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THE “MISSISSIPPI OF THE WEST”: RELIGION, CONSERVATISM, AND RACIAL  
POLITICS IN UTAH, 1960–1978

by

Jessica Nelson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

History

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2017

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## ABSTRACT

The “Mississippi of the West”: Religion, Conservatism, and  
Racial Politics in Utah, 1960–1978

by

Jessica Nelson, Master of Science  
Utah State University, 2017

Major Professor: Dr. David Rich Lewis

Department: History

Historians and Mormon scholars have largely ignored the African American experience in Utah during the latter half of the twentieth century. A close examination of Utah politics during the years 1960 to 1978 shows the profound influence of Mormonism and Latter-day Saint institutions in seemingly secular spaces, such as college campuses and state government. This work demonstrates how LDS theology and culture informed the sociopolitical landscape and contributed to white conservative resistance to racial equality readily found in Utah. Racial discrimination was not unique to Utah, but it did have its own particular flavor because of the predominance of Latter-day Saints in the state. This thesis explores the scholarship written about African Americans in Utah and

elucidates the ways in which LDS theology and Church leadership extensively affected African American life in the Beehive State.

(111 pages)

## PUBLIC ABSTRACT

The “Mississippi of the West”: Religion, Conservatism, and  
Racial Politics in Utah, 1960–1978

Jessica Nelson

This thesis examines what historians have written about African Americans in Utah as well as two carefully selected episodes from 1960 to 1978 that illustrate the complexities of race and cultural politics in the state of Utah during this time. Unlike the political and racial discourse in other states, Mormonism and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints became a large part of the dialogue in Utah because of LDS teachings on race and the predominance of Latter-day Saints in the state. The effect of these teachings was not contained to church buildings, but seeped into secular spaces such as college campuses and the state legislature.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to many individuals for their help and support through the course of completing this project. First and foremost, I would like to thank my thesis committee chair, David Rich Lewis, for his attentive editor's eye and the valuable suggestions, general encouragement, and humor he offered along the way. Dr. Lewis, it has been a great honor and privilege to have been an editorial fellow and one of your students—thank you for everything. I would also like to thank Dr. Kyle Bulthuis and Dr. Christy Glass for serving on my thesis committee. I am indebted to the librarians at the Special Collections and Archives at Utah State University and at the Special Collections at the University of Utah for their helpfulness in accessing primary source material. Bob Parsons, University Archivist at Utah State, was particularly resourceful in the beginning stages of this research. I am grateful to the history department at Utah State for affording me an enriching educational experience and this research opportunity. To my parents, family, and friends, thank you for believing in me and for offering your support. And to AJ, thank you for enduring a marriage to me and grad school these past several months and for doing more than your fair share of the cooking— you're the champion.

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
PUBLIC ABSTRACT.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. HISTORIOGRAPHY AND BACKGROUND.....	8
III. <i>MORMONISM AND THE NEGRO</i> , AFRICAN AMERICANS, AND LDS RACISM AT UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY, 1960–1961.....	34
IV. THE LDS CHURCH, THE NAACP, AND CIVIL RIGHTS IN UTAH.....	60
V. CONCLUSION.....	90
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	93



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

During and after the civil rights movement, African Americans in Utah encountered a Mormon racism imbedded in the theology of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church). Scholars have generally approached Mormon racial issues through analyses of that theology and the religious culture it created, blaming Latter-day Saint scriptures and the statements of LDS Church leaders for this problematic history. But the interaction of race and Mormonism in Utah is about more than the priesthood ban and temple rites restrictions for black members of the LDS Church. It is more than President Spencer W. Kimball's revelation in 1978 that men of all races could hold the priesthood. Until that monumental policy reversal, LDS Church leaders had held fast to their institution's racial discrimination which excluded members (both men and women) with African ancestry from serving missions, participating in LDS temple ordinances qualifying one for exaltation, or (for men) holding the priesthood. The larger picture of racial discrimination in Utah during this time period reveals the influence of Mormon theology and culture as it permeated aspects of life in Utah outside the confines of LDS institutions.

This thesis takes a critical look at Utah culture and politics during this time period to illuminate the distinct flavor of racial discrimination in the Beehive State. In spite of extreme pressure on the LDS Church to change its racist policies during the 1960s and 1970s, Church presidents enforced the ban until 8 June 1978, ten years beyond Martin

Luther King Jr.'s assassination.<sup>1</sup> This thesis will examine Utah's racial dynamics between 1960 and 1978 in the context of the nationwide struggle for racial equality and the racial discrimination and apathy toward the black freedom movement within the LDS Church.

Mormonism has proven to be a productive microcosm to study race in America. W. Paul Reeve's path breaking book *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* argues that late-nineteenth century Mormons actively pursued "whiteness" as a means to escape the "racial otherness" that critics demeaned them with. The nonwhite status attached to Mormons in popular culture stuck to them, so much so that Southern blacks belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church consciously distanced themselves from Mormons to elevate their own racial image.<sup>2</sup> Matthew L. Harris and Newell G. Bringhurst recently edited *The Mormon Church and Blacks: A Documentary History*, containing annotated documents that shaped the narrative of race within Mormonism.<sup>3</sup> The LDS Church has supported and even joined historians in examining its racial history. Striving for greater transparency in an age of information, the LDS Church released an essay on its website in December 2013—listed under the "Gospel Topics" tab—entitled "Race and the Priesthood." In concluding the essay, LDS Church scholars emphatically disavowed the "theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it reflects unrighteous actions in a

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<sup>1</sup> N. Eldon Tanner, "Revelation on Priesthood Accepted, Church Officers Sustained," accessed 15 September 2016, [https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1978/10/revelation-on-priesthood-accepted-church-officers-sustained?lang=eng&\\_r=1](https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1978/10/revelation-on-priesthood-accepted-church-officers-sustained?lang=eng&_r=1).

<sup>2</sup> W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 181.

<sup>3</sup> *The Mormon Church and Blacks: A Documentary History*, ed. Matthew L. Harris and Newell G. Bringhurst (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

premortal life,” and placed this history in the larger context of American racism. This passage reflects a 180-degree turn from a 1949 statement issued by the First Presidency where they defined the priesthood ban as a “direct commandment from the Lord” and that “the conduct of spirits in the premortal existence has some determining effect upon the conditions and circumstances under which these spirits take on mortality.” While the essay represents an attempt at greater institutional honesty, it has failed to have an impact in local congregations where many members remain unaware of its existence or are suspicious of its contents.<sup>4</sup>

Because more can and will be said about race and Mormonism, religious history scholar Max Perry Mueller has called for Mormon race studies to replace the black-white binary— a common approach in the field of Mormon religious history— with a more comprehensive understanding of race that would involve other ethnic and racial groups. As coeditor of a special issue in the *Journal of Mormon History*, Mueller also encouraged scholars to move beyond race and the Mormon priesthood ban to create “A New History of Race and Mormonism.”<sup>5</sup> While this thesis stays within a black-white racial paradigm to study the sociopolitical environment in Utah, it does answer Mueller’s call to push the

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<sup>4</sup> “Race and the Priesthood,” *LDS.org*, accessed 15 September 2016, <https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng>; “LDS Church First Presidency Statement,” 17 August 1949, in Harris and Bringhurst, eds., *The Mormon Church and Blacks*, 66; and Peggy Fletcher Stack, “This Mormon Sunday School Teacher was Dismissed for Using Church’s Own Race Essay in Lesson,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 5 May 2015, <http://www.sltrib.com/lifestyle/faith/2475803-155/mormon-bishop-dismisses-teacher-for-using?fullpage=1>.

<sup>5</sup> Max Perry Mueller, “Introduction: Beyond ‘Race and the Priesthood’— Toward a New History of Race and Mormonism,” *Journal of Mormon History* 41 (July 2015): 1–10.

analysis of race and the priesthood ban narrative in a new direction.<sup>6</sup> President Kimball's announcement in 1978 is the end point of this study, but is not the focus.

The overarching question guiding this thesis is how did racial discrimination within Mormon theology and culture, prior to the policy change in 1978, affect African Americans and even sympathetic white Mormons in Utah? In other words, how did LDS teachings on race permeate other aspects of culture and society in Utah, and how were African Americans, living in or attending college in Utah, affected? Did LDS theology make racism in Utah particularly acute? Or, despite the predominant influence of racist Mormons, was Utah no different than other western states or the rest of the nation in terms of how they treated black residents? Although African Americans were discriminated against in Utah through miscegenation laws, racist housing covenants, employment, service refusal at restaurants and hotels, and in other ways, those forms of discrimination were national in the mid-twentieth century and not particular to Utah. However, LDS teachings on race and the outright apathy of LDS Church leaders did in fact have an added negative effect upon African Americans and other racial minorities in Utah. Those teachings created a broader culture that was unwelcoming and even hostile to African Americans, and actions based on those teachings presented a major hurdle to civic groups such as the NAACP who tried to dismantle racial discrimination and build equality. Until the LDS Church fully aligned itself with racial equality by removing the

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<sup>6</sup> The black-white paradigm severely limits studies of race in the United States and Latino/a people are particularly excluded. See Juan F. Perea, "The Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race: The 'Normal Science' of American Racial Thought," *California Law Review* 85 (October 1997): 1213–1258. African Americans were not the only group who faced discrimination in Utah. However, this particular study looks at correlation between a specific piece of racist theology concerning blacks and racial politics in Utah.

race restrictions for members of African descent, being an African American in Utah meant living in a distinctly oppressive environment.

The scope of this study is limited to handful of moments and locales that illustrate how LDS Church leaders and LDS teachings on race negatively affected race relations in Utah broadly writ. They stand as specific case studies illustrating Utah's distinctive sociopolitical environment in the mid-twentieth century.

Chapter Two identifies a gap in the historiography of both the black West and Utah history concerning African Americans during the twentieth century. This chapter provides a brief overview of African Americans in Utah as prolegomena to the race struggle between 1960 and 1978 that constitutes the heart of this project. Because Mormon culture and theology contributed to the oppression that African Americans and other minorities in Utah experienced, some background about Mormonism is provided as well. Mormon scholars have been forced to address racial issues in their research because of changes in the LDS Church's official position on race over the course of the twentieth century, but their research has stopped short of a thorough cultural and political analysis of the state of Utah. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to uncover what has, or has not, been said about the relationship between racial discrimination and LDS culture and theology in twentieth century Utah.

Chapter Three will begin the analysis of events between 1960 and 1978 with a granular-level look at the campus environment at Utah State University (USU) during the 1960–1961 school year. I chose this specific setting in Logan for its predominant LDS campus community and because USU encapsulates the cultural environment created

when a powerful religious institution seeps into a supposedly secular space, and is emblematic of larger Utah state politics and governance. In other words, the LDS Church did not own or manage Utah State University just as it did not own or govern Utah and its politics, but this case study of USU demonstrates how Mormonism still had a profound effect on events that transpired in secular spaces.<sup>7</sup> Further, college campuses across the country— from the University of Georgia and the University of Mississippi to Alfred University in New York—were sites of contention during the civil rights movement. Many college-age students were agents of creating social change. They put the moral fabric of their local communities— as well as the nation at large— to the test at these sites, and USU was not an exception to this phenomenon.

Chapter Four lays the foundation for an analysis of Utah civil rights legislation by first examining the racial and conservative political makeup of the state as a precursor to the interactions between the NAACP and the LDS Church’s First Presidency. Civil rights leaders recognized the LDS Church’s dominance and knew that Church support was needed to advance minority rights in Utah. Unfortunately, Church apathy towards civil rights doomed that legislation. After the NAACP pressured Church leaders to affirmatively support civil rights legislation, First Presidency counselor Hugh B. Brown answered with a statement that turned out to be an empty promise. This chain of events illuminates how begrudgingly LDS Church leaders responded to racial issues even when forced to act. Effectively, this chapter demonstrates how LDS theology, reactionary

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<sup>7</sup> Evidence of LDS influence on college campuses in Utah can be found in recent events. When thousands of Mormon college students left school early to serve Church missions, there were significant fiscal repercussions. Lindsay Whitehurst, “As Mormon Missionaries Leave, Utah Colleges Look Out of State for Students,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 8 March 2013, <http://archive.sltrib.com/story.php?ref=/sltrib/news/55931085-78/state-utah-students-enrollment.html.csp>.

Church leaders, and conservative political dynamics constituted the main opposition to minority rights causes in Utah. This chapter also highlights the advocacy efforts of two men, John W. Fitzgerald and Byron Marchant, both of whom were white Utah Mormons who experienced Church discipline in the 1970s for opposing the priesthood ban and for publically protesting the Church's racial theology. The cases of Fitzgerald and Marchant show that the LDS Church was intolerant of those who publically protested their institutional racism, and that the political power of the LDS Church had a very real effect on racial discourse within the state of Utah.

On 8 June 1978, President Kimball announced a revelation he received to the world-wide Church: “[God] has heard our prayers and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple.” A few months later at the October 1978 General Conference, N. Eldon Tanner, a counselor in the First Presidency, asked the Saints assembled in the Salt Lake tabernacle to sustain Kimball's statement as revelation. “President Kimball,” Tanner said, “it appears that the vote has been unanimous in the affirmative, and the motion has carried.” However nice the sentiment, this unanimous vote represented LDS allegiance to prophetic authority rather than to racial equality. Before “the long-promised day” came, African Americans in and outside of the Church experienced racial hardship in a state dominated by Latter-day Saints. Racially discriminatory theology, combined with white

conservatism, made Utah a difficult place for African Americans to live, let alone thrive.

This thesis seeks to share how and why Mormonism shaped their experience in Utah.<sup>8</sup>

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Tanner, "Revelation on Priesthood Accepted."



## CHAPTER II

### HISTORIOGRAPHY AND BACKGROUND

In the midst of the 2012 presidential election, public media placed the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints under a microscope when the possibility arose that Mitt Romney, a practicing Mormon and former governor of Massachusetts, could win the election as the Republican Party nominee. Public interest in LDS Church history and its teachings increased as voters wanted to know more about the beliefs of a potential new president and wondered about the implications of his Mormon faith being brought to bear in the Oval Office. That Romney was running against Barack Obama, the nation's first black president, heightened public interest in Mormonism's history of racial discrimination. In a 2012 *Washington Post* article, reporter Jason Horowitz sought to explain Romney's particular relationship to pre-1978 Mormon racism that barred blacks from receiving the priesthood and temple privileges. Titled "The Genesis of a Church's Stand on Race," Horowitz's article attempted to answer the question of how the LDS Church's past racist practices had influenced the Mormon presidential hopeful: "Romney . . . bears no responsibility for the doctrines of his church. But in the prolonged Mormon debate over whether the ban resulted from divine doctrine or inherited historical racism, Romney appears to have embraced the prevailing view: The ban was the word of God and thus unalterable without divine intervention."<sup>1</sup> In other words, Horowitz had put a spotlight on the political dilemma twenty-first century Latter-day Saints, such as Governor Romney, faced when entering the public sphere. Belonging to a religious

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<sup>1</sup> Jason Horowitz, "The Genesis of a Church's Stand on Race," *Washington Post*, 28 February 2012.

organization that once sustained a belief and practice in divinely sanctioned racism was not going to do Romney a lot of political favors.<sup>2</sup>

To further explore Mormonism's relationship to racial discrimination, Horowitz interviewed Randy L. Bott, a popular professor in Brigham Young University's religion department. In an attempt to rationalize racial discrimination within the church's theology and practices before 1978, Bott repeated the folk tradition that many in the church continued to believe over thirty years later.<sup>3</sup> Horowitz reported that "Bott compare[d] blacks with a young child prematurely asking for the keys to her father's car, and explain[ed] that similarly until 1978, the Lord determined that blacks were not yet ready for the priesthood." Bott also added that "'in reality the blacks not having the priesthood was the greatest blessing God could give them'" because "the lowest rungs of hell [are] reserved for people who abuse their priesthood powers."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Some analysts thought Mitt Romney might receive a greater percentage of the overall Mormon vote than he actually did on the 2012 Election Day. He did, however, win ninety percent of the Utah Mormon vote. Matt Canham and Thomas Burr, "No Mormon Spike for Romney on Election Day." *Salt Lake Tribune*, 14 November 2012, <http://archive.sltrib.com/story.php?ref=/sltrib/politics/55245720-90/2004-bush-lds-mormon.html.csp>.

<sup>3</sup> Current LDS Church apostle Jeffrey Holland publically denounced apologetic explanations for the priesthood ban as problematic folklore. During a 2007 interview with PBS for their program, "The Mormons," Holland was asked to speak to this issue of lingering folklore in modern-day Mormonism. He responded with the following: "One clear-cut position is that the folklore must never be perpetuated. ... I have to concede to my earlier colleagues. ... They, I'm sure, in their own way, were doing the best they knew to give shape to [the policy], to give context for it, to give even history to it. All I can say is however well intended the explanations were, I think almost all of them were inadequate and/or wrong. ... But I think we can be unequivocal and we can be declarative in our current literature, in books that we reproduce, in teachings that go forward, whatever, that from this time forward, from 1978 forward, we can make sure that nothing of that is declared. That may be where we still need to make sure that we're absolutely dutiful, that we put [a] careful eye of scrutiny on anything from earlier writings and teachings, just [to] make sure that that's not perpetuated in the present. That's the least, I think, of our current responsibilities on that topic." "Interview: Jeffrey Holland," *PBS*, accessed 14 October 2016, <http://www.pbs.org/mormons/interviews/holland.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Horowitz, "Church's Stand on Race."

The public reacted to Bott's controversial comments with disdain, forcing the LDS Church into public relations damage control. The day after Horowitz's article appeared in the *Washington Post* the LDS Church leapt at the chance to set the record straight concerning their current position on race. The official statement issued by LDS Church media relations clarified that "[t]he positions attributed to BYU professor Randy Bott in a recent *Washington Post* article absolutely do not represent the teachings and doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . . The Church's position is clear—we believe all people are God's children and are equal in His eyes and in the Church. We do not tolerate racism in any form."<sup>5</sup> Several appalled BYU students criticized Bott's racial views in letters sent to the editor of the school's newspaper, the *Daily Universe*, and some students even planned an organized protest.<sup>6</sup>

Bott's comments and seeming support of Mormon historical racism presented the LDS Church an opportunity to demonstrate the considerable advancement in church teachings. Yet, those comments also exposed how cultural Mormon racism was still deeply internalized in Utah, particularly by older Mormons who grew up defending or rationalizing that racism. Both prior to and after Church leadership reversed the racially restrictive priesthood and temple ban, Mormon apologists like Bott represented the prevailing racial viewpoint of both members and church leaders.<sup>7</sup> However, in the years

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<sup>5</sup> "Church Statement Regarding 'Washington Post' Article on Race and Church," 29 February 2012, last modified 1 September 2016, <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/racial-remarks-in-washington-post-article>.

