The members of the Race Relations Committee are inspired by an ideal, the same ideal that has inspired the greatest plays and novels and some of the noblest effort put forth by any man, the ideal of justice. By justice, we mean justice in its most difficult sense, the justice of society. Man's HUMANITY to man might be a way of describing it, or man's relationship to man, or man's understanding of man, or perhaps even, man's need of man. For it is man in the social group that creates the need of justice.

Mrs. Robert Coady, 
Race Relations Committee Chairman, 1941.

In order to understand the Woman's City Club's history of race relations work, one needs to begin with a picture of just how racially segregated Cincinnati was in the early twentieth century. James Robinson of the Cincinnati Negro Civic Welfare League wrote, it was "a northern city with a southern exposure." Although legal restrictions had been lifted thirty years earlier, industry, hotels, restaurants, soda fountains, moving picture houses, theaters, and private parks remained segregated. Nor were there schools, hospitals, or clinics which would train Negro doctors and nurses. The press, he added, gave "undue publicity" to Negro "weaknesses, foibles, and crimes," while neglecting to cover worthy efforts. Here in Cincinnati, Robinson said, "...North and South have met and discussed, frequently with spirit, what should be done with the Negro, who was usually an innocent bystander." Writing in 1919, Robinson noted that with the creation of the Negro Civic Welfare League, "Today the Negro is himself consulted on such matters through the medium of a representative organization of white and colored citizens." Like the Negro Civic Welfare League, the Woman's City Club worked to build understanding between the races through establishing communication between leaders of the Black and white communities. Until the 1940's the thrust of this work was toward improved communication between Black and white community leaders, the development of Negro institutions, and an appreciation of Afro-American culture. By the 1940's racial integration became increasingly important. Organizations of the era of integration like the Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee and Fellowship House trace their roots directly to the Woman's City Club's pioneering race relations work which was based upon the idea that a basic equality existed among all racial groups. In its race relations work, as in so many of its civic concerns, the Woman's City Club based its program on its vision of a better world, rather than on the contemporary status quo.¹

“The Woman's City Club is ready for a consideration of race relations,” the July 1927 Bulletin announced as it offered Woman's City Club members “A Bit of Summer Reading.” The club already had a history of supporting work done in Cincinnati’s Afro-American community, and had worked with the Negro Civic Welfare Committee and the Shoemaker Health and Welfare Center in the West End. The formation of a Race Relations Committee, however, gave added importance to the club’s efforts for improved race relations. As they usually did before embarking on a new project, the club members began their work in this new area by organizing a study group for “a free and frank discussion of opinion and reaction.” Then, they would be ready to work actively for improved race relations.²

Club members began their race relations education with a book by sociologist Thomas J. Woorfer, The Basis of Racial Adjustment. Woorfer, a white southerner, worked with the Commission on Interracial Cooperation which had been building a network of local interracial committees throughout the south since 1919. For a better understanding of Negro life and culture, club members were urged to read white novelist DuBose Heyward’s Porgy and Afro-American Jessie Fauset’s novel There is Confusion. Philosopher Alain Locke’s anthology, The New Negro, and theologian R.E. Speer’s Of One Blood, also received recommendations. The Trend of the Races, by Afro-American sociologist George Edmund Haynes, Secretary of the Commission on the Church and Race Relations of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, also won club approval. Although these books differed in the form of their presentation of the issue of race relations, they all took a similar outlook in promoting a vision of an America composed of a
The Woman's City Club, a vital part of the city whose towering skyscrapers are outlined against the horizon above the Ohio River, has had four homes since it was founded. For a time in 1915 it was housed in the Christ Church Parish House on E. Fourth street and it moved from there to the Neave Building. It retained quarters there until 1917 when it moved into the Old Lincoln Club on Race street. The building retained its home until the acquisition of the present clubhouse at 329 E. Fourth street in 1925. The Neave Building is shown at the lower left and above it is the Christ Church Parish House. Center below is the present clubhouse and upper right is the Old Lincoln Club no longer in existence. (You are invited to turn forward now through the pages of the club's wartime edition of The Post. This is the 10th annual edition.)
whole series of equal cultures. They do not suggest that the society should be organized in a hierarchy, but rather as a democracy, with each component part contributing its special gift to American culture.

A closer examination of one of the books studied by the Woman’s City Club as it took up its race relations work, helps one gain insight into what were then popular views on the issue of race relations. The work of Black sociologist, George Edmund Haynes, helps recreate attitudes of the 1920’s.

In his book Haynes argued that since the emancipation of the slaves, the races had grown apart—“a cleavage from the cradle to the grave.” Separate neighborhoods and impersonal industrial work relationships composed “only the larger outlines of a more detailed segregation that ramifies in many directions.” Haynes found among Negroes that the “old feeling of dependence of many upon master is rapidly disappearing” and among whites “paternal protectiveness” was vanishing. The challenge now was for Negro and white Americans to establish a new relationship, for “the old relations of master and man, mistress and maid are gone, never to return.” Haynes suggested that these “problems of the color line” were not limited to the boundaries of the United States, but occurring in Europe and Asia and Africa—“Everywhere, white and black, yellow and brown are seeking happiness which all crave.”

Haynes found two distinct approaches among white Americans to the issue of race relations. One group he described as “self-assertive, self-centered, and dominating, considering only gain in wealth and power.” The second group was the opposite—“self-denying, seeking justice and mercy, ever ready to consider the interest of the other fellow, the other group, the other race.” Dating the beginning of the struggle between the two groups to the eighteenth century, Haynes summarized the history of the abolitionist movement, finding “an unbroken line of those who have given themselves to stop the mouths of the lions of prejudice and exploitation.” Recently, he noted, Christian women had played a particularly important role in deploring lynching.

Haynes included a list of particular issues of concern to those interested in improving race relations. Leading the list was racial friction in industrial relationships and the racial prejudice of local labor unions. Extra-legal terror, vigilantes, and lynch mobs taking law into their own hands imperiled race relations, as did the barring of Negroes from political rights and privileges. Attacking the notion of white superiority, Haynes suggested that Negroes did not wish to become white, nor did they wish for racial intermixture.

