challenge the white supremacist agenda of disenfranchising black voters.⁷¹ In March 1909, activist Edith Houghton Hooker hosted a meeting where Rev. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, president of the National American Suffrage Association, spoke. The *Baltimore Sun* reported on the event, writing:

That all the leaders in the movement for woman suffrage do not extend their desire for women to vote to include all "colored sisters" was made evident last night by the two most conspicuous figures at the meeting of the Equal Suffrage League of Baltimore, in Friends' Meeting House, on Park avenue.⁷²

That same year, Hooker broke with the established Maryland suffrage organizations to focus on the goal of passing a new Constitutional amendment granting women the right to vote. She founded the Just Government League and affiliated her organization with NAWSA.

In addition to the fight for suffrage, at the local level, black women organized independently to support their churches and communities as well as pursue political goals. Felicia L. Jamison attributes the rise of female leadership within Sharp Street United Methodist Church to the fundraising work that women put towards "defraying the newly acquired \$70,000 debt for the new edifice" erected in 1898.⁷³ Women also sought to improve the lives of their neighbors. In 1910, the N.M. Carroll Chapter of Sharp Street Church's Epworth League opened a coffee shop and soup house in the Windsor Flats section of Baltimore.⁷⁴ A similar mission inspired organization of the Colored Empty Stocking and Fresh Air Circle after the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904 to help Baltimore's dependent children.⁷⁵ Historian Cynthia Neverdon-Morton argues that the significance of these effort are seen, in part, through the interdenominational nature of their work: church women throughout the city "regardless of class or level of education, worked together in a number of social and charitable organizations to better their community."⁷⁶

Activism around disenfranchisement and segregation offered important opportunities for black women to participate in the political process. In October 1905, a mass meeting of around one hundred women at the Perkins Square Baptist Church (a building later demolished for the construction of George B. Murphy Homes) rallied opposition to the proposal in that year to disenfranchise black voters.⁷⁷ The rally followed a letter in the *Afro-American* by W.M. Alexander asking black women to join the fight against the disenfranchisement proposal:

We also appeal to colored women to do their part. The advocates of the Poe-amendment are urging the white women to help them and since the object of the amendment is to deprive colored men of civil and political liberties, colored women ought to do what they can to defeat it.⁷⁸

The mass meetings led to more formal associations. In 1906, for example, a group of black women in Baltimore organized the Federation of the Colored Women of Maryland.⁷⁹ In 1911, the *Afro American* reported:

For the first time in the political history of Maryland, the Negro women of the city have been organized into a campaign committee for the purpose of working for the success of the Republican ticket.

Additionally, a new "Auxiliary Republican Committee" was chaired by Dr. Ernest Lyon and met at 414 W. Hoffman Street. The group was allied with the Anti-Digges Amendment League, an organization of "several hundred Negro women" led by president Eliza Cummings (mother of City Councilman Harry S. Cummings).⁸⁰

Baltimore's local groups worked in concert with the national efforts of black women. In August 1916, for example, Bethel A.M.E. Church hosted the tenth biennial meeting of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs.⁸¹ In 1919, under the leadership of Rev. M. J. Naylor, Sharp Street Church established a community program that "included a kindergarten, a day nursery, and an employment bureau."⁸² Efforts by female activists at Sharp Street Church culminated in the construction of the Sharp Street Community House: "a church-affiliated community center that housed young and poverty stricken women, and offered professional classes to the Baltimore black community."⁸³ Jamison quotes the Community House Annual Report for 1921–1922, which describes how it sought:

[to] provide a higher civic and social life, to institute and maintain educational and philanthropic enterprises and to investigate and improve conditions generally through co-operation with other social agencies.⁸⁴

Leading up to the 1920 adoption of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, in 1919, Maryland's Senators split over the issue of women's suffrage with Democrat John Walter Smith voting against the proposed amendment and Republican Senator Joseph I. France voting for it. When the measure came before the Maryland legislature on February 24, 1920, the legislators rejected it, in part

due to concerns over the expansion of suffrage to black women at a time when many white Marylanders still wanted to see more restrictions on voting rights for African Americans. Despite Maryland's rejection of the measure, the Nineteenth Amendment won support in thirty-six states, and, with the approval of Tennessee on August 18, it finally became part of the U.S. Constitution on August 26, 1920.