<sup>6</sup> Kate Bennion, "Washington Post Article on Black Priesthood Ban Spurs Concern, Outrage," *Daily Universe*, 29 February 2012, accessed 18 November 2016, <http://universe.byu.edu/2012/02/29/professor-didnt-follow-university-media-policy-when-speaking-with-washington-post/>.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, a member of the LDS Church's Quorum of the Seventy, took it upon himself to write the doctrinal reasons for the ban and Mormon racism in *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), an encyclopedic volume of gospel topics. McConkie was later called to be an apostle and

leading up to the change in the priesthood ban, civil rights activism was changing the racial climate of the nation, putting the Utah-based LDS Church increasingly at odds with the evolving discourse on race taking place in the U.S.<sup>8</sup>

As a practicing Mormon, Romney's 2012 presidential campaign faced a potential grounding on the historical shoals of Mormon racism a potential grounding on the historical shoals of Mormon racism. Mormonism, a religion that had once claimed racial exclusion as divinely sanctioned, was a particularly problematic religious affiliation in 2012 when an African American president was seeking a second term. Horowitz noted that "[t]he mere mention of Romney and the church's ban on blacks is fraught. If he gets the nomination, the nation's first presidential Mormon nominee will challenge the first black president."<sup>9</sup> Just as the 2012 election could not escape storylines of race and religion, Utah's racial history in the twentieth century cannot be told without intersecting

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served in that capacity until his death in 1985. Although senior apostles Mark E. Petersen and Marion G. Romney recommended some 1,067 corrections to the first edition of *Mormon Doctrine* (1958) and the fact that Church President David O. McKay was not pleased with the volume, the book was reprinted with a few changes in 1966. Even though the Church did not officially publish the book, and the doctrines presented were McConkie's own views, it enjoyed "near-canonical status" and was used by many members and leaders of the Church as an authoritative source of Church doctrine. Entries under "Negroes," "Races of Men," and "Caste System" in the 1966 edition affirm racial priesthood restrictions and racial prejudice more generally. Under the subheading "Negroes," McConkie stated that "those who were less valiant in pre-existence and who thereby had certain spiritual restrictions imposed on them during mortality are known to us as the *negroes*." See Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 49–53 and McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 527, 616, 114.

<sup>8</sup> After the U.S. Congress passed the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965, the Church received more criticism than it ever had for its doctrinal version of Jim Crow. Several athletes and athletic programs refused to play Brigham Young University sports teams because of Mormon racism. Notable examples included Stanford University athletics and fourteen black football players at the University of Wyoming who were suspended by Coach Lloyd Eaton in 1969 for planning to wear black armbands in their upcoming game against BYU. Their story is detailed in "Beat the Devil Out of BYU": Football and Black Power in the Mountain West, 1968–1970," in Lane Demas, *Integrating the Gridiron: Black Civil Rights and American College Football* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 102–33.

<sup>9</sup> Horowitz, "The Genesis of a Church's Stand on Race."

pre-1978 LDS race doctrine. That doctrine, and the culture it infused in Utah, stalled racial progress in the LDS-dominated state before LDS Church leaders reversed their discrimination against peoples of African descent.

African Americans have a dynamic and complex relationship with Utah and with the LDS religion that dominates the state's history. As a group, African Americans have struggled to find room in "the right place" from the onset of Mormon settlement in "Deseret." That struggle still persists today.<sup>10</sup> Brigham Young's first party of Mormon settlers to the Salt Lake Valley included three enslaved black men: Green Flake, Oscar Crosby, and Hark Lay. James and Agnes Flake originally joined the LDS Church in Mississippi and were some of the several known Mormon Southerners to bring slaves to Utah.<sup>11</sup> They sent Green Flake— one of the four slaves they brought to Utah— to assist Brigham Young's vanguard company and to prepare for their future arrival. Young later assigned Flake to drive the first wagon through Emigration Canyon. From 1847 to 1852, the legal status of slavery in Utah was ambiguous; Brigham Young and the theocracy he commanded did not make a policy or law regarding slavery until Utah became a U.S. territory as part of the Compromise of 1850. After the formal organization of Utah Territory, the all-Mormon 1852 territorial legislature created and passed "An Act in Relation to Service" to honor the property rights of slaveholding Mormon converts who brought slaves with them. That statute protected slavery in Utah for the next ten years

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<sup>10</sup> Tamu Smith, an African American Mormon from Fresno, California, recalled that she was called a n—er for the first time in her life when she was in the Salt Lake temple a week after her temple sealing in the 1990s. The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that an elderly man "asked aloud what a [racial epithet] was doing there. Instead of reprimanding him, temple workers defended him, saying he didn't know better." Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Mormon and Black: Grappling with a Racist Past," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 8 June 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Newell G. Bringhurst provides a table of known Mormon slaveholders in *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Blacks within Mormonism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 220–1.

until Congress outlawed slavery in the territories in 1862. According to the 1860 federal census, twenty-nine of the sixty black residents of Utah were slaves.<sup>12</sup>

During that same 1852 legislative session, Brigham Young used his platform as territorial governor to voice his support for slavery and for racism within Mormon theology.<sup>13</sup> Young publically announced that black men should not and would not be ordained to any priesthood office within the lay Mormon clergy. Young's 1852 statement, although given in a secular context and setting, constituted the first formal pronouncement by an LDS Church leader of a racialized priesthood ban. During Joseph Smith's lifetime, Church leaders ordained a few African American men to the priesthood.<sup>14</sup> But as Smith's successor, Young made it abundantly clear that black males were ineligible for priesthood office, and for any leadership position, because of the Biblical curses placed on the "dark skinned" descendants of Cain and Ham. Young also cited these curses as justification for black slavery and servitude:

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<sup>12</sup> Although slavery was a legal institution in the territory, the law gave a few rights to slaves that owners had to observe, such as the right to an education and freedom for the children of slaves born in Utah. Thus, slavery in Utah would not extend to the next generation. For an excellent analysis of the Utah territorial slavery legislation, see Christopher B. Rich Jr., "The True Policy for Utah: Servitude, Slavery, and 'An Act in Relation to Service,'" *Utah Historical Quarterly* 80 (Winter 2012): 54–74 and Nathaniel R. Ricks, "A Peculiar Place for the Peculiar Institution: Slavery and Sovereignty in Early Territorial Utah," (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 2007). Rich argues that the Utah territorial legislature created this act for three reasons: First, to elevate enslaved persons from the status of chattel slaves; second, to recognize the property rights of a few slave holding Mormons; and third, to position Utah in the middle ground of the slavery debate between pro- and anti-slavery political forces in Congress in order to strengthen Utah's candidacy for statehood.

<sup>13</sup> Brigham Young strongly believed that black people were better as slaves or servants than free and also thought that slaves were better off than the poor classes in European societies: "When a master has a Negro and uses him well, he is much better off than if he was free. . . . good wholesome servitude, I know there is nothing better than that." *The Teachings of President Brigham Young*, vol. 3, 1852–1854, ed. Fred C. Collier (Salt Lake City: Collier's Publishing, 1987), 28.

<sup>14</sup> For an excellent resource on Mormon thought on race during Smith's life, see "Joseph Smith and Evolving Mormon Attitudes and Practices on Slavery and Race, 1830–1844," in *The Mormon Church and Blacks: A Documentary History*, ed. Matthew L. Harris and Newell G. Bringhurst (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015): 18–29.

This colored race have been subjected to severe curses, which they have . . . brought upon themselves. And until the curse is removed by Him who placed it upon them, they must suffer under its consequences. . . . they cannot share in the Priesthood; they cannot bear rule; they cannot bear rule in any place until the curse is removed from them; they are a ‘servant of servants.’<sup>15</sup>

Young’s formal announcement of priesthood race restrictions also implicitly codified restrictions against temple worship and ordinances performed in temples for black members of the church.<sup>16</sup>

Latter-day Saints believe that temple ordinances are essential to obtaining exaltation in the afterlife. Brigham Young and other subsequent Church leaders promised that one day black members might have the same blessings that other Church members had. But in effect, this policy racially segregated Mormonism’s most sacred spaces on earth and deferred prospects of full racial equality to some far off, abstract, and indeterminate date.<sup>17</sup> The notable exception to this rule was the sealing of Jane Elizabeth Manning James, a faithful black woman and Mormon pioneer, as a servant to Joseph Smith’s family. James petitioned the First Presidency of the Church to grant her wish of being sealed to Joseph Smith as an adopted child of the Smith family, a request Church leaders denied. In 1902, the First Presidency finally compromised by allowing Jane to be

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<sup>15</sup> Collier, *Teachings of President Brigham Young*, 27.

<sup>16</sup> Jane Elizabeth Manning James, a freeborn black woman who joined the church in Connecticut, repeatedly petitioned the First Presidency for the chance to receive temple blessings and ordinances, a request that she was denied from 1884 until her death in 1908. See Ronald G. Coleman, “‘Is There No Blessing for Me?’ Jane Elizabeth Manning James, a Mormon African American Woman,” in *African American Women Confront the West, 1600–2000*, ed. Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 152–5.

<sup>17</sup> In a speech to the territorial legislature in 1852, Brigham Young stated: “I tell you, this people that are commonly called negroes are the children of old Cain. I know they are, I know that they cannot bear rule in the priesthood [*sic*], for the curse on them was to remain upon the, until the resedue [*sic*] of the posterity of Michal and his wife receive the blessings, the seed of Cain would have received had they not been cursed; and hold the keys of the priesthood, until the times of the restitution shall come, and the curse be wiped off from the earth, and from michals [*sic*] seed. Then Cain’s seed will be had in remembrance [*sic*], and the time come when that curse shall be wiped off.” See “Brigham Young, Black Priesthood Denial, and Slavery in Utah,” in *The Mormon Church and Blacks*, ed. Harris and Bringhurst, 38.

sealed to Smith as a servant in a specially created sealing ceremony specific to Jane's unique situation. Zina Young stood in as a proxy for James while an authorized sealer performed this highly unusual ceremony vicariously on James' behalf.<sup>18</sup>

The First Presidency enforced this racist Mormon theology, colloquially known as "the Negro doctrine," until 1978 when Church president Spencer W. Kimball nullified it. On 8 June 1978 he announced that all worthy males, regardless of race, would be eligible for priesthood office.<sup>19</sup> This announcement, formally known as Official Declaration Two (the first Official Declaration, issued by church president Wilford Woodruff, disavowed polygamy in 1890), also offered black women the opportunity to serve proselyting missions alongside other male and female missionaries of all races and permitted them to enter LDS temples.<sup>20</sup>

While the status of blacks in early Utah history and the end of the priesthood ban are seminal events to consider when examining the African American experience in Utah, there is a much broader history of race that historians have largely left unexamined. And

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<sup>18</sup> Quincy D. Newell, "Narrating Jane: Telling the Story of An Early African American Mormon Woman," 3, *Leonard J. Arrington Mormon History Lecture Series*, no. 21, 24 September 2015, Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University. For more on the remarkable life of Jane Elizabeth Manning James, see Quincy D. Newell, "The Autobiography and Interview of Jane Manning James," *Journal of Africana Religions* 1, no. 2 (2013): 251–91; Coleman, "'Is There No Blessing for Me?'; and Karen A. Johnson, "Undaunted Courage and Faith: The Lives of Three Black Women in the West and Hawaii in the early 19th Century," *Journal of African American History* 91 (Winter 2006): 4–22.

<sup>19</sup> Historians have long debated when exactly the priesthood ban came into effect and whether or not the ban can be attributed to Joseph Smith or Brigham Young. The current consensus, and the position recently assumed by the LDS Church, is that the ban originated with Brigham Young after Joseph Smith's death in 1844 and sometime informally before Young publically discussed the ban during a territorial legislature session in 1852.

<sup>20</sup> The Official Declaration 2 is part of the canon of LDS scriptures. The 2013 edition of LDS scriptures contain an added introduction to Official Declaration 2 that demonstrates an attempt at greater transparency on the part of church leaders concerning this problematic history. While the introduction acknowledges that Church leaders ordained a few black men to the priesthood in Joseph Smith's lifetime, it falls short of attributing the ban to Brigham Young by vaguely referring to "Church leaders" as responsible for the ban. See Official Declaration 2, *Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City, 2013).



while this racial history necessarily incorporates Mormonism and was affected by the LDS priesthood ban, racial history in Utah is a fruitful field outside the narrow confines of theological and Mormon studies. While these events have had some traction in the literature of Utah history, there have been few attempts to expand the narrative in order to capture the broader African American experience in Utah. The small population of African Americans in the state has not attracted as much scholarly attention as it could. The racial and religious demographics of the state, coupled with the focus of Utah and Mormon historians on nineteenth-century Utah history and the racial priesthood restriction has resulted in a decided lacuna of historical research and writing on African Americans in Utah. This is particularly true of research into events of the mid-twentieth century, an important racial turning point in the U.S. generally.

Utah's location in the heart of the western United States is a contributing factor to the dearth of scholarship on blacks in the state. Although individuals of African descent have been inhabitants of what would become the western region of the United States since Spain controlled the territory in the sixteenth century, as a whole Western historians have been rather slow to examine or even acknowledge their presence. Quintard Taylor, a renowned historian of the black West, spoke to this issue in his 2011 presidential address to the Western History Association (WHA). "Unlike Asian American, Chicano, or much of Native American history, which are automatically perceived as 'western in orientation,'" Taylor stated, "black history in this region continues to be viewed by western regional historians and historians of African America as an interesting footnote

to a story focused elsewhere.”<sup>21</sup> Early on his career, Taylor himself did not realize his work on black urban history belonged to the field of Western history and therefore did not identify as a Western historian. He became a “hallway convert” to the field as a young scholar when an esteemed colleague told him that because he studied blacks in Seattle, he was a Western historian. While Taylor had some justified qualms with the way historians had fallen short in terms of research on blacks in the West, scholarship on the topic has grown considerably as a subfield of Western history.

Until fairly recently, African Americans were ignored or excluded from the popular story of the West that was highly romanticized and Euro-American centric. Frederick Jackson Turner, a prominent historian at the close of the nineteenth century, profoundly influenced Western history scholarship with his “frontier thesis.” He described the frontier as “the outer edge of the wave—the meeting point between savagery and civilization” and as “the most rapid and effective Americanization.”<sup>22</sup> Subsequent Western historians utilized Turner’s frontier thesis to explain the evolution of American character, institutions, and the growth of a uniquely-American democracy. African Americans, however, were neither actors in Turner’s narrative, nor participants in the West nor westering processes he described that positively transformed the developing nation. Turner’s praise for the white, “civilizing,” and westward-moving force encouraged his scholastic disciples to privilege that narrative for many years.<sup>23</sup> This

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<sup>21</sup> Quintard Taylor, Jr. “Facing the Urban Frontier: African American History in the Reshaping of the Twentieth-Century American West,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 43 (Spring 2012): 5.

<sup>22</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History (1894),” *American Historical Association*, accessed 7 December 2015, <https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/archives/the-significance-of-the-frontier-in-american-history>.

<sup>23</sup> Jack D. Forbes critically examines the Turnerian narrative in “Frontiers in American History and the Role of the Frontier Historian,” *Ethnohistory* 15 (Spring 1968): 204. Forbes stated: “To the Turnerians, as

white-dominant narrative excluded African Americans from the story because they were not found within, nor did they represent, those “civilizing” forces.<sup>24</sup>

The first attempts to find and place black history in the West coincided with the nationwide racial integration movement in the mid-twentieth century. Kenneth Wiggins Porter and William Loren Katz broke ground in the historiography of the West as some of the first historians to substantially locate African Americans in the West during the frontier period. In 1971 Porter published a volume of essays that he had written about the topic over the course of his career called *The Negro on the American Frontier*. Of the book Porter stated: “This volume aims at increasing the visibility of Negroes on a variety of American Frontiers. Its thesis is simply: ‘They were there.’”<sup>25</sup> Along with Porter, Katz also sought to establish that African Americans “were there” and had a place in Western history. While white American culture celebrated the valor and virtues of cowboys as represented in Western films, Langston Hughes, a famous poet from the Harlem Renaissance, encouraged Katz to find substantiating evidence of black cowboys. Hughes wanted black children to find representation in Western history and to make that

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well as to many other writers, the frontier consisted solely in Anglo-Americans (or, occasionally, other Europeans). . . . In other words, the concepts of ‘western movement’ (of Anglo-Americans) and ‘frontier’ become virtually synonymous.”

<sup>24</sup> This is not to say that blacks were not a part of the “taming” of the West. A lot of scholarship has been written about regiments of black soldiers whom Plains Indians dubbed “buffalo soldiers” because of their physical appearance and valor in battle. Important scholarship on Buffalo Soldiers includes William H. Leckie and Shirley A. Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Black Cavalry in the West*, rev. ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003) and Bruce A. Glasrud and Michael N. Searles, eds., *Buffalo Soldiers in the West: A Black Soldiers Anthology* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> Kenneth Wiggins Porter, *The Negro on the American Frontier* (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 4.

knowledge available to combat the romanticized, white hegemonic portrayal of the West.<sup>26</sup>

Porter used Turner's time frame—that the settlement frontier closed in 1890 with the end of open or free land—but alternatively argued that other frontiers still remained in the twentieth century. He pointed to the NAACP's court victory in striking down the Grandfather Clause in Oklahoma in 1909 as the crossing of a *racial* frontier. After the Western frontier vanished, Porter claimed, "the frontier, for both whites and Negroes, was the entire United States, and the weapons for its conquest were no longer the rifle, axe, and plow, but political and economic organization for the common benefit."<sup>27</sup> The twentieth century has no shortage of discriminatory barriers, giving historians of race and gender history an opportunity to carry Porter's torch in studying a different kind of frontier than the one conceived by Turner.

Quintard Taylor borrowed Porter's concept of post-1890 racial frontiers as a way to frame his discussion of blacks in the American West beyond the Turnerian "frontier period." Taylor favored Porter's conception of civil rights battlegrounds as new frontier sites in his 1998 book *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528–1990*. His title creates a racial frontier timeline that transcends 1890. Taylor's work also has an urban flavor as he often focuses on black urban communities in order to tell the collective biography of black Westerners. Taylor's scholarship has played a critical role in challenging common misconceptions of the West,

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<sup>26</sup> William Loren Katz, *The Black West: A Documentary and Pictorial History*, rev. ed. (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1973), xii.

<sup>27</sup> Porter, *The Negro on the American Frontier*, 529.

such as Western history is inherently rural; that black history in the West is negligible; and that Western history is bookended by the close of the frontier in 1890.

Even though Porter and other scholars of the black West had successfully demonstrated that African Americans “were there,” several decades later Quintard Taylor still had to use the “they were there” thesis to support his argument for *In Search of the Racial Frontier*. Taylor’s concerted effort to identify African Americans in the West is particularly manifest in finding black urban communities in unlikely or understudied locales, such as Salt Lake City, Utah. Taylor grouped African Americans of Salt Lake City, Helena, Montana, and Topeka, Kansas together in an analysis of late-nineteenth-century small, urban black communities. He argued that black Salt Lake City was a “remarkably vibrant community far from other black population centers,” given the newspapers, churches, social and literary clubs, Masonic lodges, and political organizations that African Americans established in the city.<sup>28</sup> However, outside of a brief mention of slavery in Utah Territory, Taylor neglected black Utahns in favor of African American stories concentrated in California, Texas, and the Pacific Northwest—urban areas where he did more extensive research.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, Taylor has encouraged

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<sup>28</sup> Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528–1990* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 210.

<sup>29</sup> Taylor’s scholarship on the black urban West includes *The Forging of a Black Community: A History of Seattle’s Central District, 1870 through the Civil Rights Era* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994); “Urban Black Labor in the West, 1849-1949: Reconceptualizing the Image of a Region,” in *The African American Urban Experience: Perspectives from the Colonial Period to the Present*, ed. Joe W. Trotter, Earl Lewis and Tera W. Hunter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); and Lawrence B. de Graaf, Kevin Mulroy and Quintard Taylor, eds., *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California, 1769-1997* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).

further scholarship, reminding scholars of the “compelling but still under-researched historical experiences of the twentieth-century urban West.”<sup>30</sup>

Historian Ronald Coleman, now an emeritus scholar from the University of Utah, argued in his dissertation that racism in Utah was “no more severe than in other western states” and that the “Mormon Church’s policy on Blacks and the priesthood . . . is negligible.” However, Coleman was addressing the nineteenth century and his assertion should not mean that the cannon of literature on racial discrimination is closed for the mid-twentieth century, especially in the context of Utah where religious and racial interests conflict in an interesting way. Coleman concentrated on this early period to show that African Americans could be found in this era of Utah history, and that they created space and a voice for themselves. In his introduction he noted “an historical study of Afro-Americans in the nineteenth and early twentieth century American West might have been greeted with surprise, based on the supposition that no black community of consequence existed in that part of the country at that time.”<sup>31</sup> Coleman’s dissertation is an important work in the history of African Americans in Utah, but aligns too easily with the “they were here” narrative and needs a twentieth century counterpart.