In 1943 Woman’s City Club was located at 528 East Fourth Street.
In 1919 the Board discussed granting "luncheon privileges" at the club tea room to organizations having "colored guests" and decided it would be "unwise to do so." Later in that year, the Board Policy Committee discussed a request from the Industrial Committee that Jennie Porter, principal of the Harriet Beecher Stowe School in the West End, be allowed to join the WCC Industrial Committee. Helen Woolley of the Policy Committee suggested that if Porter joined the WCC she could become a member of the Industrial Committee. Katherine Stilwell, however, moved that the question of Porter joining the committee "be tabled for a time."9

In 1925 the civic director reported to the Board that the club had inadvertently invited a Negro speaker, and needed a policy decision to resolve the problem. The club's usual practice was to invite all candidates for office to address club members at luncheon meetings before elections. The civic director wanted the Board to decide whether "colored candidates [should] receive invitations with other candidates or shall they be excluded?" The civic director said the club had not realized that the city council candidate in question, Henry L. Underwood, was a Negro until after he accepted the invitation. The club president, the civic director reported, "secured the approval of a number of our members" to let the invitation stand as issued. The civic director cautioned, "we have been warned by some interested people that this is likely to be a mistake."9

While the club did not have Negro members, even before the formation of the Race Relations Committee it supported coordinated work with the Black community. In October 1917, for instance, the Bulletin carried an article on the work of James H. Robinson's organization, the Negro Civic Welfare Committee. "It is hoped," the article said, "that this Committee may break down the barrier of prejudice among white citizens and awaken among the colored people a realization of their opportunities." In 1925 the club supported the establishment of the Shoemaker Health and Welfare Center in the West End. The WCC joined the efforts of the Negro Civic Welfare Association in this endeavor, which club members hoped would become "a true Community Center where health, welfare and recreational activities may be carried on as well." The Babies Milk Fund, the Better Housing League, and the Negro Civic Welfare Association all established offices in the center located at 667 West Fourth Street. Like the Negro Civic Welfare Association, the Board of the Shoemaker Center was racially integrated and included James Robinson and Jennie Porter, as well as Edith Campbell, who had been the WCC's first president.10

Once the newly formed Race Relations Committee completed its study of what Mrs. Merrell Slutes, the first committee chairman, called, "a very delicate and complicated situation," it turned its attention to making an investigation of conditions in Steele Subdivision, "a colored settlement," located in the College Hill area. Having first "attempted to analyze their own attitudes toward the question of race" and discovered among club members "as many variations as there is, always, in any question dealing fundamentally with the emotions and personal experience," the committee began to study the conditions of this settlement of 800 people located on North Bend Road. The inhabitants of the subdivision were, Slutes reported, "for the most part, migrants from the South and have not been touched by the more complicated living standards of an urban society." Committee members planned to work with the Mother's Club of Steele Subdivision and with the principal and teachers of the school for the civic and physical betterment of Steele Subdivision.11

The idea of doing such a survey came from the club's study of T.J. Woofter's book, The Basis of Racial Adjustment. Following his chapter on "Race Contacts," Woofter suggested "Topics for Study and Discussion." "Study a separate Negro residence district," Woofter proposed. "What effect has this separation on streets, police protection, lights, sanitation? What effect have these things on the Negro's attitude toward segregation?" Just what effect the club members had on the conditions at Steele Subdivision is unknown, but for the WCC women themselves, the experience provided concrete experience which they found "had a tendency to modify our preconceived ideas."12

Race Relations work soon became recognized by the club as one of its most important endeavors. During Helen Roth's presidency (1927-1929) the club published a brochure explaining the club's history, accomplishments, organization, and future. "The City Club," the brochure stated, "is an organization of alert, civic minded women who are ready to help in an organized and forceful way to bring about such things as the proposed Civic Theatre, an efficient department of Public Welfare, a Regional Planning Commission for Hamilton County, a Public Forum where all citizens may be informed, and an improvement in relationships with the Negroes of the city."13

In her 1929 presidential report, Helen B. Roth wrote that although it was one of the newer committees in the club, the Race Relations Committee was "forging ahead" and she predicted that it "will soon be recognized as one of
Club members wanted Shoe-maker Center to become a "true Community Center where health, welfare and recreational activities may be carried on..."
our most important activities.” Roth noted that the club had decided to “allow colored speakers of good standing to be heard from time to time,” and also to allow Negro guests who were “especially interested in the subject under discussion.” The Race Relations Committee took advantage of this and in the 1928-1929 club year members were “addressed by social workers of both the colored and white races.” Of particular concern to both social workers and club women was the fact that there was not a home in the city for the “delinquent and pre-delinquent colored girl.” The WCC committee took the establishment of such an institution as one of its tasks.14

The Race Relations Committee reported in 1929 that much progress had been made “in bringing to the attention of the city government and the school board the need of adequate provision for delinquent colored girls.” Edith Alexander, the committee chairman, predicted that this would be accomplished “at an early date.” The committee expected to “make further contacts with various groups of white and colored people” working on solving the problem of unemployment among Negroes. The committee also planned to work to make vocational training available to Negroes.15

At the request of Theodore M. Berry of the Department of Public Welfare, Race Relations Committee members became involved in a survey of Negro employment conditions. Berry wrote the club, “The matter of domestic help is one in which we have the greatest difficulty in getting accurate information.” He asked the club’s assistance in the circulation of a questionnaire to “a representative number of housewives.” The information would be used, Berry said, by the Department of Public Welfare to “make better placements and stabilize the employment of Negro men and women through the state-City Employment Bureau.” The Bulletin reproduced Berry’s questionnaire and asked members to fill it out and return it to him.16

According to the President’s Annual Report of 1930, committee chairman, Edith Alexander, succeeded in “gathering into her committee a group of women inspired by a real crusader’s spirit.” The committee members had “established friendly contacts among the Negro people” and it was hoped that these would lead to “the working out of the racial problems of the city.” The club worked particularly with James Ragland, Executive Secretary of the Negro Civic Welfare Association. One of the Race Relations Committee’s achievements for the year was the WCC’s successful efforts “in providing for the attendance of colored teachers and others” at a public dinner for School Superintendent Randall J. Condon. The committee participated in an “inter-racial meeting” at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church under the leadership of the Afro-American minister, The Reverend E.H. Oxley. The program, Edith Alexander noted, was attended by “white people, negroes, a Chinaman, and an American of Armenian birth.”17