On November 2, 1920, women voted for first time in Maryland and, in 1921, the Women's Suffrage League of Maryland affiliated with the recently formed League of Women Voters of the United States.⁸⁵ That same year, the Colored Women's YWCA became formally affiliated with the Baltimore YWCA although the two organizations did not fully merge into a single integrated organization until the 1970s.⁸⁶ From 1920 onward, black women voters were critical to the success of Civil Rights activism in Baltimore.

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1. U.S. Census, 1900; 1910; 1920; 1930.↩
2. Cumberbatch, "Baltimore, Maryland," 18. ↩
3. Other notable setbacks for Civil Rights activists include *Berea College v. Kentucky* (1908).↩
4. Thompson, "The Civil Rights Vanguard," 1. ↩
5. Ibid., 32. ↩
6. Ibid., 33. ↩
7. Ibid., 31. ↩
8. Ibid., 28. ↩
9. Ibid., 3. ↩
10. Ibid., 3. ↩
11. Doster, "'To Strike for Right, To Strike With Might.'" ↩
12. Bowling and Lindenmeyer, "How Did a Multi-Racial Movement Develop in the YWCA in Baltimore, 1883–1926?"; Schizsik, "Monumental Lodge No. 3, Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World." ↩
13. See Chapter 559, Acts of 1927.↩
14. Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892–1950*. ↩
15. Thompson, "The Civil Rights Vanguard," 2. ↩
16. The Niagara Movement ended within five years but led directly to the creation of the NAACP in 1909.↩
17. Collier-Thomas, "Harvey Johnson and the Baltimore Mutual United Brotherhood of Libery, 1885–1910," 224. ↩
18. The historic district includes the neighborhoods of Madison Park, Upton, Druid Heights, Harlem Park, and Sandtown-Winchester.↩
19. E.H.T. Traceries, "African American Historic Survey Districts - Baltimore County." ↩
20. Hale, *Making Whiteness*. ↩
21. Nightingale, "The Transnational Contexts of Early Twentieth-Century American Urban Segregation," 674. ↩

22. Thompson, "The Civil Rights Vanguard," 31. ↩
23. Ibid., 32. ↩
24. See *ibid.*, , 12; Thompson cites Juan Williams, "Marshall's Law," *Washington Post Magazine*, 7 January 1990, 12–17. ↩
25. Phelps, "Charles J. Bonaparte and Negro Suffrage in Maryland." ↩
26. Smith, *Here Lies Jim Crow*, 65. ↩
27. Power, "Apartheid Baltimore Style."; Nightingale, "The Transnational Contexts of Early Twentieth-Century American Urban Segregation."; Roberts Jr., *Infectious Fear*; Boger, "The Meaning of Neighborhood in the Modern City Baltimore's Residential Segregation Ordinances, 1910–1913."; Halpin, "Reforming Charm City."; Halpin, "'The Struggle for Land and Liberty' Segregation, Violence, and African American Resistance in Baltimore, 1898–1918." ↩
28. Thompson, "The Civil Rights Vanguard," 34–35; Power, "Apartheid Baltimore Style," 298–303. ↩
29. "Baltimore, Md., Ordinance 692." ↩
30. Halpin, "Reforming Charm City," 204. ↩
31. Doster, "'To Strike for Right, To Strike With Might.'" ↩
32. Glotzer, "Exclusion in Arcadia How Suburban Developers Circulated Ideas About Discrimination, 1890–1950," 481. ↩
33. Ibid., 488. ↩
34. Ibid., 482–83. ↩
35. "FAVORS HOWARD ST. PLAN." ↩
36. See "WAY NOW CLEARED FOR ARMORY PLAZA." for approval of Armory Plaza plans; Citation needed for quote about Mount Royal Protective Association. ↩
37. "PLAN TO CHECK NEGRO INVASION IS INAUGURATED." ↩
38. ??? ↩
39. See Stockbridge, "Russell I. Diggs et Al. Vs. Morgan College."; For more on the history of Morgan State University, see Wilson, *The History of Morgan State College*; See also Dula, "Prospering Because That's Its History."; For more on the history of Morgan Park, see McConnell, *The History of Morgan Park* ↩
40. For additional information on the history of lynching in America in southern states, students and researchers should look at the [American Lynching website](#) and the Equal Justice Institute's report "[Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror](#)". ↩
41. Mamiya, "A Social History of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Baltimore," 250–51. ↩
42. Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892–1950*, 125. ↩
43. Find a detailed account of the efforts of Baltimore activists to lobby for federal anti-lynching legislation in *ibid.*, . ↩
44. See [Mapping the Second Ku Klux Klan, 1915–1940](#) for more details on the growth of Klan chapters across the country. ↩
45. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915–1930*, 181. ↩
46. "Soldiers and the Police."; "Penna. Ave. Shooting Causes Comment."; "BRUTALITY OF POLICEMAN IS FLAYED HERE."; "RAISE PROTEST OVER POLICE BRUTALITY."; Our thematic study on [Criminal Injustice](#) addresses these incidents and others in more detail. ↩
47. Williams, *Thurgood Marshall*, 40. ↩