Despite these few brief references, Utah is still an understudied location in black history. Further scholarship on this topic, particularly of the twentieth century, would answer Quintard Taylor’s presidential plea for more historians to engage with Western urban history. In a fashion similar to early scholarship on black Western history,

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<sup>30</sup> Quintard Taylor, “Facing the Urban Frontier: African American History in the Reshaping of the Twentieth-Century American West,” 27.

<sup>31</sup> Ronald G. Coleman, “A History of Blacks in Utah, 1825–1910,” (PhD diss., University of Utah, 1980), iv.

literature on African Americans in Utah, where it exists, also had to first establish that African Americans “were there.” Utah historians mirrored the “add a woman and stir” approach that introduced more women into traditional narratives by asserting that African Americans— surprising and unexpected as it may seem— actually had a place in Utah history. This “stir” method also functioned as a segue to discussing prejudice that southern European and Asian immigrants faced as newcomers to Utah. And while struggle has been a part of both African American and immigrant experiences in Utah, historians have too frequently conglomerated the unique experiences of these groups into one story of “civil rights,” included as a device to dutifully comment on social problems in the state. As a result, the African American history created by Utah historians has hardly been treated as a stand-alone topic. At the same time, historians of the African American experience have not dug very deep into Utah’s twentieth century history.

This habit of lumping black Utahns with European immigrants to talk about social problems is evident in several surveys of Utah history. Thomas Alexander, a notable Utah historian, mixed African Americans in with “Utah’s Immigrants,” to say that blacks arrived at the same “early date” as British newcomers, failing to note that half of those blacks came as slaves, while the British immigrants came as free men who enjoyed a level of equality that African Americans did not.<sup>32</sup> However, Alexander did create some room for African Americans in his book, *Utah, the Right Place: The Official Centennial History* (1995). Where other scholars failed to create dialogue about the relationship between Mormon theological prejudice and the African American experience in Utah,

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<sup>32</sup> Thomas G. Alexander, *Utah, the Right Place: The Official Centennial History* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1995), 235.

Alexander clearly connects the two, although his brief mention of the subject is a bare analysis that hardly tells the whole story. “In part,” Alexander writes, “the difficulty African Americans experienced in achieving status resulted from discriminatory attitudes harbored by many of Utah’s Latter-day Saint majority.” And, furthermore, “The pre-1978 [race restrictions] provided many Mormons with a theological justification for anti-Black prejudice.”<sup>33</sup> While Alexander acknowledges that Mormonism played a part in how African Americans encountered racism in Utah, this historical question about race and Mormonism in Utah deserves more thought. It is easy for Alexander and others to point to the LDS racial exclusion of black people as a reinforcing factor of racism in Utah. How this discrimination unfolded in the everyday experience of black Utahns, however, remains untouched by Utah historians tasked with a broader analysis of an entire state, not just its Mormon inhabitants.

Dean L. May, author of *Utah: A People’s History*, made brief mention of African Americans in his chapter on immigrants in Utah, a group he called “the new pioneers.” May wrote a short timeline of African Americans in the state, starting with James Beckwourth, a well-known nineteenth-century mountain man and trapper, and ending with the civil rights movement in the mid-twentieth century. “Progress in combating prejudice has come slowly to Utah,” he wrote. “Yet progress there has been, and though blacks remain few in Utah and the West, their continued presence and increasing acceptance is a tribute to those who for a century and a half endured discrimination far greater than that afflicting any of the new immigrants.”<sup>34</sup> Though May acknowledged

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 436, 389.

<sup>34</sup> Dean L. May, *Utah: A People’s History* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 144–5.



that African Americans faced more racism and discrimination, he examined that oppression in relation to the European immigrant experience. Historians have not offered readers an analysis of how and why that discrimination took place, having only supplied surface level arguments to say that white Utahns oppressed these “new pioneers.”

Charles S. Peterson also grouped his discussion of African Americans with immigrants as members of “Other Utahs” in a Utah history he wrote for the U.S. bicentennial in 1976. Peterson simply argued that African Americans faced similar discrimination in Utah as they did nationally. “The experience of blacks came near being the experience of blacks elsewhere. . . . Seeming progress was often subverted.”<sup>35</sup> Writing a survey history necessarily limited the extent to which Peterson could elaborate, but even his brief treatment of the subject again locates African Americans only at sites of struggle. Like May, Peterson incorporated black history by commenting on the discrimination that even popular black entertainers encountered when trying to access public accommodations in Utah. Peterson also credited the owner of Lagoon amusement park who invited African Americans to fully participate in park activities in the late 1940s as evidence that Utah was making racial progress. However, the black perspective is missing in these stories, and more work could be done incorporating diverse sources to this history.

Brian Cannon later partnered with Charles S. Peterson to produce *The Awkward State of Utah: Coming of Age in the Nation, 1896–1945* (2015), a book that examines Utah’s adolescent years from statehood through WWII. Peterson and Cannon only briefly

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<sup>35</sup> Charles S. Peterson, *Utah: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 155.

mention African Americans—once to talk about the Republican Party and voting at the turn of the century, and another to discuss the changes the defense industry brought to the state during WWII. The African American population in Utah remained small during the period chosen for this study—only 588 African Americans lived there in 1890—although it more than doubled between 1940 and 1950 to number 2,729.<sup>36</sup>

As part of a discussion on WWII-era changes, Peterson and Cannon touch on the racial discrimination that black soldiers faced at cafes and theaters in Ogden, but do not provide more detail about racial segregation in Utah in their own words. The authors quote a Utahn who remembered “old-stock” Mormon mothers having concerns about racial problems given the increased presence of African Americans in the state during WWII. Peterson and Cannon privilege religion over race, however, for the rising concerns of Utah parents: “... race was not the only concern for many Mormon parents, who feared that their children might fall in love and marry a GI who did not share their faith.” Rather than engage with Mormon theology and history of racial discrimination against blacks, Peterson and Cannon limit this discussion of Utah racism to a simple matter of differing religious views. Utah’s miscegenation laws were not unique, but the state legislature showed concerted commitment to ban interracial marriage as late as 1939 by toughening the original 1888 miscegenation law. LDS racial theology— a major factor to consider in the context of an increased population of African Americans in

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<sup>36</sup> Charles S. Peterson and Brian Q. Cannon, *The Awkward State of Utah* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2015), 15, 344.

Utah— made parents much more wary of their white daughters falling in love with a black man than with a soldier of any other race or religion.<sup>37</sup>

The movement for jobs in the war industry during WWII was part of the Great Migration of millions of African Americans from the South to northern and western cities during the 1940s. Peterson and Cannon state that Utah's Clearfield Naval Supply Depot recruited more than 2,400 African American workers from the South. However, the authors posit no theories as to why Utah could not retain a bigger percentage of the black population at the war's end. As compared to the neighboring states of Colorado and Arizona, Utah did not hold the same attraction for African Americans. By 1950, the black population in Colorado (20, 177) was over seven times that found in Utah. In 1950, the black population of Arizona was 25, 974, almost ten times that found in Utah.<sup>38</sup>

Compared to the limited black migration to Utah, Arizona attracted larger numbers of African Americans and even future civil rights leaders to the Southwest, such as Lincoln and Eleanor Ragsdale who settled in Phoenix after WWII. The Ragsdales played a key role in desegregating schools in Phoenix in 1953, one year before the Supreme Court ruled in favor of integration in another western town: *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Peterson and Cannon, *Awkward State of Utah*, 343 and Patrick Q. Mason, "Interracial Marriage in Utah, 1888–1963," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 76 (Spring 2008): 126.

<sup>38</sup> Frank Wilmot, "A Look at Race and Ethnicity in Colorado (1860–2005): Census Definitions and Data," *Colorado Libraries* 32, no. 4 (2006): 16; Pamela S. Perlich, *Utah Minorities: The Story Told by 150 Years of Census Data* (Salt Lake City: Bureau of Economic and Business Research Monograph, David S. Eccles School of Business, University of Utah, October 2002), 8; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1950*, vol. 2, *Characteristics of the Population*, part 3, Arizona (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952), 17.

<sup>39</sup> Matthew C. Whitaker, *Race Work: The Rise of Civil Rights in the Urban West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005). See also Charise Cheney, "Blacks on *Brown*: Intra-Community Debates over

Political historian F. Ross Peterson has set himself apart from the rest for his scholarship on civil rights history in Utah. In a 2005 article titled “‘Blindside’: Utah on the Eve of *Brown v. Board of Education*,” Peterson examines LDS Church president David O. McKay’s administration and his interaction with the priesthood ban in light of civil rights issues in Utah and national racial politics. Because “Utah’s history often cannot separate itself from Mormon history,” Peterson argues that “in order to understand Utah’s 1954 mood [prior to the famous Supreme Court ruling that ‘separate was inherently unequal’], it is essential to examine internal decisions and discussions within the LDS church.”<sup>40</sup> Peterson’s article provides a model for future scholars to use when examining mid-twentieth century Utah history. Peterson recognizes the role that the LDS Church had in Utah’s civil rights history while pursuing this research from a secular state history perspective.

Even in the mid-twentieth century, scholars were interested in the relationship between Mormon faith and secular racial beliefs. When the LDS Church increasingly became a target of public scrutiny in the late 1960s because of the racial priesthood ban, Armund L. Mauss, a Mormon and sociologist by trade, sought to answer the question of whether LDS race doctrines had any impact on Mormon secular attitudes about African Americans. Mauss published this research in 1966 in the *Pacific Sociological Review* and in 1967 he elaborated on his findings in an article that appeared in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. To gather data on Mormon race attitudes, Mauss surveyed California

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School Desegregation in Topeka, Kansas, 1941–1955,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 42 (Winter 2011): 481–500.

<sup>40</sup> F. Ross Peterson, “‘Blindside’: Utah on the Eve of *Brown v. Board of Education*,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 73 (Winter 2005): 12.

and Utah Mormons and compared the resulting statistics to responses from a similar survey of other Christian denominations. Based on quantitative data, Mauss argued that Mormon secular racial attitudes were not statistically impacted by Mormon theological racism. Mauss concluded the *Dialogue* article with an earnest plea to critics of the church and the priesthood ban: “get off our backs! . . . No matter how much racism you think you see in Utah, you can’t be sure that it has anything to do with Mormonism. It might be related to the rural and small-town environment in much of the Mountain West (as in other parts of the country), or it might be the sickness of individual Mormon bigots, who would find some *other* way to rationalize their racism, even if the Mormon Church were without its peculiar ‘Negro doctrine.’”<sup>41</sup>

Mauss’ research, based on response-dependent surveys sent to Mormon congregations, is not grounded in history or the primary source materials and legal documents from the time period. Mauss noted First Presidency statements that affirmed LDS Church support of equal rights, but the actions behind those statements deserve more careful scrutiny and should not be taken at face value.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, Mauss was too eager to be an apologist for Mormon discrimination by telling critics to “get off our backs!” and revealed his bias in the process. Mormon attitudes towards blacks may not have been substantially more severe than that found nationally or within other religions,

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<sup>41</sup> Armand L. Mauss, “Mormonism and the Negro: Faith, Folklore, and Civil Rights,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2, no. 4 (1967): 38 and Armand L. Mauss, “Mormonism and Secular Attitudes towards Negroes,” *Pacific Sociological Review* 9 (Autumn 1966): 91–9.

<sup>42</sup> Hugh B. Brown and Sterling McMurrin were behind the statement Brown issued at General Conference in 1963. The First Presidency made the statement official two years later. Although formally approved by David O. McKay, he was not in favor of making the statement official. In 1965 the NAACP forced his hand. Prince and Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism*, 71.

but that still does not answer the question of how African Americans were affected by Mormon theology and culture in the state of Utah.

Mauss would submit that those who fall for the low hanging fruit of a common sense argument need to spend more time surveying the record of Church leader statements that supported civil rights and to learn more about racial equality within the Church itself.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, oral histories and legislative documents amount to a body of evidence suggesting that at the very least, perceived discrimination matters and automatically pulls the racism that existed within the institutional LDS Church into the narrative. Historians cannot discount the fact that racial minorities and civil rights movements formed on their behalf frequently petitioned Church leaders for support and assembled on Church property for the sake of racial equality outside of Mormonism. Testimonies of black Utahns are replete with examples of discrimination and mistreatment by a Mormon culture and corporate body that even ostracized blacks who joined their congregations. The extent to which Mormonism can be blamed for racism and discrimination in Utah is elusive and difficult to quantify, but it clearly is one of the factors involved. If Utah civil rights history is a story about minority rights advocates overcoming strong conservative opposition and the LDS Church's apathy towards racial discrimination, then Utah's civil rights history needs to begin with this recognition.

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<sup>43</sup> For example, LDS congregations have never been racially segregated. That did not mean, however, that blacks were welcomed on an equal basis. In the interwar period, Len and Mary Hope, African American converts to the Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, were told to no longer attend Church meetings so as to not offend the sensibilities of white members. The local bishop would visit the Hopes and bring them the sacrament once a month. Len Hope faithfully paid tithing and remained loyal to the Church, even though he was barred from full participation and he and his family had been expelled from their local congregation. Ronald G. Coleman and Darius A. Gray, "Two Perspectives: The Religious Hopes of 'Worthy' African American Latter-day Saints before the 1978 Revelation," in *Black and Mormon*, ed. Newell G. Bringhurst and Darron T. Smith (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 56.

David Brewer was another sociologist interested in the relationship between Mormonism and secular racial beliefs in Utah during the late 1960s. He countered Mauss' findings with a sociological study published in 1970. Brewer structured his study to incorporate a more representative sample of Utah elites with power or influence to speak of, including the elites in the LDS Church, government, church leaders of other faiths, businessmen, university level academics, and professionals such as physicians and lawyers. Brewer concluded that "whatever conservatism exists in Mormonism carries over into political racial policy. This is congruent with the fact that in 1964, Utah was the only state outside the Southern and border states which had not passed civil rights laws in either public accommodations, employment, or housing." Brewer's data also indicated that "conservatives' tend to deny any relationship between religious and secular racial norms," suggesting that most Latter-day Saints in Utah would have turned a blind eye to racial discrimination in Utah as they were unaware of how Mormonism bolstered secular racial norms.<sup>44</sup> Although Mormon scholars such as Newell G. Bringhurst and Lester E. Bush have made significant contributions to our understanding of Mormon racial attitudes, their analysis has rarely wandered into the realm of Utah politics. Other authors have similarly limited their parameters by using the LDS Church-owned Brigham Young University in Provo as their primary site of inquiry.<sup>45</sup> In *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People within Mormonism*, Bringhurst argued that Utah had an "unfavorable civil rights situation" after citing Salt Lake City NAACP officials Albert B.

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<sup>44</sup> David Brewer, "Religious Resistance to Changing Beliefs about Race," *Pacific Sociological Review* 13 (Summer 1970): 169–70.

<sup>45</sup> Darron T. Smith, *When Race, Religion, and Sport Collide: Black Athletes at BYU and Beyond* (Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield, 2015). This work is a great example of scholarship that is concentrated on race and Mormonism at BYU.

Fritz and Charles Nabors, both of whom were outspoken critics of the employment segregation and race problems statewide during the 1960s. He also noted that Mormon apathy toward the civil rights movement was in part reinforced by LDS officials, such as apostle Ezra Taft Benson, who claimed that the black freedom struggle was a covert communist operation to infiltrate U.S. politics.<sup>46</sup> Tracking the activism of the Salt Lake chapter of the NAACP and its interaction with the LDS Church was outside the confines of Bringhurst's research focus; that he expanded his connections between Mormon theology and secular race politics in Utah and the nation was progressive for a Mormon history project. However, there still exists a hole in the literature on civil rights activism by and on behalf of African Americans during the mid-twentieth century, and Mormon historians are not the only scholars who can fill this gap.

Mormon historians have been forced to comment on civil rights issues because President David O. McKay and other prominent Church leaders made strong statements disavowing the black freedom struggle of the mid-twentieth century. Gregory A. Prince and William Robert Wright's biography on McKay, LDS Church president from 1951 to 1970, demonstrates this. Prince and Wright argue that McKay privately harbored racial prejudice and suspected that the civil rights movement was riddled with communism. Of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, McKay confided in his diary that "[t]he Civil Rights Bill is

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<sup>46</sup> As an LDS church apostle in 1967, Ezra Taft Benson called out the evils of Communism in a General Conference address. According to Benson, "the same masters of deceit [Communist leaders in China and Cuba] are showing the same false solicitude for the unfortunate in the name of civil rights. Now there is nothing wrong with civil rights; it's what's being done in the name of civil rights that is alarming. There is no doubt that the so-called civil rights movement as it exists today is used as a Communist program for revolution in America just as agrarian reform was used by the Communists to take over China and Cuba." Ezra Taft Benson, untitled address, *Official Report of the One Hundred Thirty-Seventh Semi-Annual General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1967), 35.



now passed and it is the law of the land. Some of it is wrong—the Negro will now have to prove himself.”<sup>47</sup> The Church’s silence on discrimination in the state elicited protests from the NAACP who subsequently planned marches in front of the Church Office Building. While this story is informative, readers are not given much information about the NAACP because Prince and Wright’s biography on McKay inherently privileges the agency of Church leaders over the NAACP. The African American voice is mute in this matter, and attempts made by the NAACP to hold the Church responsible for the present discrimination are taken for granted rather than seen as a deliberate effort to improve the lives of black Utah citizens. That the NAACP sought out the Church at all shows that in Utah, the major civil rights battles fought by the NAACP had to involve the Church.<sup>48</sup>

Newell G. Bringhurst similarly examined the 1966 NAACP “dispute” with the Church. Here, Bringhurst takes a critical approach to the status of black people and Church teachings on race from 1820 (the year Joseph Smith had a theophany called the First Vision) to 1978 when the ban was lifted. Bringhurst surmised that the “NAACP chapter saw the Mormon Church as a factor in the unfavorable civil rights situation of Utah blacks.”<sup>49</sup> Studies of the African American experience in Utah should use this part of Bringhurst’s analysis of Mormon history as a starting point to further investigate NAACP activism in the state’s history. Bringhurst’s treatment of Utah civil rights history was necessarily limited; his focus was on the change in doctrine and shifting racial and political attitudes articulated in official Church documents. Still, Bringhurst built an

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<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Gregory and Prince, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism*, 71.

<sup>48</sup> See Prince and Wright, “Blacks, Civil Rights, and the Priesthood,” in *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism*: 60–105.

<sup>49</sup> Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks*, 168.

entrance for other historians to engage with this aspect of Utah history, and from the viewpoint of the African American community.

This brief review of African Americans in the scholarship of the black West, Utah history, and Mormon studies demonstrates that secular scholarship on African Americans in Utah is wanting, particularly for the twentieth century. Secondary sources that do include African Americans in their narrative have unfortunately linked their struggle in Utah with that of European immigrants in a way that obscures their diverse experience as a racial minority in Utah's Mormon society. Historians of Mormonism have examined Church leader responses to racial politics, but for obvious reasons have not pursued Mormon history from a black civic point of view. Mormon studies scholarship has taken a critical approach to LDS racism and hinted at a possible connection between theological and secular discrimination in Utah, and questions about this relationship should be explored further. The LDS Church, as Utah's most powerful institution, is an important factor that Utah that historians should acknowledge—but not privilege—in future studies about African Americans in the Beehive state.