In October 1930, the Negro Civic Welfare Association organized a conference on Race Relations and the Woman’s City Club participated. The topic of the conference was “the question of race relations as it affects the Negro in business and industry.” The conference passed a set of resolutions which were reprinted in the Woman’s City Club Bulletin of November 1930. The resolutions suggested employers and industrialists “should be made aware of the fact that the Negro labor supply is an important factor.” Another proposal called for the creation of a department or plant where Negro workers could have “unrestrained opportunity to perform all types of work necessary to the finished product.” The Negro Civic Welfare Association decided to embank on a campaign to convince the employers of the economic waste resulting from “unstabilized employment,
unemployment and meager wages.” And the Association also undertook to “weld the Negro community forces into a program for informing, educating and awakening Negro workers to job-consciousness and their job responsibility.” Finally the Board of Education, the Y.W.C.A., and the Y.M.C.A. were charged with developing vocational training and guidance.\(^{18}\)

The club continued its work for Negro girls, with Edith Alexander organizing a meeting of representatives of all agencies working with Negro girls in the winter of 1931. The invited groups included the West End Branch of the Y.W.C.A., the Cincinnati Girl Scout Council, the Colored Mission in the Children’s Bureau, the Recreation Commission, the Negro Civic Welfare Association, and Dean Josephine Simrall of the University of Cincinnati. The groups decided to form a council to continue their work, which was aimed at the problems of delinquent Negro girls.\(^{19}\)

Writing for her annual report for Race Relations work in 1931, Edith Alexander noted that “most of the work which was done by this committee during the year was at the suggestion of Mr. John M. Ragland, Executive Secretary of the Shoemaker Center.” In addition to describing the formation of the “Colored Girls’ Council” described above, Alexander wrote that the Negro unemployment situation had been “very forcibly brought to the attention of the committee. It is not generally realized that in the fierce struggle for jobs the colored people have been pushed out of many of the occupations heretofore generally allotted to them.” To aid the unemployed in finding work, Alexander urged club members to contact Theodore Berry, who was in a position to “furnish trustworthy colored help.”\(^{20}\)

James Ragland of the Negro Civic Welfare Association continued to suggest programs for the WCC Race Relations Committee. In a letter to Mrs. William Hegner, committee chairman in 1932, he asked that the WCC committee arrange a meeting at the Central Y.W.C.A. for the purpose of hearing a report presented by the Negro Civic Welfare Association. Ragland requested that only white persons be invited to the presentation titled “Negro Family Life and Neighborhood Conditions.” Ragland also suggested that the club committee arrange for “a number of interracial meetings in various parts of the City” over the winter. At these educational programs the Association’s view of the “Negro problem” could be presented.\(^{21}\)
In her report of 1932-1933, Lyda Hegner listed the speaking engagements the club had arranged for Ragland. Hegner wrote that these “short talks” by Ragland were “the outstanding accomplishments of the year, and the record is impressive—The Peoples Church (over 450 present), The Federation of Jewish Women (about 200 present), the Woman’s Department, Federation of Churches (350 present), the Federation of Mothers’ Clubs (over 800 present), the Oakley Presbyterian Church Young People’s Meeting (seventy), the United Presbyterian Church (over 150 present), the American Association of University Women (350 present).”

This “splendid cooperation” between Woman’s City Club and the Negro Civic Welfare Association, James Ragland wrote Hegner, enabled “us to make contact with a number of important and strategic white organizations. The educational work along the lines of racial adjustment, which your committee is doing, is invaluable to the cause of Interracial Good Will in this city.” He thanked the club women for their “assistance in securing the appointment of a Negro District Physician” and for “their efforts in the interest of greater hospital facilities for the Negro doctors, nurses, and interns.”

In response to another request from Ragland the WCC decided to financially underwrite the cost of music lessons for West End teenagers. The Negro Civic Welfare Association had organized a dozen clubs of teenagers, and found a teacher for them. She was willing to work for $3.00 a week, so if the club could provide $30.00 she could offer ten weeks of lessons. The club agreed to underwrite the music lessons, and received a typed report from Sallie Neal, the teacher. Neal taught her students Negro Spirituals, plantation songs, and Christmas carols. In December the students gave a concert for the Woman’s City Club. “Our last number, ‘Old Black Joe,’” the Negro Civic Welfare Association noted, was “very effective.” About 350 children took part in the musical program, and the Association wrote, “though there are many agencies for social uplift contacting the children,” they had, as a whole, “been but little affected and remained unadjusted, wild. It is the task here, to reach these social non-conformists and music has been our best agent. Music is an emotional soperific.”

Subsidizing these music lessons marked the beginning of the club’s long support for music education in

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At the suggestion of James Ragland of the Negro Civic Welfare Association, committee members held programs on “Negro Family Life and Neighborhood Conditions.”
the Black community. For the next twenty years the club had a close relationship with the Cosmopolitan School of Music, contributing regularly to the scholarship fund, and customarily holding the last Race Relations Committee meeting of the year at the school. The committee helped Dr. Artie Mathews, director of the school, get accreditation from the University of Cincinnati. Under Mathews' direction the choral group of the Cosmopolitan School of Music often performed at meetings organized by the WCC.25

In addition to supporting the development of Black culture, as the club did in its support of music education, the WCC also worked in the legislative arena for improved race relations, and particularly for federal anti-lynching legislation. Elsie Austin, "the only colored woman lawyer in Cincinnati," addressed the Race Relations Committee in January 1934 and suggested that club members should "interest" themselves in the Wagner-Costigan anti-lynching bill that was presently pending in Congress. The committee began serious discussion of the bill in November 1934. The bill, committee members hoped, "would hold down if not prevent lynchings in the South." The committee minutes reported "a definite decline in this type of mania was noted" during the time the bill was under consideration in Washington. The committee decided to embark on a campaign in support of the bill. Club members gathered information on the lynching situation and conducted education with other clubs on the bill and what it was trying to accomplish. Committee members sent telegrams to Washington urging passage when the bill came up. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the women thought, favored the bill, as did "an earnest group of women in the South" who were "working to stamp out this evil."26

