



William Still, *The Underground Railroad* (Philadelphia, 1872), 423.

## THE BATTLE TO END DISCRIMINATION AGAINST NEGROES ON PHILADELPHIA STREETCARS: (PART II) THE VICTORY

BY PHILIP S. FONER\*

ON JANUARY 31, 1865, Congress adopted an amendment to the Constitution providing that neither slavery nor involuntary servitude should exist within the United States and sent it to the states for ratification. On that same day, indeed at the very hour that Congress adopted the Thirteenth Amendment, conductors on Philadelphia's streetcars announced that an overwhelming majority of the passengers had voted "no" on the proposal: "Shall colored persons be allowed to ride in all the cars?" Two years later Alfred H. Love, a black activist in the streetcar battle, recalled sadly: "To think that, when the Nation was voting *freedom*, we were voting exclusion of colored people from our cars—the grossest kind of slavery."<sup>1</sup>

The Frankford and Southward Company decided to ignore the poll and began admitting Negroes to its cars. The experiment lasted one month at the end of which the company an-

\*The author is Professor of History at Lincoln University, Pennsylvania.

<sup>1</sup> Philadelphia Press, February 1, 1865; *A Brief Narrative of the Struggle for the Rights of Colored People of Philadelphia on the City Railway Cars* (Philadelphia, 1867), 16. The Philadelphia correspondent of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* wrote bitterly of the car poll: "The farce was so great that it towered into the proportions of an unmitigated humbug. All manner of fraud was perpetrated, and the mean, contemptible sponges of prejudice displayed such eagerness to make the most of this opportunity to vent their contumely towards the colored man, that injustice itself, were it a thing of life, would have blushed for shame for the zeal thus shown by the votaries." (*National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 25, 1865.)

The contrast between the vote on the car issue and the action in Congress on the Thirteenth Amendment was not really so startling since Philadelphia had been so hostile to the Emancipation Proclamation when it was announced in 1863 that it almost defeated Republican Governor Andrew Curtin. Had not the victory at Gettysburg come that year, it would have undoubtedly unseated Curtin. (William Dusingberre, *Civil War Issues in Philadelphia, 1856-1865* [Philadelphia, 1965], 154-160; Erwin S. Bradley, *Triumph of Militant Republicanism: A Study of Pennsylvania and Presidential Politics, 1860-1872* [Philadelphia, 1964], 152, 178.)

nounced that it had lost white passengers and suffered a decline in revenue. Thereafter it would allow Negroes only in special "Colored" cars.<sup>2</sup>

The Frankford and Southwark Company's experiment pointed out a special difficulty in ending streetcar discrimination. The male workers employed in the navy yard and the women who were working there on government clothing were the chief patrons of the line, and it was their opposition which did much to force the company to abandon its policy. In other words, the white working class of Philadelphia were among the chief supporters of segregation on streetcars. Yet Philadelphia at this time boasted one of the largest and most advanced labor movements in this country. And it was in this city at this time, too, that the most influential labor paper of the era, *Fincher's Trades' Review*, was published. The *Review*, edited by Jonathan Fincher of the Typographical Union, had on its editorial board representatives of the Molders, Printers, Ship Carpenters, Stone Cutters, Cabinet Makers, Carpenters, Hatters, and Shoemakers unions in Philadelphia. Between June 6, 1863, its first issue, and August 18, 1866, when the last issue came off the press, *Fincher's Trades' Review* appeared every Saturday. Had it concerned itself to any extent with the battle taking place in its own city for the right of a section of Philadelphia's working class to use the transportation facilities in going to and from work, and had the unions which were on its editorial board involved themselves in the campaign to end segregation on the streetcars, the results might have been very different. Unfortunately, although it strongly supported the Union cause during the war, as did all of the unions associated with it, *Fincher's Trades' Review* paid no attention to the streetcar issue. In the scores of editorials, union notices, and articles which appeared in the Philadelphia labor paper during its three years of existence, not a single one even mentioned the battle occurring in the city over the rights of Negroes on the streetcars.<sup>3</sup> But the labor paper did feature an

<sup>2</sup> Philadelphia Press, February 14, 1865; Frederick W. Speirs, *The Street Railways System of Philadelphia, Its History and Present Condition* (Baltimore, 1897), 25.

<sup>3</sup> This conclusion is based on an examination of copies of *Fincher's Trades' Review* in the Library Company of Philadelphia. For a discussion of the paper, see Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States* (New York, 1947), I, 350-352.

editorial entitled "The Etiquette of Travel" in which it criticized the ladies of Philadelphia for scorning seats in the streetcars offered by "tired, poorly clad" workingmen "worn out by a hard day's work."<sup>4</sup> *Fincher's Trades' Review* called itself "An Advocate of the Rights of the Producing Classes." But it either did not believe black workers belonged to the producing classes, or, if they did, that they did not have any rights.

Many of Philadelphia's white workers received their education on the streetcar issue from the racist *Philadelphia Age*, a Copperhead daily filled with anti-Negro propaganda. Readers were told six days a week from the first issue in March, 1863, that Negroes were "barbarians," so "inclined to rape white women" that to allow them to sit next to Philadelphia ladies was to run the risk of having them attacked right on the floor of the streetcars. In addition to rape, opening the cars to blacks involved the risk of racial intermixture—"Miscegenation," as the editors of the *Age* were fond of calling this social phenomenon. Finally, there was the constant refrain in the *Age* that the "bodily odors of Negroes" were enough reason to maintain the existing practice of segregation on the cars.<sup>5</sup> Opinion was so intense that when Mayor Alexander Henry sent a message to the city council bemoaning "the great loss of life on our city railroads," one correspondent in the Copperhead paper said he favored integration on streetcars because it would simply prompt more violence and thereby further reduce the size of the city's black population.<sup>6</sup>

Still seeking to accomplish something at the city level, the Concert Hall committee appealed to Mayor Henry, requesting him to prevent the use of the police to assist conductors in ejecting colored passengers. The mayor rejected the request and went on to uphold the segregation policy, saying that he did not wish "the ladies of his family to ride in the same car with colored people." The committee observed that "except in

<sup>4</sup> *Fincher's Trades' Review*, July 11, 1863.