## CHAPTER III

*MORMONISM AND THE NEGRO*, AFRICAN AMERICANS, AND LDS RACISM AT  
UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY, 1960–1961

This chapter examines the ways in which LDS racial theology intersected with developing racial issues at Utah State University (USU) during the 1960–1961 school year. College campuses across the country were dealing with racial issues, such as the University of Georgia where a federal court had recently mandated integration. But the predominance of Mormons in Logan, Utah and at USU, presented a complex dimension to race relations even as the rest of the nation moved toward greater equality. While USU was in the midst of confronting these issues, a USU professor and Latter-day Saint named John Stewart published *Mormonism and the Negro*, a treatise explaining and defending the doctrine of the LDS Church regarding “Negroes and others of Negroid blood.”<sup>1</sup> Where Professor Randy Bott’s anachronistic *Washington Post* comments falsely represented the Church in 2012, Stewart’s book showed how problematic Mormon race teachings were prior to 1978. His doctrinal explanations clashed with an emerging racial dialogue on campus, creating a telling episode of twentieth century race in Utah. In this chapter I will argue that LDS doctrines on race, as explained in Stewart’s *Mormonism and the Negro*, added to the complicated social atmosphere on USU’s campus, making it difficult for African Americans to assimilate into the student body and stifling the development of better race relations at USU, itself a microcosm of the greater Utah population.

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<sup>1</sup> John J. Stewart, *Mormonism and the Negro* (Orem, UT: Bookmark, 1960), 3.

In 1966, *Newsweek* reported that “88 percent of all whites (97 percent of the Southern whites) are opposed to dating between Negroes and white teen-agers, and 79 percent (91 percent in the South) would object to the marriage of a close friend or relative to a Negro.”<sup>2</sup> USU President Daryl Chase was well aware of the implications of that story for his campus, and sympathized with the broader opposition to interracial relationships. Six years earlier, Chase had collected a 22 February 1960 *U.S. News & World Report* article about an interracial romance and filed it among his office papers in a folder labeled “Negro File.” The article provided Chase substantiating evidence that interracial dating and the controversy that followed would reflect poorly on universities and their administrators, something he wanted to avoid at USU.

The 1960 article told the story of Dorothy Lebohner, a white freshman described as a “startlingly slim, tender-looking, fair and blonde-hair,” and Warren Sutton, an African American basketball player described as “6 feet 3 inches tall with a physique of classic proportions, but rather heavy facial features.” The two started dating the summer before Lebohner’s freshman year at Alfred University.<sup>3</sup> After both students dropped out of school, Dorothy’s parents decided to send her to Florida to forget about Warren, but the couple planned a secret rendezvous to run off together. When Edward Lebohner—Dorothy’s father and Alfred University’s treasurer—discovered his daughter’s disappearance, he obtained a police warrant for her arrest for being a “wayward minor.” Even though some people, including the Dean of the nursing school, saw the couple’s immaturity as reason enough why the relationship should not continue, the racial aspects

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<sup>2</sup> *Newsweek* data quoted in Hugo G. Beigel, “Problems and Motives in Interracial Relationships,” *Journal of Sex Research* 2 (November 1966): 185.

<sup>3</sup> Robert S. Bird, “Integration—And a Campus Romance: A Reporter’s Close-Up of an Incident at a Northern College,” *U.S. News & World Report*, 22 February 1960: 101.

of this story provided occasion for thoughtful audiences to consider whether integrated college campuses encouraged intermarriage: “Is marriage between a white girl and a Negro morally permissible? Or practically possible?” Robert S. Bird, author of the article, captured African American students’ views on the subject, including those of one student who quite frankly said that “[i]nterracial marriages just cause headaches. People are cruel, children are cruel. It’s just natural. It would be better to live in Europe if you had an interracial marriage rather than buck society here. It can’t be done.”<sup>4</sup>

USU’s President Chase wanted to avoid the headaches that interracial relationships had caused Alfred University, but in doing so Chase almost certainly precipitated one. On Sunday, 15 January 1961, USU Vice President Milton R. Merrill, and Dean J. Elliot Cameron met with USU’s “Negro students” to “inform them of public criticism directed at USU regarding the number of black students on campus and their social activities.”<sup>5</sup> They also wanted to discuss some of the problems African Americans faced in Cache Valley. At this meeting, Chase took the opportunity to discourage these black students from interracial dating. A later *Salt Lake Tribune* article published on 4 February recorded Chase’s two reasons for calling the meeting with the school’s black students. First, he wanted to explain “that some persons ‘felt that too many scholarships were being given to Negro, out-of-state students.’” Second, he wanted to “inform them that ‘we . . . have a problem with Negro students dating white girls.’” Chase termed such dating “very unwise” and then showed the group the *U.S. News and World Report* article

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 100, 102.

<sup>5</sup> This article was found in the Daryl Chase Papers and reportedly is from the 20 January 1961 edition of the *Deseret News*. “USU Inquiry Finds Race Rumors False,” *Deseret News*, 20 January 1961, folder 5, box 36, Daryl Chase Papers, 1954–1968, Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University (hereafter Chase Papers).

about Alfred University's recent experience with Sutton and Lebohner's interracial relationship. "We are very inexperienced (in Negro-white relationships) on this campus," Chase stated, "and I don't think we could avoid this sort of thing," referring to the "irreparable damage" the negative publicity caused Alfred University. To keep the administration's hands clean, Chase made the black students the accountable party for averting racial issues rather than accepting that as a personal or university responsibility.<sup>6</sup>

According to Tom Jones, editor-in-chief of *Student Life*, the truth of what actually transpired at that meeting "played little part... as some students eagerly heard, accepted, and passed on some sad stories concerning race relations on campus."<sup>7</sup> Some of the rumors circulating on campus included that black athletes would be stripped of their scholarships for dating white girls, and that women living in residence halls would be convicted of a campus offense by accepting dates with "the Negroes." Vice President Merrill wrote to Chase on 21 January about the rumors and noted that "the campus is seething (the description of a reasonably judicious informant) with the report that you called all of the Negro students in and issued an ultimatum to the effect that inter-racial dating would result in immediate expulsion of the Negro involved."<sup>8</sup> Merrill likely overstated the reaction to Chase's meeting with the black students in saying that the whole campus was "seething."<sup>9</sup> Generational differences between the administration and students probably played a role in Merrill's perception of how vocal the campus

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<sup>6</sup> "Head of USU Clarifies Race Stand" *Salt Lake Tribune*, 4 February 1961[?], included in Chase Papers.

<sup>7</sup> "Truth Plays No Part as Rumors Run Rampant," *Utah State University Student Life*, 20 January 1961.

<sup>8</sup> M. R. Merrill to Chase, 21 January 1961, Chase Papers.

<sup>9</sup> If the whole campus were indeed "seething," more activist responses would have been generated. As will be shown later in this chapter, only about seventy students and staff showed up to a subsequent meeting to discuss racial issues on campus.

community opposition was, and he was likely surprised to hear that even a few people were upset if the circulating rumors about expulsion for interracial dating were true.

The administration's shock at both student speculation and the formal inquiries into USU's racial policy that followed can be attributed to their misplaced expectations of the significance of such a small number of racial minorities on campus and how their presence could dictate discussions of race at USU. In general, Utahns were a politically and religiously conservative group that evaded many racial issues by discouraging the growth of a black population rather than embracing integration and the task of racial progress.<sup>10</sup> USU reflected that state profile, and administrators felt that predominance of whites on campus afforded them the luxury of not having to deal with racial issues. In notes Chase made on 21 January 1961, he reveals how little the issue of race had been broached on campus: "The subject has never come up in any Board meeting; nor has any Board member spoken to me personally about the subject as a problem of the school. All our policies deal with students—not race."<sup>11</sup> While there was no segregation policy at USU and the university operated under the auspices of seeing and dealing with students and not their race, the administration's approach reflect a form of proto-colorblind racism.<sup>12</sup> "The rules of the University," Chase wrote, "as found in the Catalog, the Student Body Constitution, and in the Faculty Code, are dealing with human beings. As

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<sup>10</sup> This attitude is generally reflected in many of the primary sources used in this chapter, particularly by community members who called upon Chase to take administrative action against African Americans.

<sup>11</sup> Untitled note, 21 January 1961, Chase Papers.

<sup>12</sup> Eduardo Bonilla-Silva argues that colorblind racism took the place of state-legitimated discrimination in the post-Civil Rights era to reinforce white privilege. I use the word "proto-colorblind racism" to describe USU's race policy since the 1960–61 school year lies at the heart of the Civil Rights era, and acknowledges a structural support of white privilege at USU. See Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*, 4th ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

such, it makes no racial distinction; and in harmony with this, the school is administered.”<sup>13</sup> The void of a statutory racial policy at USU was, in practice, filled by the unwritten racial bias held by Chase and members of the community with whom he corresponded. This correspondence illustrates the reluctance, and even open opposition, of both university administrators and the community, to any conscious efforts in favor of racial equality.

Although small in number, black male students were particularly visible because of their high profile on athletic teams. In line with Michel Foucault’s notion of surveillance by those in power, the administration monitored the grades and dating habits of the school’s male African American students as a separate demographic. J. Elliot Cameron, the Dean of Students, reported to Chase on 21 January 1961 that there were only twelve black students on campus: ten “boys,” seven of which were athletes on scholarship or assistantship to play football or basketball, and two “girls.”<sup>14</sup> The sudden discussion of race issues on campus prompted the administration to launch an investigation into the academic standing of the few “Negro students on campus.” Dean Cameron reported the cumulative and fall quarter grade point averages (GPAs) for all black students to President Chase in an undated document retained in Chase’s papers. Crosschecking the names in this GPA report with the 1960–1961 men’s basketball roster confirms that President Chase wanted this information that school year, sometime after 26 January.<sup>15</sup> “President,” Cameron began, “The two girls listed are in good standing. . . .

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<sup>13</sup> Untitled note, 21 January 1961.

<sup>14</sup> See “Panopticism,” in Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison System*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 195–230.

<sup>15</sup> “Negro Students on Campus,” n.d., Chase Papers and “Utah State Men’s Basketball All-Time Roster,” accessed from USU Men’s Basketball web page, 27 October 2016,



All other students are on probation because of low fall grades, or low cumulative grades.” Poor academic performance on the part of these black males students potentially offered Chase a way to exclude them from further study based on his universal policy of student academic merit rather than any overt policy of racial segregation.

In the process of evaluating the academic performance of USU’s black students, administrators failed to take into consideration the ways in which race had already impacted the educational experiences of those black students, both in high school and at USU. In an oral history interview, Darnel Haney, a member of the 1960–1961 basketball team, stated that he had never attended school with white children until his freshman year of high school, having attended segregated schools in his hometown of Phoenix. Haney’s father was murdered when he was just seven years old. His family of twelve relied on the odd jobs he and his siblings could find— such as picking potatoes and shining shoes—to supplement his mother’s income as a domestic worker and the government welfare support they received.<sup>16</sup> Although Haney struggled academically at USU in 1960–1961, he went on to receive a M.S. in Sociology from USU in 1973, writing a master’s thesis titled “Factors Contributing to the Black High School Dropout Rate.”<sup>17</sup> Haney also related the insulting experience of being in USU classrooms and overhearing other students talk amongst themselves about him. Once during a biology lecture, the professor used the expression “there must be a nigger in the wood pile” in Haney’s presence. This set of economic, educational, and racial circumstances, in addition to the time consuming

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[http://grfx.cstv.com/photos/schools/ust/sports/m-baskbl/auto\\_pdf/2015-16/misc\\_non\\_event/USUMBBAlltimeRoster.pdf](http://grfx.cstv.com/photos/schools/ust/sports/m-baskbl/auto_pdf/2015-16/misc_non_event/USUMBBAlltimeRoster.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> “Darnel L. Haney Interview,” *Facing the Color Line: Race and Ethnicity in Cache Valley*, digital exhibit online, accessed 19 November 2016, <http://digital.lib.usu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/minority/id/233>.

<sup>17</sup> Darnel L. Haney, “Factors Contributing to the Black High School Dropout Rate,” (master’s thesis, Utah State University, 1973).

task of being student athletes, made life and academic performance difficult for black students at USU.

Records do not indicate how these student athletes met their punishment for poor grades, but evidence suggests that at least one community member was hoping that USU would uphold high moral standards to naturally eliminate black students. “Please believe me,” Wayne B. Garff wrote to Chase in February of 1961,

you will have plenty of backing in taking a strong stand on the racial issue. . . . We feel sure that the majority of people are greatly incensed over the inroads and demands of a small minority. Many of us feel that the pendulum has swung too far too quickly in permitting our colored associates to have unusual privileges because of a rabid minority. On the issue of morals, we encourage you to dismiss from the college any persons who will not uphold the moral standards of our institution and of our state and federal laws. Most of us are perfectly willing to permit people to have freedoms as long as they do not impose on our equal freedoms. . . . We want you to know that we are behind you in upholding the dignity and integrity of our Alma Mater.<sup>18</sup>

It is likely that Garff, a resident of Salt Lake City and a 1936 graduate of then–Utah State Agricultural College (USAC), had few if any interactions with African Americans.

Census records indicate that during the years Garff attended USAC, the African American population of Cache County was somewhere between one and four persons.

The 1960 Census reveals that when Garff typed his letter to Chase, African Americans made up 0.5 percent of Utah’s population of 890, 627, were largely concentrated in Ogden, and were outnumbered by both the Native American and Japanese populations.<sup>19</sup>

Without any likely personal interaction with African Americans, Garff’s prejudice was

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<sup>18</sup> Wayne B. Garff to Chase, 6 February 1961, Chase Papers.

<sup>19</sup> Pamela S. Perlich, *Utah Minorities: The Story Told by 150 Years of Census Data* (Salt Lake City: Bureau of Economic and Business Research Monograph, David S. Eccles School of Business, University of Utah, October 2002), 8.

informed by racial stereotypes, fear of white Utahns losing the power that their dominant share of the state's population (98.1 percent) brought, and by his familiarity with LDS theology per his upbringing and lifelong membership in the LDS Church.<sup>20</sup> In his letter to Chase, Garff proclaimed himself a spokesman for USU alumni and other Utahns who thought of African Americans as outsiders who did not belong in Utah. The Utahns Garff insisted on representing were bent on retaining racial barriers in the state, including on college campuses. They perceived the presence of African Americans at USU as a threat to their alma mater, their morals and social customs, and their accustomed interpretation of state and federal laws.

After the January 1961 meeting in which Chase admonished the school's few black students against interracial dating, public discussion of USU's racial policies took off—exactly what Chase had hoped to avert. Concerned community members aligned and involved themselves in Chase's endeavor by monitoring the dating activities of black USU students. In a memorandum dated 25 January 1961, ten days after Chase's meeting with the black students, Chase recorded that he “received a call from Trustee [David W.] Evans, who seemed quite concerned about the rumors in Salt Lake about the relationships between Haynie [*sic*] and a girl in North Logan who, it was represented, was pregnant. He wanted to know if I were aware of it and doing anything about it. . . . He urged me to keep him up to date on the negro question and said we might have a special committee of the Board look into it, etc.”<sup>21</sup> On the other side of that story stood Darnel Haney himself

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<sup>20</sup> “Wayne Brimhall Garff,” *Deseret News Obituaries*, 19 August 2007, <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/deseretnews/obituary.aspx?n=wayne-brimhall-garff&pid=92868212>.

<sup>21</sup> “Memorandum,” 25 January 1961, Chase Papers.

who experienced the community's judgement firsthand.<sup>22</sup> Of dating interracially as a student athlete at USU, Haney remarked, "of course that wasn't accepted at all. And since we were a losing team [during the 1960–61 season], I was a big problem for Utah State. They wanted me out of there. They watched me every place I went." According to Haney, other black athletes were dating interracially as well, but they did so secretly to avoid the negative attention that could potentially jeopardize their athletic careers.<sup>23</sup>

While social acceptance was conditional at best for African American students, USU administrators seemed to think that the university was making gains in developing a multicultural campus. Student reporter Tom Jones quoted President Chase in a *Student Life* article as saying, "We are proud of the cosmopolitan character of the student body. I think that it can truthfully be said that to a remarkable degree we are learning how to work and study and socialize together as members of the great human family... Let us go forward on our chartered course of friendliness and opportunities for all."<sup>24</sup> While Chase publically spoke of accommodating the presence of racial and ethnic diversity on campus and affirmed that the only means of judgment was based on academic merit, underneath all of that public posturing the truth of the matter was that neither he nor the local community wanted USU to be the vanguard of racial equality.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Marie Packer from North Logan was the young woman Haney was dating. They eventually married and had several children and currently reside in Ogden, Utah. I have been unable to determine whether or not the pregnancy rumors were true at this time, although Darnel and Marie would have several children together. "Haney Interview."

<sup>23</sup> "Haney Interview." From Haney's point of view, opportunities for civil rights activism in Logan were nonexistent. Even if Logan's small group of African Americans were able to find a way to be involved, Haney felt that it would likely have jeopardized their athletic careers and upset campus administrators and the community.

<sup>24</sup> "Truth Plays No Part."

<sup>25</sup> "USU Inquiry Finds Race Rumors False."

A month before his meeting with USU's black students, Chase received a letter from a local attorney, L. D. Naisbitt, who disapproved of USU's recruitment of black athletes. Naisbitt wanted to "give Basket Ball [*sic*] to the white boys. . . Generally speaking [black athletes] are no permanent good to the University and in most cases the University is no good to them. I appreciate the good work that is being done at the University but in my humble opinion the above practice is a mistake and national recruiting, especially colored boys should be abolished."<sup>26</sup> In other words, only local and white boys should be recruited. An examination of the 1960–1961 basketball roster reveals that there were as many players from Columbus, Indiana as there were from the whole state of Utah (three). Wyoming and Idaho had each supplied USU with two players. Naisbitt's explicit aversion to black players on USU's basketball team and his disdain of national recruiting (read as recruitment of black players) in favor of local recruiting stemmed from an underlying desire to maintain the existing racial boundaries at USU and in the state of Utah.

Chase's response to Naisbitt affirmed that the university's policy aimed at being inclusive, although his main defense for the presence of black athletes in USU athletics was tied to maintaining competitiveness with other athletic programs. "As you know," wrote Chase, "our doors are open to all academically qualified students, regardless of their nationality, race, or religion. This is the policy and spirit of the University. We segregate and eliminate students only on the basis of scholastic achievement and character." Chase wanted to keep USU's football and basketball teams competitive rather than "second or third-rate," and did not want these programs to be cut for the sake of

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<sup>26</sup> L. D. Naisbitt to Chase, 16 December 1960, Chase Papers.

keeping the teams stocked with only white players. Chase claimed he had no issue with coaches recruiting a “Bill McGill,”<sup>27</sup> although he did have a problem with the number of black athletes, particularly on the basketball team, but for a different reason than Naisbitt did: “It makes us appear before the public as an institution moving toward professionalism in athletics, and this is a situation we want to resist.” Chase’s linking of black athletes with professionalism in sports is very telling of his perception of who and what a college athlete should be. White student athletes embodied the popular amateur athletic ideal Chase envisioned for USU athletics. His association of professionalism with black student athletes, especially in basketball, was negative—part of a larger critique that black athletes were infusing professional sports with different styles of play.<sup>28</sup>

Concurrent national events, such as the student sit-in movement in North Carolina and the Supreme Court’s *Boynton v. Virginia* decision ending Jim Crow segregation in public transportation, provided some perspective for USU administrators evaluating their campus. Colleges across the country were inviting social change, protest, and even violence during the decade of the 1960s.<sup>29</sup> President Chase wanted the USU student body to be proud of the fact that things were not as bad in Logan as they were other places, and

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<sup>27</sup> Bill McGill, a native of Los Angeles, California, created an impressive résumé at the University of Utah. In 1961 he led the Runnin’ Utes to a NCAA Final Four appearance and during his senior year in 1961–62, he notched an impressive 38.8 points per game. Kyle Goon, “Utah Basketball: Utes Pioneer Bill McGill Dies at 74,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 12 July 2014 and “Billy McGill to be Inducted into Pac-12 Hall of Honor,” *utahutes.com*, 21 February 2014, [http://www.utahutes.com/news/2014/2/21/Billy\\_McGill\\_to\\_be\\_Inducted\\_into\\_Pac\\_12\\_Hall\\_of\\_Honor.aspx](http://www.utahutes.com/news/2014/2/21/Billy_McGill_to_be_Inducted_into_Pac_12_Hall_of_Honor.aspx).