As in their other civic work, an important component of the WCC Race Relations work was public education. In the same way that the club had pursued its goals in city planning by organizing public exhibitions on planning, the women organized a "Race Relations Institute" in December 1938. Working with the cooperation of the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., the Negro Welfare Mission, and the Council of Social Agencies; the Race Relations Committee planned three sessions. The first two sessions, "The Negro Woman" and "The Negro in Industry," took place at the WCC club on Fourth Street. The final session, "The Challenge of the New Negro," was an evening session held at the Enquirer auditorium. The Reverend Howard Melish, assistant rector of Christ Church presided over the program's panel discussion. Panelists presented perspectives on "the New Negro." Dr. C. Baker Pearle, local president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, spoke on "His Cultural Contribution." Dr. G. Barrett Rich, of the Avondale Presbyterian Church, talked about "His Cultural Opportunities." Marcus Rambo, principal of Douglass School, spoke on "His Economic Contribution," and Dr. Joseph Fletcher, Dean of the Graduate School of Applied Religion, contributed "His Economic Opportunities." The Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church Choir sang
According to Helen B. Roth, Race Relations Committee chairman, the club's goal in organizing the institute was to "enlist the interest and support of a large group in the City to the end that there may be a better understanding of the problems confronting the negroes in our community." The institute received coverage in the local press and committee members collected sixteen articles announcing the event. The morning and afternoon sessions both had "capacity" audiences, the speakers proved to be "all qualified in their respective fields," and provoked much "constructive discussion." The evening meeting, "The Challenge of the New Negro," Roth noted, "attracted an excellent group of both whites and colored people." The final session was "a challenge to continue our efforts" in working for a "better understanding between the two Races." Committee members judged the entire undertaking "an unqualified success."28

The club continued its role of advocate and educator in the area of race relations. In November 1939, committee minutes reported a series of recent committee actions. Mrs. Robert Coady, committee chairman, informed the members that she had written to the chairman of the Cincinnati Committee on Democracy, "calling his attention to the fact that there is no negro representation on said committee." Mrs. Roth announced that the Ault Education Council's spring garden classes, and all other classes, were "open to colored as well as white boys." The committee convinced the Cincinnati Council of Parents and Teachers to publish articles on race relations, and invited principals of schools with both Negro and white students to a committee meeting after discovering that few P.T.A. units from such schools belonged to the Cincinnati Council.29

Although the Race Relations Committee primarily concerned itself with issues in the Negro community, at times it examined other groups. In 1939, for example, Reverend Brown spoke to the committee on the refugee problem in Europe, discussing the plight of Jews in German territory. After presenting the committee with case histories of refugees who had come to the United States he told the committee about a bill, which Congress had failed to vote on, allowing 20,000 refugee children to enter the United States. The Race Relations Committee voted to join the club legislation committee and "present in person" to their senators and representatives a "brief in favor of this bill."30

Mrs. Robert Coady, Race Relations Committee chairman in 1941, described her committee members as being "inspired by an ideal...the ideal of justice." The record of the club's work for racial justice was, she wrote, "a fine healthy, stirring record. We are always on the lookout for discrimination and intimidation, corruption and abuse. If you believe that every man (or woman) must stand on his or her merits, and on that alone, or if you believe in the dignity of man, or if you believe that externals count only as externals and nothing else, you are invited to join." Coady concluded, "If you don't believe in these things, you are still invited. You will become converted before you know it." Under Coady's leadership the committee began its co-sponsorship of what became annual interracial dinners. Three hundred people attended the first dinner, held at the Student Union of the University of Cincinnati.31

Alice W. Rogers, chairman of the committee in 1942, suggested that there existed "more confusion as to the scope and purpose of the Race Relations Committee than of any other committee in the club." In her definition "Race Relations" meant "happier and more workable relationships among all creeds, races, and nationalities. Practically," she stated, "it has been narrowed down to the negro and the refugee problems since they are our most pressing and timely needs." Members of the Race Relations committee served on the Cincinnati Committee for Aid to Christian Refugees. This group brought eight refugees to Cincinnati, helped them find employment and get "more or less adequately adjusted." "Our aims with the colored people," Rogers continued, "are to secure more information concerning their problems; to help produce leaders among them, and to hold up the hands of their present leaders. Whenever possible," WCC committee members worked to "counteract somewhat the discouragement" Negro leaders must feel when they experience "the pardonable apathy of their own race and the opposition of ours."32

In her report on the club's race relations work, Alice Rogers noted that the emphasis of the club's work had "centered on more adequate employment, fostering better training, and attempting to open up new avenues of employment." Employment discrimination grew in importance as an issue during World War II and club members themselves in charges of discrimination against the Crosley Corporation, a defense plant. Negroes were refused employment, and company officials stated that the union claimed its members could strike "if one negro was hired." The club committee began an investigation of racial discrimination and discrimination against people "of foreign names." Theodore Berry, who served as counsel for the Double Victory Council of Cincinnati, called to the attention of the WCC the particular problem of discrimination against Negro
women. He wrote the club, “By refusing to employ Negro women in industries, the producers of war goods in this vicinity are in effect, immobilizing essential and available woman power. Equality of sacrifice should mean that prejudice and fixed industrial patterns which exclude Negroes from skilled production processes must be sacrificed in the interest of maximum production and national security.”

Berry asked that club members join others in doing something “immediately to deal with this situation.” As it had to Berry’s requests for help in the 1920’s, the club responded positively. Lyda Hegner, replied to Berry that the club wanted suggestions “as to how the Woman’s City Club can assist in the speedy collective action you so earnestly request.”