48. "MASS MEETING OF 500 URGES PUNISHMENT OF INSURANCE COLLECTOR." ↩
49. Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892–1950*, 115–17. ↩
50. Ibid., 112. ↩
51. Roberts, "Infectious Fear," 28. ↩
52. Wilson, "Druid Hill Branch, YMCA," 138. ↩
53. Bowling and Lindenmeyer, "How Did a Multi-Racial Movement Develop in the YWCA in Baltimore, 1883–1926?" ↩
54. Gordon and Collier-Thomas, *African American Women and the Vote, 1837–1965*, 124. ↩
55. Pearson, "The National Urban League Comes to Baltimore," 523. ↩
56. Ibid., 524. ↩
57. Ibid., 529. ↩
58. Ibid., 532. ↩
59. Halpin, "Reforming Charm City"; Roberts, "Infectious Fear"; Lieb, "'We Clean-Up, Paint-Up, and Fix-Up Our Neighborhoods.'" ↩
60. This topic is addressed in greater detail in our [incomplete thematic study on housing](#) and our [study on Preston Gardens](#). ↩
61. Johnson, "The Strayer Survey and the Colored Schools of Baltimore City, 1923–1943," 23. ↩
62. Ibid., 36. ↩
63. Ibid., 34. ↩
64. Ibid., 37. ↩
65. Ibid., 40. ↩
66. Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892–1950*, 33. ↩
67. Johnson, "The Strayer Survey and the Colored Schools of Baltimore City, 1923–1943," 14. ↩
68. Ibid., 15. ↩
69. Ibid., 18. ↩
70. Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892–1950*, 36. ↩
71. Walton Jr., Puckett, and Deskins Jr., "The Enfranchisement of African American Women, 1669–1921," 424–25. ↩
72. "APPOSES IGNORANT VOTE." ↩
73. Jamison, "Leading from Behind." ↩
74. Ibid., 83. ↩
75. Neverdon-Morton, "Self-Help Programs as Educative Activities of Black Women in the South, 1895–1925," 219. ↩
76. Jamison, "Leading from Behind," 80. ↩
77. "THEY MAUL THE AMENDMENT." ↩
78. Alexander, "Letter to the Editor 1 – No Title." ↩

79. Jenifer, "The Forum." ↩
80. "Women Will Help to Get Out Voters." ↩
81. "MEETING OF CLUBWOMEN." ↩
82. Jamison, "Leading from Behind," 41. ↩
83. Ibid., 5. ↩
84. Ibid., 6. ↩
85. On November 7, 1922, Maryland voters ratified a Constitutional amendment (approved by the legislature as Chapter 275, Acts of 1922) to allow women to hold public office. ↩
86. Bowling and Lindenmeyer, "How Did a Multi-Racial Movement Develop in the YWCA in Baltimore, 1883–1926?" ↩