<sup>28</sup> Chase to Naisbitt, 19 January 1961 and Rachel Alicia Griffin, “The Disgrace of Commodification and Shameful Convenience: A Critical Race Critique of the NBA,” *Journal of Black Studies* 43 (March 2012): 163.

<sup>29</sup> Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, “The 1960s and the Transformation of Campus Cultures,” *History of Education Quarterly* 26 (Spring 1986): 1–38. As Horowitz points out, student activism on college campuses was not a 1960s phenomenon; wealthy, elite students had caused stirs on campus since the late-nineteenth century. However, Horowitz also argues that “no one surveying the campus scene in 1959 could have predicted the 1960s.” Horowitz, “The 1960s,” 10.

that USU was able to stay above the political unrest and racial fray that was disrupting universities and making national headlines.

In 1961, violent riots took place on the University of Georgia's campus in direct response to Judge William Bootle's court-ordered admission of nineteen-year-old Hamilton Holmes and eighteen-year-old Charlayne Hunter, the school's first African American students.<sup>30</sup> Terry Hazelwood, author of an editorial appearing in UGA's newspaper, the *Red and Black*, proudly stood for segregation, but encouraged fellow students to maintain good behavior and understand that a national spotlight had been cast on their school by mandated integration: "[T]hose persons covering developments here for national magazine and newspapers will emphasize the few students standing around as curious onlookers... They have been known to sensationalize in a manner unfavorable to the South." Hazelwood went on to explain that the student body "must all, at any cost and in any event remain level-headed, rational, and think before we take any action. We must present to those of the nation who are watching us with more than casual interest the fact that we are mature, and can handle this situation with discretion. Only by thus doing can we reflect credit upon ourselves and our institution."<sup>31</sup> Much like Hazelwood, Chase wanted racial dialogue and administrative action to reflect positively on USU, the state of Utah, and the nation at large. Although USU avoided the violence and spectacle found at the University of Georgia, a form of structural racism was still supported by the local LDS culture that resisted racial progress. Mormonism had its own "Jim Crow" that

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<sup>30</sup> "Hamilton Holmes and Charlayne Hunter at UGA," *Freedom on Film: Civil Rights in Georgia*, digital collection, accessed 19 November 2016, <http://civilrights.uga.edu/cities/athens/hamp1.htm>.

<sup>31</sup> Terry Hazelwood, "Your Responsibility," *University of Georgia Red and Black*, 9 January 1961. <http://civilrights.uga.edu/cities/athens/hamp1.htm>.

effectively kept African Americans out of LDS sacred places. The arrival of John Stewart's book, *Mormonism and the Negro*, and the dialogue that followed demonstrates the ways in which LDS theology powerfully shaped racial attitudes in Utah and at USU.

John Stewart was an associate professor of journalism, editor of publications at Utah State University, and a faculty advisor to the school's newspaper, *Student Life*, when he published *Mormonism and the Negro* in 1960. Stewart also had three other books in print that displayed his knack for writing on Mormon-oriented historical themes: *Joseph Smith: Democracy's Unknown Prophet*, *Thomas Jefferson and the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, and *The Eternal Gift: The Story of the Crucifixion and Resurrection*.<sup>32</sup> An article appearing in the 14 December 1960 *Student Life* featured Stewart and his new book, *The Eternal Gift*, wherein Stewart was quoted as saying, "In all literature there is only one story as beautiful as that of the birth of Jesus Christ at Bethlehem, and that is the story of his birth at Calvary 33 years later—the birth that is called death." Titled, "Utah State Professor Writes about Savior," this *Student Life* article sheds light on the privilege that LDS topics had in university news. LDS topics needed no introduction to the newspaper's audience. Authors assumed that student readers were Mormons or already familiar with the LDS Church, and so often wrote from an LDS viewpoint. The author of the Stewart article illustrates this by stating that the book was "given to church and other groups during the Christmas and Easter seasons" where

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<sup>32</sup> John J. Stewart, *Joseph Smith: Democracy's Unknown Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Mercury Publishing, 1960); John J. Stewart, *Thomas Jefferson and the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1959); and John J. Stewart, *The Eternal Gift: The Story of the Crucifixion and Resurrection* (Orem, UT: Bookmark, 1960).



“Church” obviously means LDS Church and “other groups” refers to minority Christian denominations in the area.

Further evidence of a prominent LDS influence and readership of *Student Life* is the frequent advertisement of events at the LDS Institute of Religion on campus. One such notice announced Elder Howard W. Hunter as the headline speaker at the annual Joseph Smith Memorial event held at the LDS Institute building. This announcement appeared on the same page as the Stewart “Savior” article. The upcoming program with Elder Howard was to feature a chorus provided by a USU fraternity, a fact that speaks to the strength of LDS presence on campus.<sup>33</sup> That administrative offices for Delta Phi and Lambda Delta Sigma were also housed in the LDS Institute building also suggests that campus fraternities enjoyed overlapping connections with the LDS Church.<sup>34</sup>

Although BYU professor Randy L. Bott’s 2012 comments in the *Washington Post* appeared over fifty years after Stewart published *Mormonism and the Negro*, there are stunning parallels between their views. Like Bott, Stewart claimed that God was acting for the best by denying the priesthood to black members: “Is it not possible to see an act of mercy on the part of God in not having the Negro bear the Priesthood in this world, in view of his living under the curse of a black skin and other Negroid features? . . . Who is to say that . . . the Negro is not—so far as his temporal well being—better off not to have

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<sup>33</sup> It is hard to know the exact proportion of LDS students at USU during this period. In 2013, the LDS population at USU was about 86% while the LDS population of Utah as a whole was about 60%. Research by Utah demographer Pam Perlich has demonstrated that the LDS population has declined over time. See Lindsay Whitehurst, “As Mormon Missionaries Leave, Utah Colleges Look Out of State for Students,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 8 March 2014 and Celeste Tholen Rosenlof, “60% of Utahns LDS in 2013, Gallup Says,” *KSL*, 24 February 2014, <https://www.ksl.com/?sid=28799562>.

<sup>34</sup> “Utah State Professor Writes about Savior,” *Student Life*, 14 December 1960 and “Church Official Presides: LDS Dedicates Institute,” *Student Life*, 11 November 1960.

the Priesthood?”<sup>35</sup> Behind Stewart’s support for a black race restriction on priesthood was an underlying belief that being born black was also a societal curse. “In our society today,” Stewart wrote, “from which situation is the Negro suffering most: (1) In not being permitted to hold the Priesthood in the LDS Church, or (2) In having a black skin and other Negroid features which stigmatize him in the eyes of most Whites?” Stewart’s God, and by extension, his description of Mormonism’s God, was more unjust in placing a spirit in a black body than the LDS Church was in denying him the priesthood.<sup>36</sup>

Stewart was not unique in his unfavorable views on black phenetic features. Indeed, as any examination of beauty product advertisements in the mid-twentieth century would indicate, natural black features fell far short of the ideal beauty standards upheld by white America.<sup>37</sup> Having strong black or “Negroid features” in 1960 did stigmatize African Americans in popular culture, despite efforts to combat those negative associations going all the way back to Marcus Garvey and W.E. B. DuBois in the early part of the twentieth century. During the 1950s and 1960s civil rights era, those efforts continued, producing the cultural embrace of black phenetic features in the phrase “Black is beautiful.”<sup>38</sup> The point here, however, is that Stewart found further justification for the LDS racial priesthood ban in part by extending his theological interpretation of race to an explanation of why blacks were treated poorly in secular society. In other words, Stewart

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<sup>35</sup> Stewart, *Mormonism and the Negro*, 49.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>37</sup> The June 1960 issue of *Ebony* magazine included an advertisement for Perma-Strate, a product designed to remove “all the undesirable kink and too-tight curls to give soft, natural-looking straight hair” that could be more easily styled. Although this ad was placed in *Ebony* and was intended for black women and men who were told that their “too-tight” curls were “undesirable,” this advertisement still featured white women in the “before and after” photos. See *Ebony* 15 (June 1960): 45.

<sup>38</sup> Claud Anderson and Rue L. Cromwell, “‘Black is Beautiful’ and the Color Preferences of Afro-American Youth,” *Journal of Negro Education* 46 (Winter 1977): 77.

saw the systemic, pervasive negative connotations of blackness to be the result of pre-earth life consequences—explained in Mormon theology—and characterized societal mistreatment as worse than anything the LDS Church could do to African Americans by restricting priesthood privileges. “If you say this Church is unjust in not allowing the Negro to bear the Priesthood, you must, to be consistent, likewise say that God is even more unjust in giving him a black skin.”<sup>39</sup> Stewart’s logic followed that God should bear more blame for how blacks were treated (as He was the one who put their spirits in black bodies) than the LDS Church for restricting their access to priesthood rights and temple blessings.

In the conclusion of *Mormonism and the Negro*, Stewart encapsulated LDS race doctrine in eight clear points. After summarizing LDS racial theology and position on “Negroes” in points one through five, Stewart warned readers in his sixth point of the resulting dangers of interracial marriage: although “[t]here is nothing in Church policy that forbids nor discourages us from extending brotherly Christian love to the Negro...[that] does not and should not include intermarriage, for we would bring upon our children the curse of Cain, or rather, we would bring unto ourselves children from those spirits destined to be the seed of Cain.”<sup>40</sup> Mormonism’s fear of interracial marriage went above and beyond that found nationally because it would supposedly bring children of Cain into an otherwise “clean” and “untainted” theological family line. “Cursed” boys would become men who would be ineligible for any priesthood office, regardless of how righteous and worthy they were. Black men and women were barred from LDS temples

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<sup>39</sup> Stewart, *Mormonism and the Negro*, 48.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

to participate in ordinances which Latter-day Saints believe secure one's exaltation, denied the chance of serving proselyting missions, and the opportunity of being eternally sealed to their spouses.<sup>41</sup> In almost every sense, having black family members would make it theologically and hence practically impossible to continue family traditions, perpetuate Mormon culture, and participate fully in LDS religious activity. Building on existing social stigma and white opposition to interracial marriage in American society as a whole, Stewart added the theological threat that interracial marriage would bring children of the murderous and evil Cain into close familial proximity, an act loaded with extreme eternal consequences.

Stewart was just one among many Mormon speaking out against interracial dating. While his writings did not have the same legitimacy as an LDS apostle's, Stewart's views were broadly representative of those of Church leaders. In an infamous speech delivered at an education conference at Brigham Young University in 1954, LDS Church apostle Mark E. Peterson reminded his audience what was at stake if interracial marriage became accepted and widespread:

Now what is our policy in regard to inter-marriage? As to the Negro, of course, there is only one possible answer. We must not inter-marry with the Negro. Why? If I were to marry a Negro woman and have children by her, my children would all be cursed as to the priesthood. Do I want my children cursed as to the priesthood? If there is one drop of Negro blood in my children, as I have read to you, they receive the curse. There isn't any argument, therefore, as to inter-marriage with the Negro, is there? There are 50 million Negroes in the United States. If they were to achieve complete absorption with the white race, think what that would do. With 50 million Negroes inter-married with us, where would

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<sup>41</sup> Even though women in the LDS Church cannot be ordained to the priesthood, they can participate in temple ordinances in other ways. Women who were black, however, were disqualified from receiving temple covenants, and thus were ineligible to serve proselyting missions. Mormons believe that marriages that are solemnized in LDS temples are eternal sealings, and that those kinds of unions are binding in this and after death.

the priesthood be? Who could hold it, in all America? Think what that would do to the work of the church!<sup>42</sup>

According to Peterson, black assimilation into the white race by way of interracial marriage would result in a cursed, racially-mixed society whose members would be ineligible for full Church participation. Thus, LDS teachings added another layer of resistance to interracial marriage as Mormons feared the divine ramifications of creating and having more descendants of Cain on Earth.

While Stewart was trying to clarify and defend LDS racism in *Mormonism and the Negro*, other religious groups in the area were looking for productive solutions to racial inequality on campus. A close reading of news reports shows that the local LDS constituency largely sat on the sidelines in the movement for racial equality at USU. The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that it was the Unitarian Fellowship on campus that sought a meeting with the administration to ask for clarification of USU's racial policy.<sup>43</sup> Another article indicated that "a student movement aimed at doing away with race prejudice in the area is gaining momentum" and that "over 70 students met at the Unitarian Fellowship Seminar." Interested faculty members also participated. Because of all of the attention the meeting attracted, the advisor of the Unitarian Fellowship wrote a letter to the editor of *Student Life* to clarify the purpose of this racial discussion group: "In view of the publicity given to the Logan Unitarian Fellowship in connection with recent racial tensions on the campus it is felt that a statement explaining the stand of this organization

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<sup>42</sup> Mark E. Peterson, "Race Problems—As They Affect the Church," folder 1, ms 0376, Mark E. Petersen Papers, 1954, Special Collections, University of Utah.

<sup>43</sup> "Says Racial Dating 'Very Unwise,'" *Salt Lake Tribune*, 4 February 1961.

is in order. . . . Unitarians believe that only through free inquiry and thorough discussion can social problems be dealt with constructively.” The Unitarian Fellowship believed that “we surely have a responsibility to make [USU students of other races, ethnicities, and nationalities] feel wanted and accepted. Only by dealing with these problems openly, and in the democratic tradition, can we build a sound foundation for the future.”<sup>44</sup>

Alongside the Unitarian Fellowship, the Lutheran Student Fellowship also concerned itself with improving student relations and helping minorities find equal treatment at USU. Karl Smith, president of the Lutheran Student Fellowship and chairman of the American Student–Foreign Student Relations Committee, wanted international students to experience a greater welcome than that currently offered by the community.<sup>45</sup> This committee— also referred to as the International–American Student Relations Committee— travelled to Salt Lake City to hear Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. give an address at the University of Utah on 31 January. John Cannon, student body president, appreciated Dr. King’s “moderate” activist approach in his report in *Student Life*: “We need more men like Dr. King. We need to mellow our attitudes towards others. This moderate, understanding will produce results if used with wisdom.”<sup>46</sup>

The Unitarian and Lutheran Fellowships’ approach of creating open forums for racial dialogue and their eagerness to welcome and promote equality for minorities on campus was a far cry from contemporary action taken by Ernest L. Wilkinson, president of Brigham Young University. When one of his subordinates hired a black professor to teach a summer course in 1960, Wilkinson reversed this action stating, “I wish we could

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<sup>44</sup> Bruce O. Watkins, “Fellowship Explained,” *Student Life*, 31 January 1961.

<sup>45</sup> “Senate Hears Committee Plan for Better Student Relations,” *Student Life*, 27 January 1961.

<sup>46</sup> John Cannon, “Recent Events Aim Toward Better Relations,” *Student Life*, 3 February 1961.

take him on our faculty, but the danger in doing so is that students and others take license from this, and assume that there is nothing improper about mingling with the other races. Since the Lord, himself, created the different races and urged in the Old Testament and other places that they be kept distinct and to themselves, we have to follow that admonition.”<sup>47</sup> Wilkinson’s action speaks to the nearly impermeable racial boundaries erected and maintained within predominantly Mormon communities in Utah (including Logan and USU) during the mid-twentieth century.

USU basketball player Darnel Haney experienced a lack of acceptance by the Logan and USU campus community firsthand. As a black man from Phoenix, he found acceptance in groups of other non-LDS out-of-state students: “USU had a lot of kids from New York who came in for the theater programs. So I had a lot of friends in that area and . . . from out of state who were [also] dealing with the community and being kind of ousted too. If you weren’t LDS, you were not basically accepted.”<sup>48</sup>

Underscoring Haney’s view of LDS exclusion, Peter Bunting, a USU transfer student from George Washington University (GWU), compared the two campus environments in a letter to *Student Life*. Bunting claimed that a GWU student would “make an earnest effort to understand those around him,” something he “found lacking in many of the people in Utah, particularly those persons of the LDS Church.” Bunting went on to say that “until these people are willing to give their time, and possibly money, in an earnest effort to understand, tolerate, and work with the people outside their own minute sphere, that the closed-mindedness and prejudices that are now present will continue and

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<sup>47</sup> Wilkinson quoted in Prince and Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism*, 65.

<sup>48</sup> “Haney Interview.”

will be a constant hinderance [*sic*] in the social maturing of the persons having them.”<sup>49</sup> As observers of LDS culture and its interaction with minorities and non-Mormons, Haney and Bunting’s voices illustrate how the predominance of LDS students on campus and in the community affected minorities and racial experiences at USU and in Utah.

Even President Chase slowly came to the realization that Mormon theological prejudice contributed to racial inequality in Logan. However, Chase continued to rationalize this situation stating, “Mormons’ concept of one group’s being superior to another” was somehow parallel to ancient Greeks, Judaism, and Japanese Shintoism, cultural groups who also drew racial lines to establish their superiority. “This is not a Logan problem,” Chase went on to say, “isolated from the rest of the world as some would make it. We are talking about world problems.”<sup>50</sup> By Chase’s account, “Mormons” and the “Logan” population were interchangeable and, for all intents and purposes, synonymous. When Chase compared Mormonism to historic cultures, it was an attempt to justify the apparent ancient and modern impulse of social stratification. For Chase, the blame for the unequal treatment of African Americans on campus rested in human nature and not on the local community.

Professor John Stewart thought he was performing a service to the USU community by writing *Mormonism and the Negro*, but two of his colleagues thought otherwise. After word about the book spread, professors J. Golden Taylor and T.W. Daniel wrote letters of complaint to the university’s Committee on Professional Relationships and Faculty Welfare. On 13 January 1961, Taylor and Daniel formally

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<sup>49</sup> Peter Bunting, “Removed: Ignorance,” *Student Life*, 24 February 1961.

<sup>50</sup> Untitled note, 21 January 1961, Chase Papers.



requested that Stewart be censured for the use of his university title and position on the book's title page, an action that they argued implied the university's sanction for content that they "violently opposed."<sup>51</sup> Stewart's response to this committee, and to the views of his critical colleagues, reveals his ambivalence towards black students on campus and their response to the racialized theology and rhetoric in the book. His response also shows how he, like Chase, conflated the campus community and members of the LDS faith.