Edith Alexander presented the club committee members with a sketch of Negro progress made in 1944. “A decided change in public opinion” had occurred and it was now realized that “minorities must be given a place in the democratic way of life.” The newspapers and police department had improved their treatment of Negroes, and Negroes were now represented “for the first time” on city agencies such as the Better Housing League, the War Chest, the Adult Education Board, the U.S.O. Board, the Man-

power Commission, and the Mayor’s Friendly Relations Commission. The police department hired the first Negro detective in twenty years, and the R.K.O. theaters began to admit Negroes.

If progress had been made, problems remained. Late in 1944 Race Relations Committee members had an unusual meeting during which WCC women’s questions “that are troubling us concerning the Negro today” were answered by Mrs. Reber Cann, the wife of a Cincinnati physician. Cann, originally from the South, received her degree from Wilberforce, and had worked as both a school teacher and a social worker. Mrs. Cann began the meeting by telling club members that “segregation is the root of the trouble with the Negro.” She said, “There are no inferior races, only inferior opportunities.” She traced for club members the life of an average young Negro couple who decide to marry and raise a family. Although the husband has a good job, “he is not given equal privileges with his white fellow employee.” The couple must live in “a run down neighborhood” and pay more rent than whites for inferior housing. “The new baby,” she continued, “is ushered into this world in a hospital ward marked ‘for colored.’” Once

The W.C.C. 1946 edition of the Post ran a picture of what good race relations can be.
school age the child must either enter a segregated school with inferior teaching equipment, or “if he goes to a school for both races he is slighted, is not allowed equal recreational privileges and must often make the street his playground.” If he goes to college, it is usually for “Colored Only,” even if he graduates with honors and enters a profession “he still finds himself discriminated against in most places.” She concluded, “Later, this young man marries and the circle begins all over again.”

After her presentation Cann answered questions that club members had submitted in writing. To the question, “Has the morale of the Negro been raised by the present better employment?” She answered, “Emphatically yes.” “What recreational facilities would you deem unfair for Negroes?” “Anything not good enough for whites. They should share in all public recreational activities.” “Would Negroes not be better off in segregated school facilities for teaching and recreation equal to whites?” “No. There is no place in a democracy for a segregated school. If we expect to have democracy we must integrate our schools.” “Do Negroes want social as well as economic equality?” “Why not? This is a democracy.” “Would Negroes welcome a hospital manned and staffed by their own race?” “No that would be unnecessary, expensive, and undemocratic.” “Do you believe in racial intermarriage?” “Marriage is a private affair, people marry whom they please. It is a matter of individual preference and if intermarriage seems advisable to the interested parties it is certainly better than association without marriage.” At this point in the meeting Edith Alexander protested that she thought this was “a very dangerous theory to promulgate at this time” and that it “might do a great deal of harm to the cause of the Negro.” “Mrs. Cann did not agree with this.” Mrs. Paul Briol suggested that “with so many great issues at stake and so much feeling existing in the world at present” the question of interracial marriage should be “left undiscussed.”

At the next meeting of the committee the WCC women discussed Mrs. Cann’s views on interracial marriage. Edith Alexander said she thought it “only fair to say that persons who were asked to talk at these meetings should be allowed to express their own views and opinions.” Guest speakers should not, she said, “be expected to say only the things we want to hear.” Mrs. Cann’s presentation had provoked thinking among the Woman’s City Club members, and the meeting went on to propose a “movement for an organized interracial woman’s group.”

Publicly, however, club members did not yet advocate racial integration. In 1945 the WCC along with the Cincinnati Metropolitan Council, a Negro women’s club, organized a Speaker’s Bureau “composed of intelligent, highly trained Negro men and women.” The purpose of the bureau was “to help break down some of the unjust, unfounded prejudices existing in the minds of many people today.” The Negro wanted to share “economic advantages”—adequate education, decent housing, equal industrial opportunities. “Please note,” Helen Roth cautioned in her announcement on the bureau, “he is not asking for social equality, as he prefers to remain in his own social sphere.”

The club continued to move in the direction suggested by Mrs. Reber Cann’s talk. In 1946-1947 committee members studied “the problems resulting because of segregation and prejudice.” Club members were urged to recognize what Gunnar Myrdal called “the American Dilemma,” defined by the club as “our divergence from the pattern of democracy.” Members were cautioned to take a look at themselves—“Are we sure that we are without prejudice?” If they found themselves to be prejudiced, found themselves to fail to be “as instinctively courteous to people of other groups as we are to those of our own,” club members should understand that they have been exposed to powerful influences for years. “You need only be ashamed,” the Bulletin told readers, “if you don’t track it [the prejudice] down and resolve to accept only the truth, and to regard each American as an individual.”

The Race Relations Committee chose as part of its study for 1946-1947 Margaret Halsey’s book, Color Blind, A White Woman Looks at the Negro, published in 1946. Like Reber Cann, Halsey took a different approach than that of the race relations experts the clubs had studied in the 1920’s and 1930’s. George Edmund Haynes had argued for equal appreciation of the special contributions of Afro-Americans to American culture. To this end he urged the formation of Negro institutions and the development of Negro leadership as routes to recognition of the contributions of the race. While he advocated increased contact on a level of equality between leaders from the Black and white communities, he did not envision an integrated society. Margaret Halsey, and others by the middle of the 1940’s were not interested in stressing the special contributions or achievements of any group. Halsey, a professional humorist, had no special training to write about race relations, but during the war she had worked in a canteen for servicemen, and the canteen had “no discrimination” policy. In a light handed way she recounted how the canteen handled problems of prejudice, ranging from attitudes of southern white servicemen through the issue of interracial sex. Halsey argued...
that there was no significant difference between Negro and white: "When the races of man—Caucasian, Maylay, Mongol, Negro, etc—were evolving from the primeval slime, the place in which the Negro happened to evolve was the jungle of Africa." That was the reason for and the meaning of difference in skin color.

Halsey cautioned that "to avoid crippling disappointments" steps taken to improve race relations needed to be made "in the full knowledge that some Negro Americans and some white Americans are not ready for them." Jobs and schools and neighborhoods needed to be opened to Negroes—people interested in race relations had to "do many things at once." This was not as hard to do as it seemed, Halsey suggested. "Any woman who keeps house can testify that the moment the door bell rings is almost always the precise, identical segment of time when the rice boils over and the baby falls downstairs. There is nothing especially new to human experience in having to take care of everything at once. The integration of the Negro into American society is one of the most exciting challenges to self-development and self-mastery that any nation of people faced."

When the club committee found acts of injustice, it worked as a pressure group and during 1947 club members joined others in protesting police brutality toward Negroes. In January 1947, Nathan Wright, a divinity student, testified before the Cincinnati City Council Law Committee that he had been "accosted" by two police officers, addressed by them in "abusive and threatening language" and taken to the police station. The police officers "unjustly suspected" Wright of having stolen a typewriter in his possession. In response to Wright's accusations, the officers replied that Wright had been "impudent" toward them. Bishop Henry Wise Hobson of the Episcopal Church testified before the Law Committee and accused the police of "lacking in courtesy and interfering with the rights of an innocent person." Bishop Hobson added that if officials failed to take action on the charges "the people will." He also requested that the police be given proper training to prevent future incidents. City Manager W.R. Kellogg replied that the police "had in no way been in error."

The Woman's City Club Race Relations Committee reported that "quite a representative group" attended the hearing, "and if nothing else was accomplished the police might be more careful in the future." The committee decided to send a letter to Chief Weatherly and Oris E. Hamilton, Director of the Department of Safety, "urging more courteous treatment" by police. The club felt the city should be offering "public relations" training which was not currently being offered to Cincinnati police officers. Such training, club members felt, was a necessary "modern trend." Hamilton replied that the war had interrupted service training classes for police officers, but that they planned to begin a course in public relations "as soon as time will permit." Hamilton invited club members to attend the course on Criminal Law and Laws of Evidence currently being offered Cincinnati police officers.

The criticism by the Woman's City Club and others of the actions of the Cincinnati police brought a virulent reaction from Councilman Gordon H. Scherer. Speaking before the Hamilton County Police Association Scherer charged that the criticism was a plot by the Communist Party in an attempt to "have the public lose confidence in the police departments as the opening wedge for overthrow of the our government." In an editorial on February 17, 1947, the Cincinnati Enquirer reported on Scherer's speech, adding:

Perhaps it's true that too many people have been looking under too many beds for communists, but perhaps it's also a fact that there is so much smoke there must be some fire. We haven't heard much about Communists around Cincinnati lately, but one would have to be naive, indeed, to think that they are busy every place else except Cincinnati. Criticism of the police or any other public agency is a healthy thing, unless the root of criticism is, itself, diseased. The real source of criticism often is obscure, and difficult to trace and persons bent on destroying our type of government are very skillful in picking tools for their attack."

The Woman's City Club Board responded to the attack in the editorial by writing to both the Enquirer and Gordon Scherer. "The Board of the Woman's City Club deeply deplores the enclosed editorial," wrote Josephine Streit Shapiro. She continued:

There are certain implications which we do not feel are justifiable. We feel it is unworthy of you and harmful for the good of the community to imply that the criticism that has been made is Communist inspired. As members of a civic organization, we feel that criticism, when it is fair and unbiased, is a wholesome thing and should not be discouraged by editorials that try to scare our citizens into believing that the criticisms we have had are inspired by Communists. If we have an undesirable situation, why not face it, instead of using the slogan "Communist Inspired" as a defense."

Building an interracial movement became a priority of the club in the late 1940's. In March 1947, the Race Relations Committee sponsored a tea and invited thirty Negro women "all of whom were known to be
altruistically interested in civic problems.” After discussions about the race relations problem in Cincinnati, the mixed group decided to meet regularly. This group of women engineered the formation of a local fellowship house in Cincinnati. In June 1947, Helen Roth and Edith Alexander reported to the Race Relations Committee that they had met with a representative of the Philadelphia Fellowship House which described itself as “an experimental laboratory in racial and religious understanding—primarily a religious movement.” Its goal was “to prove to society that men of all creeds and races can live together in harmony.” Members of the Race Relations Committee of Woman’s City Club participated actively in Cincinnati’s Fellowship House.

The new institution sponsored a variety of activities aimed at combating prejudice through education. One of the most popular Fellowship House educational programs consisted of “speaking trios.” Representing “the three major groups who live in our city,” these groups were composed of a Negro, a Jew, and “a member of the majority group.” WCC women belonged to these trios and traveled the city speaking to civic groups about “their personal experiences in facing prejudice and discrimination.” In 1949, Mrs. Harold Upson, the Executive Director of Fellowship House, reported to the Race Relations Committee that 100 trios had spoken before 8,000 people. At the same time that club members worked to build understanding through the work of Fellowship House, Mrs. Jack Klempe, representing the WCC on the Community Teamwork Section of the Mayor’s Friendly Relations Committee (MFRC), which had been organized in 1943, Mrs. Klempe, an associate member of the MFRC, reported regularly to the club on the work of the MFRC which concerned itself with “inter-group problems.”

Racial integration increasingly attracted the club’s attention. The League of Women Voters appointed a Negro woman to its board in 1948, and the Woman’s City Club Race Relations Committee noted the League’s action with approval. The Race Relations Committee minutes noted that following the announcement of the League’s accomplishment “there were expressions of optimistic hope that at some future date the Woman’s City Club will welcome Negro members.” The minutes do not record just when the club itself became integrated, or the nature of the discussion about this change. However, once the Race Relations Committee had made the decision to organize the integrated women’s group which became the foundation of Fellowship House in 1947, the future direction of the club was set. In February 1949, Johnnie Mae Berry, whose husband had been prominent in civic and educational affairs, was elected a member by the Woman’s City Club, 523 E. Fourth St., as was learned yesterday.

In admitting the Negro women to membership, the 33-year-old civic club set a precedent for the organization, but not for the city as a whole, since there is a Negro board member in the League of Women Voters. The two new members are Mrs. Theodore Berry, 2039 Fairfax Ave., wife of an attorney, and Mrs. B. F. Cann, 5223 Ward Ave., Madisonville, whose husband is a physician.