As the author of several works of Mormon scholarship, Stewart wrote: "It is my belief that not only this book [*Mormonism and the Negro*] but the others as well . . . are a credit to the University, among a large portion of its constituency—to its major public." Although Stewart wanted whites and non-whites, Mormons and non-Mormons alike to have a better understanding of LDS race doctrine, it was the LDS community, USU's "major public," who stood to gain from an acceptance of his book and the doctrine it defended. "Is not the University's welfare inseparably connected with the goodwill and support of its constituents, the majority of whom are members of the LDS faith and practically all of whom are Christians? And is not this goodwill and support dependent, in turn, upon the University's properly serving that constituency and showing a proper respect for its feelings and convictions?" Stewart asked. The value of *Mormonism and the Negro* to USU Latter-day Saints, in Stewart's own words, was the reassurance that no "member need feel any shame, apology or embarrassment" about any LDS doctrine. Many LDS members "feel ill at ease or critical" of Church doctrine concerning blacks,

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<sup>51</sup> Annette Peterson, Secretary, Professional Relations and Faculty Welfare Committee, to Chase, "Departmental Memorandum," 25 April 1961, Chase Papers.

but if this doctrine was properly understood, Stewart argued, members “would not feel critical of it.” While he certainly had his own name and reputation as a Mormon scholar to uphold, Stewart defended his work in terms of how it would assuage the collective conscience of Latter-day Saints and the USU majority within the context of progressive and changing ideas of racial equality and civil rights.<sup>52</sup>

While the USU majority likely appreciated a clarification and reiteration of Mormon race doctrine, there was also a vocal minority who joined professors Taylor and Daniel in their criticism. Stewart’s explanation of Mormonism’s theological prejudice against blacks prompted several people to write letters to the editor of *Student Life* that both affirmed and questioned the tenants of *Mormonism and the Negro*. Dr. Jack R. Spence, a professor at USU, wrote that Stewart’s book should be regarded as just one author’s opinion and not official Church doctrine. However, Spence went on to write that he was “completely opposed” to Mormon race restrictions because “in practice it does seem to give some religious support (mainly due to personal interpretations) to discrimination, and as such is morally unacceptable.” In the same issue, another writer likened Mormon ideology to authoritarian rule in Communist China:

We have something of a parallel to face close at home. The book *Mormonism and the Negro* is written from an authoritarian point of view. It condemns all members of the LDS Church who do not hold to the ideas in the book. . . . I hope hundreds of thousands of Mormon people, who reject a doctrine which is so un-Christian, so un-democratic, so un-American, and so unreasonable and so contrary to all the light thrown upon the nature of man and the universe that mankind has been able to accumulate since honest science began to operate in the western world. If we have to hate, let’s hate harmful ideologies and not people.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> John Stewart to Committee on Professional Relations and Faculty Welfare, 23 January 1961, 6, 1 and Stewart, *Mormonism and the Negro*, 7.

<sup>53</sup> Jack R. Spence, “Book Examined” and George Meyer, “Reasoning Not Clear,” both “Book Criticism Given,” *Student Life*, 10 February 1961.

Hoping to clarify the “Mormon viewpoint,” Paul Griffin (presumably a student at USU) responded to Spence’s comments with his own letter to the editor. While he agreed with Spence that blacks should not be denied the rights of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” Griffin affirmed that Stewart’s thesis was supported by official Church doctrine. Griffin also spoke to the experience of LDS students encountering criticism of Mormon theology from faculty on campus, something he thought was inappropriate in an institution of higher learning: “I did not come to Utah State to defend my religion against some instructors on campus who preach atheism. . . . I do not go into a classroom to have the instructor call my religion trash, or to hear Jesus Christ compared with Hitler. . . . No instructor has the right to raise false contention against any group, for this represents in my mind, bigotry and prejudice no different than that to which many have already objected.” Griffin argued that USU should not be a place where the privilege that Mormonism enjoyed should be questioned. His conservative response resonated with Garff’s letter to Chase, wherein Garff claimed that the pendulum had swung too far, infringing on the rights and privileges of the state’s white majority.<sup>54</sup>

The 1960–1961 school year at Utah State University provides fruitful grounds to examine Utah’s twentieth-century racial history. Unanticipated debate ensued in the aftermath of university president Daryl Chase’s meeting with black students in January 1961. Interested persons on both sides of racial politics questioned the university’s racial policy. USU administration cited a policy of dealing with students and not race, and yet

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<sup>54</sup> Paul Griffin, “Doctrine Defended,” *Student Life*, 14 February 1961.

responded by placing the responsibility of handling such issues on the few male black students who were already precariously navigating the community's racial sensitivities. While the university recruited black athletes to improve its competitive edge against other athletic programs, President Chase considered restricting scholarships available for black student athletes on the basketball team as a way of protecting USU's racial image and non-professional sports status. The simultaneous arrival of Stewart's *Mormonism and the Negro* and its attendant dialogue and backlash was opined a "fiasco" by USU administrators confronting racial inequality on campus for the first time.<sup>55</sup> *Mormonism and the Negro* prompted interesting discussions of what kind of academic and religious freedom should be offered to faculty and students of the LDS faith on a secular campus within the predominantly LDS setting of Logan and Cache County, Utah. This episode ultimately sheds light on the ways that Mormon race doctrine, combined with white hegemonic prejudice and conservatism, informed some of the resistance to racial progress in mid-twentieth century Utah. Mormon theological prejudice and the social and political culture it created were active participants in the public and secular world of race relations at Utah State University.

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<sup>55</sup> M. R. Merrill to Chase, 21 January 1961, Chase Papers.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE LDS CHURCH, THE NAACP, AND CIVIL RIGHTS IN UTAH

There never was a time when the world, and, particularly the United States, had greater need for new ideas. This need is critical. What is uncertain is whether the changes ahead will be unanticipated and catastrophic or intelligently foreseen, prepared for, and directed. What is to be regretted, therefore, is not that the local culture is geared to preserve its theology, but that in being so geared it is incapacitated to contribute needed new insights and conceptions bearing upon national policy and action. Moreover, it is likewise incapacitated to support new insights from wheresoever they may come; and this is also regrettable.<sup>1</sup>

Utah was not an exception to the twentieth-century practice of discrimination in housing and employment, segregation in public accommodations and movie theaters, and enforcement of miscegenation laws that triggered the U.S. civil rights movement. When Roy Jefferson, an African American and standout wide receiver for the University of Utah, came back from playing in a 1965 postseason bowl game, he found it impossible to rent an apartment for his wife and eleven-month-old son close to campus. According to a speech he delivered to reporters at a demonstration in Salt Lake City, Jefferson searched for an apartment for two weeks only to face managers who made multiple excuses for why they would not grant him a lease. Jefferson shared this experience with a group of protesters rallying on the steps of the LDS Church Office Building in response to LDS Church second counselor N. Eldon Tanner's statement that "he knew of no incident where Negroes have had housing problems in Salt Lake City."<sup>2</sup> Jefferson's experience with racist housing practices in Salt Lake City in 1965 demonstrates that even high profile African Americans—including well known black figures and entertainers such as

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<sup>1</sup> Waldemer P. Read, "What Freedom is Found in the Local Culture, 1962," mss sc 2321, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University

<sup>2</sup> "Star Athlete Bares Testimony; Utah Discrimination Exposed," *University of Utah Daily Utah Chronicle*, 10 March 1965.

Paul Robeson, Harry Belafonte, Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, Lionel Hampton, and NAACP president Roy Wilkins— encountered racial discrimination firsthand in Utah.<sup>3</sup>

Jefferson's account of dealing with racist housing practices in Salt Lake and the setting at which he shared his story is representative of two aspects of the black experience in Utah. First, Jim Crow segregation in Utah only sometimes reared its ugly head overtly; racially discriminatory practices in housing, public accommodations, and employment were rarely formally pronounced, and yet powerfully shaped black life in Utah. Second, strategies to combat racial discrimination in Utah included petitioning the LDS Church to support civil antidiscrimination legislation while also criticizing Church leaders for their part in creating a local environment hostile to the advancement of black civil rights. The same article that featured Roy Jefferson's story quoted John Driver, president of the local NAACP chapter, with the following statement: "No one questions the right of the LDS Church to hold this doctrine [of race restrictions within the religion], but positive steps need to be taken (by the Church) to counter the effect in civil life of its doctrine of exclusion."<sup>4</sup> Scholars may debate the relative strength of the correlation between Mormon race doctrines and civil policy, but the two are inseparably woven into the story of civil rights in Utah.

During the 1960s the LDS Church, the state's most powerful institution, became a political target of the NAACP and other advocates of black civil rights. A few Mormons

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<sup>3</sup> F. Ross Peterson, "'Blindside': Utah on the Eve of *Brown v. Board of Education*," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 73 (Winter 2004): 5 and Roy Wilkins and Tom Matthews, *Standing Fast: The Autobiography of Roy Wilkins* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1994), 171–2. Roy Wilkins vowed never to listen to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir again after he tried to find housing accommodations on a road trip through Utah on his way to California. Wilkins also said that "I would have taken the lowest-life Nevada gambler over a Mormon bishop any day."

<sup>4</sup> "Star Athlete Bares Testimony."

concerned with racial equality also challenged the LDS Church from within by petitioning the Church and speaking out against its racist practices. Therefore, LDS Church leadership was challenged in both religious and civic contexts by individuals inside and outside the Church for failing to support minority civil rights and for denying religious privileges to black members of the Church. Histories of the civil rights movement in the South—the major frontline of the black freedom struggle— focus on collective action, economic pressure, non-violent protests, voting rights campaigns, and activism by youth and college students. However, events during the civil rights movement era in Utah unfolded differently. The small size of the black community in Utah partly explains that difference, but the major contributing factor was the oversized presence of Mormonism in Utah and the institutional structure of the LDS Church.

The predominance of Mormons and the powerful influence of the LDS Church in the state's sociopolitical arena is a uniquely Utah variable that sets this mid-twentieth century study of civil rights history apart from others. While the previous chapter detailed how Mormon culture and theology profoundly influenced racial encounters on Utah State University's campus in 1961, this chapter will demonstrate how Mormon theology and culture informed the sociopolitical landscape that black and minority civil rights legislation had to traverse in Utah. One might argue that prevailing national white hegemony and racial conservatism found throughout the nation expressed itself through the LDS faith and culture, but as I will demonstrate, the story of civil rights history in Utah is an unparalleled variant because of the force LDS racial constructs had in this secular story. This historical anomaly is the product of a rare environment created when an institution—in this case the LDS Church and the culture of its subscription base—is

able to exert, through theology, an overwhelming influence on the racial norms and politics of the state.<sup>5</sup> This chapter will detail how a few concerned and politically active individuals squared off against LDS Church leaders from the local level up to the First Presidency in order to demonstrate the strength of LDS culture in determining the narrative of the civil rights movement in Utah, culminating in that moment when the LDS Church finally admitted blacks into the priesthood and temple as full members. Even non-LDS blacks heralded the priesthood revelation as a victory and a sign of secular state civil rights progress in Utah.

Analysis of mid-twentieth century Utah state politics reveals that the political culture was not a one sided party affair, but that overall the state moved “markedly toward a preference for conservatism.” Authors Wayne K. Hinton and Stephen Roberds argue that this shift was partially due to Church leader warnings about the threat of communism during the 1950s period of McCarthyism in national politics. In fact, LDS Church leaders “strengthened the state’s conservative nature” by speaking out against communism and by creating Church policy on other supposed moral issues throughout the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> Hinton and Roberds also assert that because Mormonism sanctioned black inferiority, at the very least it created a neoconservative population in Utah— neoconservatives who “generally voice abhorrence of prejudice and

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<sup>5</sup> One symptom of this skewed power distribution in Utah state politics is that as late as 1990, over ninety percent of Utah’s state officeholders and legislative body were LDS while the population of Mormons in Utah was only about seventy percent (active membership in Utah is lower than that, but the LDS Church does not provide those statistics). Statistics also show that Mormons vote in higher percentages than their non-member neighbors. Wayne K. Hinton and Stephen Roberds, “Public Opinion, Culture, and Religion in Utah,” in *Utah in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Brian Q. Cannon and Jessie L. Embry, (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2009), 240 and Matt Canham, “Utah Less Mormon than Ever,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 18 November 2007, [http://archive.sltrib.com/story.php?ref=/ci\\_7496034](http://archive.sltrib.com/story.php?ref=/ci_7496034).

<sup>6</sup> Hinton and Roberds, “Public Opinion, Culture, and Religion in Utah,” 242.



discrimination while opposing government initiatives based on race or ethnicity such as hate crimes.” While some LDS Church leaders expressed explicit racist tendencies privately or in unofficial comments, official Church statements concerning race and civil rights fell within the public boundaries of neoconservative politics. In other words, neoconservative statements and policy made by Church leaders were not friendly to the movement that aimed to end racial discrimination in Utah. As such, the LDS Church became the main face of the opposition for many African Americans as well as white Mormon advocates of black rights because Church policy greatly affected both groups.<sup>7</sup>

Historian Max Perry Mueller has examined protest at Temple Square—the ten-acre campus in downtown Salt Lake City that serves as the LDS Church’s headquarters—during the civil rights era in Utah. He argued that civil rights protestors utilized Temple Square as a secular town square and a civic space while it also served as a sacred space for Mormonism: “Because it is the literal and symbolic focal point for the region’s most powerful cultural and political institution, Temple Square—rather than the grounds of the Utah State Capitol or those of Salt Lake’s City-County Building—has been the most popular place to carry out protests, even protests in which religion is not directly

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<sup>7</sup> A comprehensive list of racist comments made by twentieth-century LDS church leaders would be too long to detail in this footnote, but examples include apostle Mark E. Peterson’s 1954 address at BYU wherein he condemned the civil rights movement as a ploy for African Americans to subvert the white race and the work of the Church through interracial marriage; President David O. McKay’s explicit disappointment with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; President Joseph Fielding Smith referring to blacks as “darkies;” and President Harold B. Lee’s commission of BYU President Ernest L. Wilkinson to prevent any black students from becoming engaged to white women. Official statements issued by Church leaders in 1963 and 1969 lightly condemn racism, weakly support civil rights, but still sanctioned race restrictions on priesthood and temple privileges for peoples of African descent.

implicated.”<sup>8</sup> Protesters consciously chose the capitol of Mormonism for civil rights activism in Utah because of its stature as the political and cultural center of the state.

Mueller’s insights involving Temple Square and civil rights protest underscore the notion that the LDS Church and Mormonism cannot be divorced from the civil rights narrative in Utah. Even in cases where LDS Church policy or doctrine was not necessarily the target of picketing or protest, protestors specifically identified LDS property as the site of political power in the state. It indicates what civil rights groups saw as the inherent obstacle preventing full racial equality in Utah. Ultimately, civil rights protesters knew that they had to get the Church’s attention and garner LDS support if they wanted to expand state legal protection of secular civil rights. Mueller’s work implicitly calls for more examination of black oral histories and sources from political figures and activists who were cognizant of how LDS racism affected civil rights in Utah and who found themselves protesting on Church grounds for legal remedies in the Beehive state.

Part of the difficulty that African Americans—particularly black Mormons—faced in mid-twentieth century Utah stemmed from their inability to fully assimilate into Mormon culture per the priesthood ban. And because the black population never constituted more than one half of one percent of the total population, African Americans did not have the demographic or economic influence to force such change.<sup>9</sup> This is not to

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<sup>8</sup> Max Perry Mueller, “The Pageantry of Protest in Temple Square,” in *Out of Obscurity: Mormonism since 1945*, ed. Patrick Q. Mason and John G. Turner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 126.

<sup>9</sup> Stanford University economics professor Gavin Wright argued that the civil rights movement created drastic economic change. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 and overall enfranchisement of black voters “almost immediately ended the extreme racist rhetoric that until that time had been the hallmark of southern politics. The economic value of this change is in my view inestimable, in both senses of that word.” “The Civil Rights Revolution as Economic History,” *Journal of Economic History* 59 (June 1999): 274.

say that black Utahns and the civic organizations that they supported—such as the NAACP, the Utah Non-Violent Action Committee, and the Citizens Committee for Constitutional Rights—were necessarily predestined for failure. But much like the situation in the South where African Americans were unable to hold racist politicians accountable until they regained voting rights, black Utahns (within and outside of Mormon culture) were without a source of power or representation that could force the LDS Church to change policy and the rhetoric used by Church leaders.<sup>10</sup>

In cases where black Utahns were Church members, they could still be excluded from full participation in Mormon activities because they were black. Jake Green, an African American and former Mormon, related to interviewers in 1971 that some of his family members were among the few black Mormons in Utah. According to Green, his grandfather joined the Church at age twelve and became the first African American to finish high school in Utah. “I remember going to theatres with my parents and having to sit in the balconies, never being allowed to go in white cafes to have anything to eat, and this was followed up until 1962,” Green recalled. Even though Green was a Mormon, he could not fully participate with his fellow Saints. “At the time Wasatch Springs was still a public pool; however, there was discrimination. You couldn’t swim. The Mutual class went swimming, and being a Mormon in the Mutual class, I went with them. While I ended up sitting on the balcony, the rest of the class swam, and that was the end of that.

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<sup>10</sup> During the 1960s, David O. McKay and other Church leaders made repeated attempts to begin missionary work in Africa outside of white South African communities. Church leaders were concerned that their efforts would not be sustainable there, given black members’ ineligibility for priesthood leadership callings and that missionary work among black Africans might force the Church to extend priesthood privileges to them. This story is outlined extensively in Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, “Blacks, Civil Rights, and the Priesthood,” in *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 60–105).

Since then I have professed to be of no religion.” In other words, being a part of the predominant LDS faith did not offer black Utahns any civil advantages during the mid-twentieth century: their black identity and status as a racial minority held greater weight than their membership in the religious majority.<sup>11</sup>

By 1962 the national civil rights movement was in full swing. Sit-ins to integrate “whites only” lunch counters quickly spread to fifty-four cities and nine states after four African American college students started the movement on 1 February 1960 in Greensboro, North Carolina.<sup>12</sup> Freedom Riders made their appearance in 1961 in order to test new legislation desegregating interstate buses. As Wayne Garff, told USU President Chase in 1961, “Many of us feel that the pendulum has swung too far too quickly in permitting our colored associates to have unusual privileges because of a rabid minority.” By 1962, conservative Utahns had become aware of this vocal minority movement and it made them feel threatened and uncomfortable—that demands for racial equity threatened the security of state and national laws as well as the individual rights and privilege of white citizens.<sup>13</sup>

Waldemer P. Read, a philosophy professor at the University of Utah, was one of the educated elite convinced that ending racial discrimination in Utah was not going to be easy given the strong conservative political base of citizens like Garff. On 4 April 1962, Read presented a paper titled “What Freedom is found in the Local Culture” for the

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<sup>11</sup> Jake Green, interview with Beverly Eichwald and John Barton, 1 December 1971, folder 8, box 1, African American Oral History Project, 1971–1973, Special Collections, University of Utah (hereafter interviewee name, date, folder, box, AAOHP).

<sup>12</sup> Robert A. Pratt, review of *February One: The Story of the Greensboro Four* in *Journal of American History* (December 2005): 1110–11.

<sup>13</sup> Wayne B. Garff to Chase, 6 February 1961, Chase Papers.