Acceptance of the women as members came four days after a luncheon at the club when the program was devoted to a discussion of racial prejudices in which Mrs. Berry was one of the speakers. One of the most active committees of the Woman’s City Club is the Race Relations Committee, which took the initiative in organizing Fellowship House. Concerning the action, Mrs. Mary Jones said, “It is kind of revolutionary. I think it will work out alright.”
working with the club since the 1920s, and Reber Cann, who had so frankly addressed club members in 1944, joined the Woman’s City Club. Although the newspapers reported “rumors” that some members of the club threatened to resign, Mrs. Forrest Maddux, club president, said she knew of “no controversy.” One member told the Cincinnati Post, “This was something that was coming and here it is.”

As an indication that the club no longer intended to think in racial terms the Race Relations Committee decided to change its name, to a “phrase with a better connotation.” Between 1950 and 1952 the Race Relations Committee was known as the Inter-Group Relations Committee. Apparently the new name was not satisfactory, however, for by 1952 the club decided to change the name back to Race Relations. The Race Relations Committee needed more than a change of name, however. The vision of social organization that had sustained the race relations work of the club for the last twenty-five years was no longer functional. This old vision of a society composed of the coordinated action of separate but equal racial groups was inherent in the very term “race relations.” Increasingly by the late 1940s and early 1950s club members like other Americans, became more interested in the individual, in “human relations,” than in group relations. Fellowship House and the Mayor’s Friendly Relations Committee, both products of the Woman’s City Club effort, seemed more suited to the tasks at hand than a club’s Race Relations Committee. In July 1952, Mrs. Frederick Rauh suggested to the Board that the club’s Race Relations Committee had “outlived its usefulness” since the establishment of Fellowship House and the Mayor’s Friendly Relations Committee. Edith Alexander, however, argued that the committee should continue for there was “a need for education in Race Relations among members of the Woman’s City Club.”

Edith Alexander, no doubt, was troubled by the fact that although the Woman’s City Club itself was now racially integrated, its branch of younger women, the Junior Woman’s City Club, remained all white. Organized in 1926, the Juniors had their own constitution, committees, members, and program and a quasi-independence from the Seniors. Originally limited to young women under the age of twenty-five, the very month the Seniors became racially integrated, the Juniors expanded the age range to thirty. Theoretically members moved from the Juniors to Seniors without major change as they passed the age of thirty, but the issue of integration pushed the Juniors and Seniors in different directions.

In 1952 when Edith Alexander suggested the need for internal education, there were 358 Senior members and 165 Junior members. During the 1951-1952 and 1952-1953 club years the Race Relations Committee took up a new task, limiting itself purely to educational work among a mixed group of Junior and Senior members. Under the leadership of Dorothy Dolbey the group visited Fellowship House, and studied the work of the Urban League, organized locally in 1948; and the work of the Mayor’s Friendly Relations Committee. Members of the committee did not, however, involve themselves actively in the desegregation of Coney Island, a local amusement park. The WCC Board itself followed the issue with interest, but the Race Relations Committee did not, Mrs. Dolbey reported, because of the “majority of membership of Juniors on the committee.”

“The Supreme Court decision on desegregation of our public schools has deeply stirred us,” wrote Margaret Von Selle, chairman of the Race Relations Committee in 1954. The committee, she predicted, was “looking forward to an exciting time of study and experience.” By the end of the club year in the spring of 1955, however, her description of the Junior-Senior Race Relations Committee was less rosy. Her predecessor, Dorothy Dolbey, had felt that the committee would be ready for “serious work,” but it was not. Dolbey, according to Von Selle, “had not suggested they work for the integration of Negro members into their own club.” This idea, Dolbey had argued, “should come from within the group itself and should not be superimposed by her.” Clearly, however, Dolbey tried unsuccessfully to steer the Juniors on the committee into integration. Von Selle had even less success. She cataloged her failed attempts. She had planned for a table of Juniors at the Roy Wilkins’ dinner in celebration of the Supreme Court decision. “Only the Junior chairman and one other member attended,” Von Selle said, “and they arrived after the dinner.” Hurricanes and snowstorms influenced turnout at subsequent meetings, and few Juniors attended club events on Fair Employment Practices Legislation, and human relations work. Only one Junior attended the last committee meeting of the year. The Junior member reported that since it was the beginning of summer “the girls wanted to take it easy and were not interested in any more meetings.”

Exasperated, at the end of the year Von Selle sent each committee member a copy of Lillian Smith’s publication *Now is the Time*. Provided by fellow committee member Marian Spencer, Von Selle wrote the Junior members that Smith’s writing would “supply up to date background and tangible direction to anyone truly interested in racial integration in this our democratic country.” She noted that
the club had hoped the study pursued by the committee would develop "the well informed and concerned nucleus which would help to bring about acceptance of Negro members into the Junior Club in conformity with Senior policies. Von Selle wrote, "It is imperative that we practice what we claim to believe in. I think you will agree with me . . . that the witness and the work of the seniors is weakened as long as the juniors reject members on racial grounds."50

The disagreement over integration became transformed into a fight over the organizational relationship between the Juniors and the Seniors. Rather than an open political battle there were little fights over constitutions and by-laws. In 1947 the Juniors had removed the age limitation which mandated a switch to senior status when one reached thirty. The Board responded in September 1956, after it was clear that they could not successfully influence the younger group's racial policy, by passing a motion that required Junior members to automatically become Senior members at the age of thirty-five. This new position was to go into effect "as soon as possible and no later than July 1, 1960." The Junior Board of Directors polled its membership and "had no interest" in joining the Seniors, the under-thirty-five's shared this lack of enthusiasm so the Junior Board of Directors voted to disband the club.51

After Margaret Von Selle's Race Relations Committee of 1954-1955, the club went for five years without a special committee devoted to the issue of race relations. In 1960 a club Civil Rights Committee was established, taking as its work the question of "job opportunities for minorities," racial policies of unions, the creation of apprenticeship programs, and the stimulation of an atmosphere "whereby minority youth will be encouraged to apply for apprenticeship training." The Civil Rights Committee did not continue to be active, however, for in 1964 "after a series of meetings on the problem of civil rights in Cincinnati" the WCC decided the Race Relations Committee must be "reactivated." Once again the club sought a chairman and members to "set up a group for study or action." The newsletter announced, "The club has always been active in the field of race relations and it is hoped that we can continue this work."52