“Great Issues Forum” held at the University of Utah. Read, himself a Mormon, was critical of the Mormon influence in Utah’s political affairs and the way that Mormon culture suppressed ideological freedom in the state. After criticizing Utah’s “antiquated doctrinaire economic conservatism” and its “built-in isolationism” which prevented its participation in establishing world peace, Read argued that “built-in racial prejudice” was another ideological hindrance produced by the local culture. According to Read, “No problem is more critical for our future than the racial problem.” While Read desperately wanted Utah to be part of the creation of new ideas and national policy actions to improve society, he argued that local Utah culture was incapacitated by its instinctive desire to preserve the primary theology of its electorate. “One could wish that our contribution to the solution of the urgent problems that now face us and that lie still unseen in the future could be something more than ‘foot-dragging,’ but such would require a quality of inner freedom that we do not have, and that we’re not about to develop.”<sup>14</sup>

Professor Read’s 1962 remarks speak to the unique religious environment in the state that affected the state’s civil rights trajectory. But Read did not want to just talk about Utah’s racial issues, he had a record of pursuing real solutions by working with civic organizations. Read was a two-time president of The Council for Civic Unity (CCU), a group founded in 1947 and active until the late-1950s. As president and participant of the CCU, Read encountered similarly progressive peers from Salt Lake City, Ogden, and Provo, each with informed concerns about racial discrimination, each equally determined to find solutions. CCU members, many of whom were university

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<sup>14</sup> Read, “What Freedom is found in the Local Culture, 1962,” 14.

professors and highly-skilled professionals, united in the “belie[f] in the right of all persons regardless of race or religion to equal participation in the life of this democracy,” and in a commitment to inquire “into the employment problems of Salt Lake’s residents of minority ancestry” and the “injustices in recreation and education.” In 1947 and 1949, the CCU lobbied the Utah legislature in hopes of passing civil rights legislation, but without success. The CCU also tried to improve access to recreational facilities, particularly public swimming pools, for African Americans.<sup>15</sup>

In 1963, the Utah state legislature finally repealed the miscegenation law that first appeared in 1888 and was reaffirmed by the legislature as late as 1953. Second only to Wyoming, Utah was the last state outside the South to repeal its miscegenation laws. Just four years later the Supreme Court ruled against all state miscegenation laws in *Loving v. Virginia* (1967). In contrast to the Southern states, Utah and other Western states did not have large populations of African Americans that state legislatures wanted to control through Jim Crow laws. Put simply, Utah’s miscegenation laws were not created to segregate large black populations or out of fear of increased incidents of interracial sex and marriage, but for the principle of white supremacy. Because the Utah legislature voted to strengthen the original 1888 law with an amendment in 1953 that tightened the restrictions on who could marry, historian Patrick Q. Mason argued that this new miscegenation law “revealed existing public sentiments about racial distinctiveness and white superiority and then codified those sentiments into law, thus hardening racial

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<sup>15</sup> Margaret Judy Maag, “Discrimination against the Negro in Utah and Institutional Efforts to Eliminate It,” (master’s thesis, University of Utah, 1971), 72–3.

hierarchy and reinforcing the attitudes that originally inspired discriminatory legislation.”<sup>16</sup>

That Utah legislative bodies held onto miscegenation laws longer than almost every other state outside the South speaks volumes about racial attitudes in Utah. While LDS teachings and statements from Church leaders about interracial marriage cannot bear sole blame for these laws, the presence of a discriminatory LDS theology certainly bolstered them. LDS cultural support is evidenced by one of the few dissenting voices against the 1963 miscegenation repeal. The *Ogden Standard-Examiner* reported that state representative J. McKinnon Smith said “persons of dark-skinned races were accepted as equals in schools, in sporting events and at hotels and motels. ‘Really there is no problem. But in a discussion of allowing marriages between blacks and whites there is a goal of minority people that the only way to take care of this problem is by inter-marriage.’ Smith said he didn’t want his children or grandchildren to lose their heritage.”<sup>17</sup> All evidence suggests that African Americans and other minorities were *not* accepted as equals in Utah as evidenced by legislative proposals over the next several years to remedy racial disparities in employment and access to public accommodations. But the most striking part of Smith’s remarks concern his perception of the threat of interracial marriage to his children and grandchildren’s theological inheritance. By officially recognizing the marriages of interracial couples, this Utah law actually

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<sup>16</sup> Patrick Q. Mason, “The Prohibition of Interracial Marriage in Utah, 1888–1963,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 76 (Spring 2008): 128.

<sup>17</sup> “Utah,” *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, 14 March 1963. During his research on the subject, Patrick Q. Mason listened to the legislative debates during his research and he quoted Smith as saying, “I would not want to sell my heritage or the heritage of any of my posterity and have grandchildren or great-grandchildren who would not be entitled to the blessings and privileges that you are entitled to.” Smith’s comments were aimed at the seemingly homogenous House floor audience made up of Mormons who would have understood what theological blessings Smith referred to.

protected the potential secular inheritance of his children and grandchildren in case any of them entered an interracial marriage because it made that espousal a legal union.<sup>18</sup>

The only inheritance that Smith feared his posterity might lose is the eternal and celestial one Church leaders promised would be redacted if any Latter-day Saint married a person of African descent. This was no trivial matter. In a speech on 8 March 1863, Brigham Young stated: “Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so.”<sup>19</sup> After Young’s death, Church leaders decided in 1897 that temple privileges would be withheld from any individual (and for males, priesthood eligibility would also be revoked) married to a black person. Darius Gray, one of the few black Mormons to attend BYU in the 1960s and a founding member of the LDS Church-sanctioned support group for black members called the Genesis Group, commented on the LDS reaction to interracial relationships in 1971. From his own experience of being in an interracial relationship, some Mormons were likely to say ““That girl has lost all of her blessings, and she’s going to be eternally cursed, and she doesn’t know it yet. She should have died on the spot.””<sup>20</sup> Needless to say, LDS history and teachings rejected interracial relationships on a theological basis because of the eternal consequences it implied.

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<sup>18</sup> According to Albert Fritz, one of the largest interest groups in favor of the bill were white American–Japanese couples, the result of American GIs stationed in Japan after WWII. Albert Fritz oral history testimony, 15, folder 7, box 2, Interviews with Blacks in Utah, 1982–1988, ms 453, Special Collections and Archives, University of Utah.

<sup>19</sup> Young’s position on interracial sex did not necessarily set him apart from other mainstream views. However, Young’s statement and the severity it carried have weight because of Young’s calling as a “prophet, seer, and revelator.” See W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 158.

<sup>20</sup> Darius Gray, 1 December 1972, box 1, folder 7, 37, AAOHP.



The 1963 bill repealed the prohibition against a marriage “between a negro and a white person. Between a Mongolian, member of the malay race or a mulatto, quadroon, or octoroon, and a white person.”<sup>21</sup> This law was about more than just white-black relationships; the state would now recognize white-Asian relationships as well. However, Representative Smith only viewed the 1963 bill through his particular Mormon theological lens. While Utah was not the only state with a conservative political electorate opposed to repealing interracial marriage laws, it was the only state with an opposition that spoke in LDS theological terms of forsaken heavenly inheritance based on priesthood and temple doctrines. While other conservative Christian state legislators might have been opposed to repealing miscegenation laws, the discussion did not revolve around what otherworldly blessings their posterity were entitled to, conditional upon their spouse’s race.

1963 proved a promising yet disappointing year for civil rights causes in Utah, particularly for the NAACP who persistently encouraged LDS leadership to support civil rights legislation. Albert Fritz, president of the Salt Lake City chapter of the NAACP and outspoken activist who sought the betterment of all minorities in Utah, was deeply invested in gathering support for fair employment and public accommodations bills.<sup>22</sup> On Monday, 11 March 1963, the NAACP scheduled a demonstration at the state capitol

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<sup>21</sup> State of Utah House Bill no. 271, 1–2, folder 44, box 32, series 432, Utah State Archives and Records Service (USARS). Available online as part of Utah State Archives Digital Archives. <http://images.archives.utah.gov/cdm/compoundobject/collection/432n/id/48475/rec/1>.

<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, Fritz was “urged” by Republican Utah congressman Sherman P. Lloyd to “use his influence” to get the planners of the upcoming March on Washington to call off the demonstration. Fritz replied to Rep. Lloyd that the proposed march was designed to “indicate to the Congress the unanimity of opinion of all dedicated American citizens, regardless of race or religious belief, in the need for early action on civil rights.” See “Salt Lake NAACP Promises Orderly Capitol March,” *Provo Daily Herald*, 15 July 1963.

building to show their disapproval with the state legislature for failing to enact civil rights legislation.<sup>23</sup> Repealing the miscegenation law a few days later was certainly a step in the right direction in advancing minority civil rights, but changing intermarriage laws was not Fritz's or the NAACP's primary goal: "we [the NAACP] didn't push for it, the Japanese didn't push for it, the blacks definitely didn't push for it—why not? We weren't interested in marriage. We were interested in jobs [and public] accommodation. That's why."<sup>24</sup>

Sometime in 1963, Fritz and Henry Kasai, a very successful and influential Japanese American, were scheduled to meet with LDS President David O. McKay to discuss some of the racially discriminatory practices that concerned them. According to a later interview, Fritz said that the Church administration cancelled their meeting with McKay for reasons they were not privy to, and that they were never able to reschedule the meeting.<sup>25</sup> Fritz and Kasai sought an audience with the Church president because they needed the highest governing body of the Church on their side if they ever expected the state legislature to enact any civil rights protections for minorities.

[t]he reason [we] wanted to go to church heads is because practically all of your state senators and representatives and your legislatures were LDS. . . . But what we wanted was the church heads to persuade them to pass the public accommodation [act]. Because in Provo and in any of these little outlying areas, you couldn't eat in the cafe. You couldn't sleep in a motel . . . . We couldn't bring no pressure. We could persuade them. Ask them. There's no way to bring any pressure. Because you did not have the majority in voting. You could not persuade the majority because they were LDS to vote.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> "NAACP Plans Demonstration at State Capitol," *Provo Daily Herald*, 8 March 1963.

<sup>24</sup> Albert Fritz oral history testimony, 16.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 15. Fritz did not mention the specific date of the cancelled meeting, but contextual clues suggest that it was scheduled in the first two months of 1963, before the miscegenation law was repealed and while the legislature was still in session.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

Unfortunately, the 1963 legislature failed to pass legislation regarding fair employment or public accommodations. Shortly after the end of the legislative session, Fritz stunned his audience at the Provo Exchange Club when he indicted Utah as the “Mississippi of the West,” based on the fact that Utah was trailing other Western states in passing civil rights legislation.<sup>27</sup>

The question and answer portion of Fritz’s address in Provo demonstrates that the NAACP hoped minority rights legislation would force the local culture to finally accept blacks as a part of Utah society, even while it was clear that Utahns were not ready for laws to coerce such contrived local integration. The *Provo Daily Herald* reported that audience member Rue Clegg asked how legislation could potentially change a situation wherein a café owner would rather refuse service to an African American than accept him as a customer because of the anger and resentment it would create among local whites. Fitz “replied that this problem tends to disappear in such states as California where integration is a fact.” Apparently, residents of Provo were not ready to accommodate all races equally.<sup>28</sup>

Tension between NAACP and LDS Church leaders nearly boiled over in October 1963, just before the Church’s semiannual General Conference. Fritz and the Salt Lake NAACP were planning a march to take place during the highly publicized LDS gathering to urge Church leaders to support minority civil rights legislation. Sterling McMurrin— a Mormon intellectual, Commissioner of Education during John F. Kennedy’s presidency, professor of philosophy and later Dean of Graduate Studies at the University of Utah—

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<sup>27</sup> “Utah Called ‘Mississippi of the West,’” *Provo Daily Herald*, 21 March 1963.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

got wind of the NAACP intentions and contacted Fritz to see if he would like an audience with First Presidency counselors N. Eldon Tanner and Hugh B. Brown. At the meeting, Brown declared his intent to issue a statement at the forthcoming conference, and the NAACP agreed to call off the protests. McMurrin helped Brown draft a quick opening statement to be added to the beginning of his scripted address slated for the Sunday morning session.<sup>29</sup> In his statement, Brown made an appeal for “all men everywhere, both within and outside the Church, to commit themselves to the establishment of full civil equality for all of God’s children. Anything less than this defeats our high ideal of the brotherhood of man.” Brown also stated that it was a “moral evil for any persons to deny any human being the right to gainful employment, to full educational opportunity and to every privilege of a citizenship.”<sup>30</sup>

Albert Fritz praised Brown’s statement and was confident that civic organizations such as the NAACP would now be able to work with the Church to overcome the opposition to minority rights in the conservative Utah legislature. “We [at the NAACP] feel this will certainly put Utah in line with other liberal states in the West which have come out in favor of civil rights. We have urged all NAACP members, interested Church groups, civic organizations, labor unions and individuals that have been working toward passage of civil rights legislation to work in harmony with all LDS Church officials and members where it is possible.” The *Daily Herald* cited local NAACP leaders as saying

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<sup>29</sup> McMurrin detailed his involvement with the NAACP and First Presidency in a short note published in 1979, a year after the priesthood ban was nullified. See Sterling M. McMurrin, “A Note on the 1963 Civil Rights Statement,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 12 (Summer 1979): 60–3.

<sup>30</sup> A full transcript of Brown’s statement was reported in the *Salt Lake Tribune*. “Give Full Civil Equality to All, LDS Counselor Brown Asks,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 7 October 1963.

that Brown's statement was "a significant first step in helping to solve the problems of race relations here in Utah and across the nation."<sup>31</sup>

The exchange between the NAACP and the First Presidency, and the NAACP's post-General Conference reaction to Brown's statement, reveals that there was a perceived correlation between LDS Church leader approval and a potential increase in minority civil rights; the latter might finally pass after the former affirmed the rights of all men and women. Fritz and other members of the NAACP knew that future public accommodations and fair employment bills would be successful only if the LDS Church were to sanction such legislation. According to Fritz, Brown's statement was a "major victory for minority groups in Utah." The NAACP was still interested in gaining the unequivocal support of Governor George D. Clyde, but having an LDS Church leader on record seemed to be a greater triumph (at the time) than the setback sustained by not having the governor's full support.<sup>32</sup> Still, in the weeks and months that followed Fritz and the NAACP took Governor Clyde to task for his failure to fully represent the interests of Utah's minority groups.<sup>33</sup>

Although Brown's statement held potential for the start of a better relationship between the LDS Church and civil rights groups, it did little to improve the situation of Utah minorities initially and did not change LDS culture overnight. Technically, Brown's statement was not an official First Presidency announcement or policy. Brown took it upon himself to answer the NAACP's call for a statement and although Brown had the

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<sup>31</sup> "Negro Group Lauds LDS Rights View," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 7 October 1963.

<sup>32</sup> Albert Fritz stated that Governor Clyde had "failed to come out publically in favor of civil rights legislation." See "Negro Group Lauds LDS Rights View."

<sup>33</sup> Duston Harvey, "Church Issues Statement on Civil Rights," *Provo Daily Herald*, 7 October 1963 and "S.L. Negro Leader Hits Clyde on Civil Rights," *Provo Daily Herald*, 5 December 1963.

approval of President McKay and second counselor N. Eldon Tanner, it did not contain their signatures, and therefore did not bear the imprimatur of official doctrine.<sup>34</sup> In the end, Brown's statement proved an empty promise. Two years later the Salt Lake NAACP was still searching for LDS Church support for civil rights legislation, particularly during the 1965 legislative session. Only after the NAACP again pressured the First Presidency by organizing protests in front of the Church Office Building in Temple Square over the lack of Church support for state civil rights bills did President McKay and the First Presidency finally elevate Brown's 1963 conference address to official status in 1965. The demonstrators disbanded two days after that official statement.<sup>35</sup>

On 21 October 1963, President Hugh B. Brown disclosed—in private correspondence with John W. Fitzgerald, a concerned Utah resident and Church member—that his 1963 statement was only intended to clarify LDS Church support of universal civil rights. Brown, who made no mention of the NAACP, said that he was responding to the misconceptions of the Church's position on this issue held by the media. "We, of course," Brown wrote, "do not take any stand on any bill that may be pending or in anticipation either state or national, but did wish the world to know that we

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<sup>34</sup> Brown's statement also lacked meaningful support from key members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the second-highest governing body of the church, and his statement did not earn him many favors. While conducting one of the sessions of the April 1968 General Conference in 1968, Brown also eulogized Dr. Martin Luther King who had been assassinated just a few days prior. After McKay's death in 1970, Joseph Fielding Smith removed Hugh B. Brown as a counselor in the First Presidency, an act that went against the traditional grain of retaining the previous president's counselors. Brown's grandson Edwin B. Firmage claimed that Joseph Fielding Smith removed his grandfather from the First Presidency because of Brown's liberal stance on racial issues. It is widely known that McKay's successors, Joseph Fielding Smith and Harold B. Lee, were even more conservative on racial issues than McKay and certainly more conservative than Brown. See Gregory and Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism*, 66 and 419, n. 21.

<sup>35</sup> Prince and Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism*, 71.

believe in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.”<sup>36</sup> While Brown’s statement was a seemingly sincere gesture to privately placate the NAACP and prevent public demonstrations, it did not represent a turning point in Church policy concerning Utah civil rights legislation that Fritz and the NAACP so urgently wanted.

Brown later reaffirmed that the First Presidency did not want to support a specific state or national civil rights bill, even after the First Presidency adopted Brown’s 1963 statement as official Church policy in 1965. In another letter to Fitzgerald in 1966, Brown gave insight into why the LDS Church continued to drag its feet on this important issue: “Conditions in the Southern part of the United States, in fact, all over the United States, affecting the Negro are such that for us to take positive action might involve us in controversies to which as yet there seems to be no definite inspired answer.”<sup>37</sup> In spite of a claim to prophetic revelation, LDS Church leaders were unwilling to sanction any specific piece of legislation without a guarantee that civil rights legislation would not have a bad political outcome for the Church or the nation at large in the future.

Thus, the hesitancy of LDS Church leaders to support Utah civil rights legislation stemmed from unsettled fears about the trajectory and final result of the civil rights movement. Fear that the civil rights movement was a façade for communist takeover and radical left politics was not just internally discussed among Church leadership, it was preached from the pulpit. In a 1967 General Conference address, Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles addressed the Church on how the civil rights movement was being used by communist insurrectionists as a medium to destroy

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<sup>36</sup> Hugh B. Brown to John W. Fitzgerald, 21 October 1963, 2, folder 12, box 4, John W. Fitzgerald Papers, mss 102, Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University.

<sup>37</sup> Brown to Fitzgerald, 10 February 1966, folder 12, box 4, Fitzgerald Papers.

American democracy. According to the ultra-conservative Benson, the communist plot involved passing civil rights legislation as a way of increasing the power of the federal government and thus increasing federal control. “Total government is *the* objective of Communism,” Benson stated. “Without calling it by name, [the plan is to] build Communism piece by piece through mass pressures for presidential decrees, court orders, and legislation that appear to be aimed at improving civil rights and other social reforms.”<sup>38</sup> Because Elder Benson had a claim to revelatory authority as an LDS Church apostle, his comparison of the American civil rights movement to the communist takeover of Cuba and China was not just one man’s opinion, but an authoritative take on this political situation. Thus obedient Latter-day Saints were nothing short of commanded to view the ongoing American civil rights struggle as suspicious communist activity. Latter-day Saints were to resist progressive racial policies as vigilant guardians of American liberty.

Even though the 1965 Utah State legislature finally passed civil rights legislation in the form of a public accommodations bill and a fair employment practices bill without the formal sanction of the First Presidency, records show that the legislature respected the LDS Church as a significant interest group. The initial and even final draft of the “Utah Anti-Discrimination Act of 1965,” as it was officially known, exhibits the extent to which the legislature wanted to protect the LDS Church’s interest in employment and in preserving racially discriminatory doctrine. The earlier draft of the bill excluded “religious organizations or associations, religious corporations sole,” as well as “any

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<sup>38</sup> Ezra Taft Benson, untitled address, *Official Report of the One Hundred Thirty-Seventh Semi-Annual General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1967), 37.



corporation or association constituting a wholly-owned subsidiary or agency of any religious organization or association” from the definition of “employer” in the state of Utah.<sup>39</sup> The final draft of the bill simplified this language but still excluded “religious organizations or associations, except such organizations or associations supported in whole or in part by money raised by taxation or public borrowing or by solicitation from the general public.” In other words, if a religious organization— namely the LDS Church— collected funds privately, then that organization would not be liable as an employer to a lawsuit for racial discrimination in employment.

The 1965 legislature’s mission to protect LDS Church interests is further evident in Section 6 (2)(b) of the “Utah Anti-Discrimination Act of 1965” which declares that it is not unlawful

For a school, college, university or other educational institution or institution of learning to hire and employ employees of a particular religion if such school, college, university, or other education institution or institution of learning is, in whole or in substantial part, owned, supported, controlled or managed by a particular religious corporation, association or society, or if the curriculum of such school, college, university or other educational institution of learning is directed toward the propagation of a particular religion.<sup>40</sup>

Clearly, the Utah legislature did not want LDS Church-owned Brigham Young University to be liable for racial discrimination as an employer. Because this legislation categorized BYU as a religious university, the law granted BYU the right to discriminate in how they hired employees as an institution controlled “by a particular religious corporation.” This law also sanctioned discriminatory hiring practices based on the fact

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<sup>39</sup> “1965 Session: Bill 62,” 2, Legislature. House’s Working Bills, 1896–1989, folder 61, box 32, series 432, USARS. <http://images.archives.utah.gov/cdm/compoundobject/collection/432n/id/55578/rec/1>.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 34 (but page 8 of the official bill).

that religion professors had to support racist theology at BYU as part of BYU's religious education program. Religion professors had to be able to teach that blacks were second-class in the Kingdom of God.

Even though the NAACP got the legislation they had been asking for in 1965, real racial progress in Utah was difficult to find until after LDS Church president Spencer W. Kimball extended priesthood and temple privileges to all members in 1978. Because Latter-day Saints were the super-majority in Utah, black Utahns could not be equal to their white counterparts until they were recognized as equals in Mormon theology. During the late 1960s and into the early 1970s, the LDS Church attracted a lot of criticism for holding onto racist doctrine and policies that were anachronistic in relation to the national progress made by the civil rights movement. BYU athletic teams were the target of boycotts by other athletic programs opposed to the LDS Church's stance. Still, LDS Church leaders continued to discriminate and uphold institutional racism.

During the period of time between major civil rights victories in the 1960s and the LDS priesthood revelation in 1978, several Mormons publically opposed the LDS Church's institutionalized racism and were excommunicated or disfellowshipped for their efforts. The fact that these membership assassinations (so to speak) continued until the priesthood ban was lifted marks 1978 as a pivotal moment in the Utah black freedom movement. Not only did blacks within and outside the Church stand to benefit from a racial policy change, but advocates for racial equality within Mormonism did as well.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> "Policy" is a very carefully selected word that deserves some clarification. A significant aspect of debates about the priesthood ban during the 1960s and 1970s centered on whether the practice was the result of a doctrine or policy, and it varied based on who was asked. For President Brigham Young and Elder Bruce R. McConkie, the practice was doctrinally based. Church presidents David O. McKay and Spencer W. Kimball came to believe that the priesthood ban was a policy, not necessarily doctrine, and

Progressive Mormons would not be excommunicated for publically opposing current racist practices if the Church disavowed such discrimination.

John W. Fitzgerald, that concerned Mormon who corresponded with President Hugh B. Brown in the 1960s, publically disagreed with and protested the Church's racist practices for several years before being disfellowshipped in 1973. In 1958 he wrote President McKay about his frustrations with the priesthood ban: "Our (the Church's) policy of discrimination against all negroes is very embarrassing, not to say unjust and unfair. Every other race, color and condition of men are welcomed, indeed invited, but because of the color of skin—and some are quite light—the Negro is barred from the full blessings of the Gospel."<sup>42</sup> After local Church leaders excommunicated Fitzgerald's friend LaMar Petersen—a person with whom Fitzgerald had authored several letters to President Brown, Elder Mark E. Petersen, and collaborated on a letter to the editor of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*—Fitzgerald wrote to Brown again to ask "what the future of the Church will be when highly moral, responsible, able researchers and writers are 'cut off' when their objective is the search for truth and a belief in the Equality before God of all men."<sup>43</sup>

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thus could be changed by a revelation given in the Lord's time. However, LDS doctrines, such as belief in agency given to man in the premortal existence, were shaped to support the practice whether it was a doctrine or a policy. The LDS Church today acknowledges this period of racism and also stands by claims made by Church leaders that a revelation was needed to change the policy even though neither Joseph Smith nor Brigham Young claimed to have received a revelation that instituted the policy in the first place. See "Race and the Priesthood," *LDS.org*, accessed 24 March 2017, <https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng&old=true>.

<sup>42</sup> Fitzgerald to David O. McKay, 22 December 1958, box 7 folder 24, Fitzgerald Papers.

<sup>43</sup> Fitzgerald to Brown, 16 July 1971, folder 12, box 4, Fitzgerald Papers; Fitzgerald and LaMar Peterson to Mark E. Petersen, 17 September 1967, in John W. Fitzgerald, *Conflict* (n.p.; printed by author, 1973), 59, box 16, Fitzgerald Papers; and Petersen and Fitzgerald, letter to the editor, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3 (Summer 1968): 7–8.

For his part in promoting and participating in interfaith dialogues and for the noise he created as a frequent writer in letters to the editor of local newspapers, Fitzgerald captured his local authorities' attention and suspicions. Jay J. Campbell, Fitzgerald's stake president in Holladay, Utah, notified Fitzgerald in writing of the Church disciplinary charges against him on 12 November 1972, which were: "1. Failure to sustain the Authorities of the Church. 2. Conduct unbecoming a member by holding the Church to ridicule and criticism through your teachings and publications. 3. Advocating false doctrine." In LDS Church disciplinary courts, the defendant's stake high council acts as judge and jury in a disciplinary case.<sup>44</sup> On 3 January 1973, Fitzgerald's local stake presidency formally announced the high council's decision in a letter: he was disfellowshipped. While not as terminal as outright excommunication, being disfellowshipped is a harsh penalty that severely limits the convicted Church member's activity. Fitzgerald was instructed not to exercise his priesthood in any way, offer public prayers, take the sacrament, or participate in any Church meetings. He appealed the high council's decision to the highest council, the First Presidency, in order to retain full membership privileges. In a letter dated 26 March of 1973, just five years before the LDS race policy changed, the First Presidency affirmed the high council's decision to disfellowship Fitzgerald.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> In Church disciplinary courts, the accused may have witnesses attest to their character in statements addressed to the council. Sterling McMurrin gladly sided with Fitzgerald and wrote a compelling defense of Fitzgerald's actions. "I am arguing that he is not guilty of a crime against the Church. Surely the Church is strong enough to contain its own critics rather than constrain them to conformity and silence through excommunication or the threat of excommunication. Perhaps we have no legal right of dissent in the Church, but we should all hope that we have a moral right of dissent. I cannot believe that anything less than this will do honor to an institution that places such great value on free moral agency. I believe that actions intended to silence criticism by imposing constraints on its members can only weaken and dishonor the Church." Sterling McMurrin to Jay J. Campbell, 11 December 1972 in Fitzgerald, *Conflict*, 84.

<sup>45</sup> Fitzgerald, *Conflict*, 147, 137, 146. Both excommunication and disfellowship require the convicted Church member to make drastic changes in their lives and to repent. See M. Russell Ballard, "A Chance to

Byron Marchant's local authorities excommunicated him on charges of open opposition to Church leaders in October of 1977, only months before the LDS race policy changed in June of 1978. He became an outspoken black rights advocate after making an unsuccessful attempt to promote two African American Boy Scouts to leadership positions in his Scout troop in 1973. Previously unaware that the boys' ineligibility for LDS priesthood precluded them from achieving troop leadership positions, Marchant discovered that the LDS priesthood ban had far reaching affects that he had not supposed. In 1974 the NAACP threatened a lawsuit against the LDS for this discrimination, forcing the LDS Church to retract the policy that required Scout troop leaders to also hold leadership position in their respective deacon's quorums. This experience wakened Marchant's consciousness to recognize other aspects of racial disparity in LDS Church teachings.<sup>46</sup>

In Marchant's excommunication case, his active picketing ventures at the Church Office Building in downtown Salt Lake City was the straw that broke the camel's back as far as his local leadership was concerned. Through his own research, Marchant discovered that Elijah Abel, a black man who was a contemporary of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, held the LDS priesthood during Smith's lifetime without any challenges being made to his priesthood authority. This information directly contradicted a First Presidency statement issued in 1969 about the history of the priesthood ban wherein

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Start Over: Church Disciplinary Councils and the Restoration of Blessings," *Ensign* (September, 1990). Fitzgerald might as well have been excommunicated because regaining full membership would require him to forsake his racial viewpoint by "repenting" for his "wrongdoings" and to accept the Church's racial discrimination as divinely mandated, something he could not do based on his research and personal beliefs.<sup>46</sup> "Former Missionary Excommunicated from the Church," *Dover (OH) Daily Reporter*, 15 October 1977 and Byron Marchant, *Mormon Wrangles and Rainbows: An Autobiography Regarding the 1978 Black Priesthood Change* (Salt Lake City: printed by author, 1987).

Church leaders claimed that LDS prophets had always “taught that Negroes, while spirit children of a common Father, and the progeny of our earthly parents Adam and Eve, were not to receive the priesthood, for reasons we believe are known to God, but which he has not made fully known unto men.”<sup>47</sup> Marchant picketed the Church Office Building to draw attention to the false information provided in the 1969 First Presidency statement. In particular, Marchant wanted N. Eldon Tanner, the lone surviving member of the 1969 First Presidency, to alter the statement to make it historically accurate. Marchant was so dissatisfied with Tanner’s silence on the issue that he went to General Conference and voiced his opposition to Tanner as a “prophet, seer, and revelator” during the usually routine and uneventful sustaining of Church officers that takes place during Conference weekend. On another General Conference weekend, in April of 1978, Marchant was arrested for trespassing on Temple Square as an uninvited guest. These charges were later dropped.<sup>48</sup>

Because Marchant worked as a custodian for the LDS Church, his excommunication not only resulted in a loss of Church membership, but also cost him personal relationships and his means of supporting his two daughters and his wife who was then dying of cancer. Marchant described these life changing events in his autobiography: “It seemed incredible to me that because I sided with two twelve-year-old black Scouts in their desire to attain leadership positions in a Scout troop I was, subsequently, tried in a Mormon Church court, arrested—charged with trespassing—and

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<sup>47</sup> “LDS Church First Presidency Statement on Position of Blacks within the Church and Civil Rights, December 15, 1969,” Appendix D in Newell G. Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People within Mormonism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 229–35.

<sup>48</sup> Marchant, *Mormon Wrangles and Rainbows*, 328, 348.

tried in criminal court. The matter gained international media attention and altered my life dramatically.”<sup>49</sup>

The activism and subsequent disfellowshipment and excommunication stories of John W. Fitzgerald and Byron Marchant demonstrate that personal and religious liberty was at risk in Utah while the racial priesthood restrictions were still in place. Opposing the Church on racial matters put both civil rights activists and Church members interested in historical honesty and racial equality at risk. One’s standing in the local community and even employment opportunities were at stake. Marchant’s case specifically draws attention to how religious and secular dynamics complicated the civil rights period in Utah and give it its distinct flavor.

African Americans and Mormon intellectuals both had hopes that the racial environment in Utah would improve once Church leaders removed race restrictions in Mormon practice. Charles Nabors, an African American faculty member at the University of Utah, recognized how Mormon culture and theology continued to perpetuate discrimination in Utah that was neither explicit nor sanctioned by law, but tangible nonetheless. Nabors became the first African American faculty member at the University of Utah when he was hired to teach anatomy at the university’s medical school in 1958. He was an outspoken member of the NAACP and a political activist at the forefront of the civil rights battle in Utah. For example, in 1964, Nabors and several other NAACP members formed a delegation to meet with Governor George D. Clyde to encourage him to support an executive committee to examine Utah’s civil rights

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., xi.

problems. Nabors spoke on behalf of all minorities who are “interested in a full-time human relations commission with authority to supervise state civil rights laws.” He also heavily campaigned for Democratic candidate George McGovern in the 1972 presidential race against Republican Richard Nixon.<sup>50</sup>

As a working black professional and non-Mormon, Nabors was familiar with the racial and religious climate that directly affected his life experience: “As a black [in Utah], I honestly don’t believe there is any place I can go in this Mormon society. If I move up, it will be only as a token thing, and in order to do so I would have to sell myself, to adopt to some extent a religious and political point of view. Let’s face it, the government here is controlled by the religion.” For black men and women like Nabors, living in a Mormon society that continued to exclude blacks from its most sacred spaces and all leadership positions was difficult. In Utah, protesting the Mormon racial hierarchy fundamentally challenged cherished LDS beliefs concerning the theology taught by their divinely-inspired Church leaders. “I could not move up without accepting that,” Nabors stated. “I would have to make a commitment not to speak out harshly or to ever ridicule them.” In other words, Nabors would not be able to push back against the second-class status of blacks and instead would have to accept his inferiority (without “making a fuss”) as a black man in the LDS faith if he wanted to have upward mobility. This manifestation of institutional racism within the LDS Church demonstrates that the

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<sup>50</sup> See biographical summary in finding aid of Charles James Nabors Papers, 1954–1986, accn 1007, Special Collections, University of Utah. “Clyde Weighs Proposal for Civil Rights Study,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 10 March 1964.



ramifications of the LDS priesthood ban were not confined within chapel and temple doors, but permeated the broader Utah culture.<sup>51</sup>

After President Kimball declared that all worthy males could receive the priesthood in June of 1978, the *New York Times* interviewed Nabors about discrimination in Utah. The state had already adopted its own forms of anti-discrimination legislation over a decade earlier in addition to the national Civil Rights Act of 1964. At this point, discrimination in Utah was “not a sign on a toilet door or a clause in a rent contract,” Nabors stated, “it’s a given. You can buy property or rent an apartment. In a job there is not likely to be a lot of difficulty unless you want to be a department head. But before last Friday [the day President Kimball made the famous announcement], there were things you wouldn’t find in Colorado or Texas or Mississippi—the constant implications of the given that blacks are inferior.”<sup>52</sup>

In numerous ways, LDS theology and the culture it generated had a dramatic impact on the civil rights narrative in Utah history. LDS cultural influence fostered a conservative political environment and created a neoconservative demographic that saw no need to legislatively target minority oppression in order to promote racial equality. Minority groups recognized that they needed the LDS Church, the state’s largest interest group, to be on their side if they were to get the state legislature to pass civil rights legislation. The NAACP battles with the First Presidency showcase the LDS Church’s concern with being unfairly represented as backward racists in the media while also revealing their complete apathy to any legislation aimed at helping minorities. A few

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<sup>51</sup> “Mormon Decision to End Ban on Blacks in Priesthood to Have Wide Impact on Utah,” *New York Times*, 18 June 1978.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

dissenting members of the LDS Church found out just how strong and able the LDS Church was— both on a local and state level— in determining racial politics, and paid dearly for it. Both local and high-ranking authorities leveraged dissenters' Church membership and eternal salvation to control racial dialogue and to sustain the status quo. Moreover, the progressive turning point for the secular racial experience in Utah was none other than the priesthood announcement made by Kimball in June of 1978. Because the LDS racial priesthood restrictions sustained racial inequality in Utah for so long, the journey of Utah civil rights could finally move towards a resolution now that LDS Church leaders reversed their religious policy. The consequences of this policy reversal were positive, in both the religious and secular environments of Utah.

## CHAPTER V

## CONCLUSION

In 1986, the Utah State Legislature passed a bill designating the third Monday in January as Human Rights Day. When the state legislature finally changed the name of the holiday to Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 2000, it became the last state to officially recognize the civil rights leader's birthday, by name, as a state holiday.<sup>53</sup> Terry Williams, Utah's first black state senator, first proposed the King holiday bill in 1985. President Ronald Reagan had already signed a measure in 1983 that made King's January birthday a federal holiday. Williams' first attempt to pass a King holiday bill in Utah failed in 1985, and his second in 1986 would likely have followed suit if he had not remembered the religious demographics of the state senate. Unable to convince any of his fellow senators that Utah should follow national precedent, Williams finally struck a chord with the audience by invoking Mormonism. He related his experience in a later oral history interview:

When I arrived [in the legislature] in 1980, most of the people [in it] were here through the auspices of the LDS church. And that's why I received some ridicule. I mean, they thought I had no place [being] here, because I didn't come through channels. So, I was not only a fluke [in their eyes], but after I got here I was not afforded the same respect and access [to the system] as others. I mean, it was like I had no business here.

A decision had to be made one way or the other. Either we were going to get the bill or we weren't. And I said "Every Thursday we send these beautiful young men out of this state." This was my quintessential argument. I said, "We send these fine gentlemen out on United Airlines every Thursday morning to all parts of the world to be missionaries [and] to proselytize for the LDS church. What do

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<sup>53</sup> Paul Rolly, "We Shall Overcome— Eventually," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 16 January 2017, <http://www.sltrib.com/home/4817309-155/rolly-we-shall-overcome-eventually>.

you think is going to happen to them when they go to other states in the Union?" I said, "They are going to get off their planes, and people are going to say, 'You're from that state that didn't pass the Martin Luther King Holiday, aren't you?'"

What brought them to the brink and over was the recognition that what we do here, regardless of whether we [fully] believe in it, would affect the status of this state and how it stands in the nation. [If we didn't pass the bill] when forty-nine other states had chosen to do what the president had embraced as a national holiday, we would be singular in our denial. So, I touched a nerve in the Mormon mentality, because I learned a long time ago that the Mormon church is proud and places itself in the public eye in the best light possible, all of the time. And this decision would have detracted from that. It would have reflected badly upon their religion."<sup>54</sup>

The legislative debates on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in Utah encapsulate the major theme of my thesis argument. First, discussions about race and racial progress in the state of Utah during the second half of the twentieth century were often contextualized in relation to LDS agendas and beliefs. Second, the Utah Legislature dragged their feet on all civil rights legislation—including state observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day—even when the federal government had already taken progressive legislative steps. And finally, black history in Utah cannot be researched or written without confronting how LDS racism permeated the civic environment that African Americans lived in and tried to improve. Because LDS racial theology informed what it meant to be black and white in Utah Mormon society, this added a complex dimension to race relations during and after the American civil rights movement.

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<sup>54</sup> Even though Williams finally got his fellow legislators to support the King holiday, he had to compromise on its name. The 1986 bill originally called the holiday Human Rights Day, "also known as Martin Luther King Day." Rolly, "We Shall Overcome." Leslie G. Kelen and Eileen Hallet Stone, *Missing Stories: An Oral History of Ethnic and Minority Groups in Utah* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000), 120, 123–4.

While a few Utah and Mormon historians have postulated that pre-1978 LDS theology could have contributed to the practical racial discrimination in Utah, this issue largely remains unexamined in the literature. Mormon Studies scholars have explored race and Mormonism at length, but have not crossed the border into culture and politics in Utah because that issue lies outside of prescribed theological boundaries. This thesis marries Utah and Mormon history to examine how hegemonic LDS institutions affected the black Utah experience and pursuit of equality. Because LDS theology and culture largely shaped Utah's sociopolitical landscape African Americans could not avoid Mormonism if they tried. Even secular institutions such as college campuses and state legislatures invited (and privileged) Mormonism with its racist theology at the table during the mid-twentieth century. Black students at Utah State University— unwelcomed by some community members— were not afforded the same privileges as their white peers. The USU administration carefully monitored their dating habits and academic records as a group, and at least one faculty member thought they should be informed of their inferiority in LDS theology. Civil rights activists brought themselves into close contact with the LDS Church when trying to create social and economic change and in doing so learned that Church leaders were unwilling to be their allies. A close examination of Utah from 1960 to 1978 suggests that this may have been “the right place” for whites and Mormons, but in many ways Utah's sociopolitical environment showed African Americans that this not their place. Race relations in Utah had a much better chance of improving after Mormonism finally aligned with racial equality when LDS Church leaders finally scheduled 8 June 1978 as the “long-promised day.”

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