The women of the WCC have not left position papers explaining how they defined the connection between the interests of women and the club's work for improved race relations. Mrs. Robert Coady, for example, wrote about "Man's HUMANITY" without mentioning any special role for women. Looking back however, it appears significant that it was a woman's organization that established the first on-going Race Relations Committee in the city. Much of the club's race relations work was gender-based, from their work with the Steele Subdivision Mother's Club, the work to establish the Colored Girls' Council, the work with the Cincinnati Metropolitan Council to organize an integrated woman's group, to the formation of Fellowship House. The club women's early vision of themselves as municipal housekeepers was expansive enough to include the task of building harmonious relations between the different racial groups living in Cincinnati, and "cleaning up" problems of racial injustice.

Beginning with the organization of its Race Relations Committee in 1927 the Woman's City Club devoted considerable attention to the pursuit of what the club defined as justice in race relations. In the 1920's and 1930's the club's vision of racial justice, which was based on extensive study of the work of race relations experts, led the club to work in cooperation with leaders in Cincinnati's Afro-American community. In this partnership the club supported the development of Black institutions and broad education in the white community aimed at developing more harmonious race relations and an appreciation of Afro-American culture. By the mid-1940's however, the club's vision of justice and democracy no longer called for the coordinated efforts of separate but equal groups, and the emphasis shifted to increasing demands for racial integration, for the right of individual choice. In the 1920's and 1930's the Woman's City Club stood alone among civic organizations as a group that recognized the importance of building ties between the leadership of Cincinnati's Black and white communities. By the 1940's, the pioneering work of the Woman's City Club had helped to lay the basis for new organizations like the Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee and Fellowship House. The race relations work of the club at times led the club into situations of conflict, as in the debates over police brutality and the protracted internal struggle with the Juniors. Through all this, the WCC policy on race relations was motivated by a desire for justice. As Mrs. Robert Coady declared in 1941: "This effort for justice has persisted in the city club. The record is there for all who care to read it."53
Race Relations Improve as Club And Other Groups Battle Prejudice

BY MRS. INEZ MOORE
Chairman of the Woman's City Club Race Relations Committee

The Woman's City Club over a long period of time has been particularly interested in promoting better human relations in Cincinnati. Through its Race Relations Committee, civic luncheons, discussions and programs of various committees, contacts with other civic groups, the club has broadened the outlook and increased the concern of many club members for better race relations.

Consequently many Woman's City Club leaders have gone out into the community to become active with other groups working in this area.

DURING THE last few years, because of the continuous efforts of many individuals, there has been in Cincinnati marked progress in breaking down prejudices and in securing human rights. Also there is an acute awareness of the prejudice which exists and of the places where there is still a need for fair play, justice, equality of opportunity.

Some of the progress made within the last few years includes the opening of Cincinnati's two schools of music to Negro students. It has been within the last few years, too, that restaurants, hotels, theaters have made their services available to all citizens.

With increasing frequency one hears of new job opportunities which are available. The agencies which work specifically in this field of human relations have done much to bring about this progress.

FELLOWSHIP House, the founding of which was instigated by the Race Relations Committee of the club, has brought together individuals from different backgrounds, nationalities and races and has increased among its members the awareness that to know each other is to deepen one's appreciation of the inherent worth of the individual.

The Urban League through its services in employment, vocational guidance and counseling has opened up many new job opportunities for Negroes.

The Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee has helped combat tensions arising from racial prejudices and has carried on a program of education.

THE NATIONAL Association for the Advancement of Colored People has worked specifically in the area of civil liberties and has been a legal resource for securing justice through legal channels.

The Jewish Community Relations Council, as well as the National Conference of Christian and Jews, promotes educational material and programs and has helped to increase inter-faith, inter-race appreciation and understanding.

There are many other groups in the city which are working in behalf of better human relations—the churches, the schools, YWCA, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, social agencies, to mention a few.

Everywhere today in civic, political, social welfare and educational groups one senses, on the whole, a deep concern for the achieving of the American way.

It is self evident that one of the main reasons for this is the world struggle going on today between two ideologies, communism and democracy.

We know that all over the world the communists have made progress in winning friends and influencing people by publicizing and exploiting incidents of racial discrimination in the United States.

In 1953 club members felt they had made steps toward improving race relations.
This article is an excerpt from the forthcoming book, *Lighting the Way*, *Woman's City Club* 1915-1965 by Andrea Turtel Kornbluh and published by the Woman's City Club. The book will be available in October 1986.


2. Woman's City Club *Bulletin* (hereafter *Bulletin*), July 1927, p. 15.


7. *Bulletin*, July 1927, p. 15. Woman's City Club Civic Director's Report, December 2, 1927. The earliest minutes of the meetings of the Race Relations Committee no longer exist, the collection begins in 1931.


9. Civic Director's Report, October 16, 1925.


27. Race Relations Committee, November 14, 1938. Newspaper clippings on Race Relations Institute. WCC Papers, Box 18, folder 193.

28. Helen B. Roth, "Institute on Race Relations, December 12, 1938." WCC Papers, Box 18, folder 193.

29. Race Relations Committee Minutes, November 17, 1939.

30. Ibid.


33. Theodore M. Berry to Mrs. Dorothy S. Mathers, November 17, 1942. Lyda Hegner to Theodore M. Berry, December 10, 1942. WCC Papers, Box 18, folder 194.

34. Race Relations Committee Minutes, April 14, 1944.

35. Race Relations Committee Minutes, November 6, 1944.

36. Ibid.

37. Race Relations Committee Minutes, December 5, 1944.

38. Mrs. Albert S. Roth, November 29, 1945. WCC Papers, Box 18, folder 195.


44. Josephine Streit Shapiro to Gordon Scherer, February 20, 1947, WCC Papers, Box 18, folder 196.


49. Margaret Von Selle to Dear Member, June 20, 1955. Woman's City Club Papers, Box 18, folder 198.