<sup>5</sup> *Philadelphia Age*, July 9, 14, October 2, 1863; March 1, 14, 22, 25, April 8, 16, May 3, June 25, July 12, August 25, November 1, 1864. See also Ray H. Abrams, "Copperhead Newspapers and the Negro," *Journal of Negro History*, XX (April, 1935), 135-152, and Forrest G. Wood, *Black Scare: The Racist Response to Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Berkeley, 1968), 21, 34, 35, 43-51, 59, 60, 63-64, 118, 139.

<sup>6</sup> *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, June 25, 1864; *Philadelphia Age*, June 27, 1864.

his more than average frankness," the mayor "well represented our educated, respectable, and religious classes." But the Reverend Elisha Weaver, the usually mild-mannered editor of *The Christian Recorder*, was so infuriated by the mayor's remark and the blank check it gave to Philadelphia's police and the streetcar conductors to manhandle blacks, that he announced: "We do not believe in fighting or taking life, but we greatly fear, that if Mayor Henry does not put a stop to such treatment by the police, and railroad conductors become more civil to persons of color, some of them may appear at the judgment bar of God before they are ready."<sup>7</sup>

It was not so easy to put the Reverend Weaver's policy of self-defense into practice. A few days after his warning to the police and conductors, three Negro men boarded a car of the Walnut and Chestnut Street line during a pelting cold rain. The conductor instantly informed them they could not ride. "You can draft us in the service, and why can we not ride?," one of the blacks asked. The conductor brushed this aside as irrelevant and insisted that the three get out into the rain. "We do not mean to get out; you can put us out if you choose. We came from Boston; we could ride in the cars there; we cannot see why we should not ride here." A white passenger rose to the conductor's defense and shouted in rage, "You know you are not allowed to ride in here." "If we are offensive to the passengers, we will get up and go out," the Negroes replied. "You are offensive to the ladies," the passenger shouted back. The two ladies in the car rose and said, "They are not offensive, but we want no disturbance." At this point the car was stopped, and the conductor called a policeman, who said to the three

<sup>7</sup> *Report of the Committee Appointed for the Purpose of Securing to Colored People in Philadelphia the Right to the Use of the Streetcars* (Philadelphia, 1869), 2; *The Christian Recorder*, March 11, 1865. The Reverend Weaver had just returned from Washington where he had witnessed the inauguration of President Lincoln and where, he reported, he had "enjoyed the privilege of exercising a freeman's rights, to ride in the cars on the Metropolitan City railroad, among the most refined ladies and gentlemen of Washington, New York, Massachusetts, and elsewhere, who, like ourselves, had journeyed thither to witness the day's proceedings. . . . But when we came back to Philadelphia, the first thing that struck our eyes in looking over the morning papers, was an account of the forcible ejection of some colored gentlemen from the Chestnut and Walnut street cars, and the brutal and cowardly treatment they received at the hands of the conductors and some of Mayor Henry's police." Segregation had been abolished on Washington's streetcars in March, 1865.

blacks, "You must leave the car, or be locked up." Asked if it was against the law for Negroes to ride, the policeman replied in the affirmative. One of the blacks shouted back, "It is *not* against the law, and you may lock me up." "Then I will take you first," the officer shouted, grabbing him by the collar roughly. The white passenger jumped to the policeman's assistance. Suddenly from the streets a gang of toughs pushed into the car and began beating the Negroes with clubs.

"Feeling ourselves, however, to be men and not dogs," the three victims wrote in a signed letter published in the *Press*, "one of us determined to suffer risk of personal injury and the lock-up rather than run. He came in for more than a due proportion of blows, as fists and the billy were applied freely to his person, the head not being spared. We confess that in the excitement of the moment, we felt unwilling to endure the outrage without resentment, and at least one of us dealt a few blows in return. But we were overpowered and taken before an alderman. Here insult was, as it were, added to injury, for grave charges were made against us; and we soon found that we should be sent to the lock-up unless bail could be procured. For the time being, our minds were so much absorbed by reflections upon the outrages heaped upon us that we were not in a condition to think of this; hence we were incarcerated, as threatened, and remained so until a friend kindly came and procured our release. . . ."<sup>8</sup>

While seeking concessions from the companies, the advocates of equal rights had been also attempting to win in the courts. Criminal prosecution was instituted against a number of conductors who had ejected Negroes from the cars. But the grand juries stymied these efforts by refusing to indict. Only in civil cases was there success. In May, 1865, a conductor on the Lombard and South Street line was tried in the Court of Quarter Sessions upon the charge of having violently thrust "a respectable colored woman" from a car. The old woman had been on her way home from church, where she had been engaged in

<sup>8</sup> Miles R. Robinson, James Wallace, and R. C. Marshall in *Philadelphia Press*, March 15, 1865. The letter was reprinted in *Liberator*, March 24, 1865, and may also be found in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (New York, 1951), 505-506. It was William Still who bailed out the three.

providing comforts for wounded soldiers. After she had been seated for only a few minutes, the conductor came in and told her she must get out, "that no niggers were allowed to ride on that line." She pleaded the lateness of the hour, that there were only two or three passengers in the car, none of whom objected, and finally asserted her right to remain. The conductor called in two friends standing upon a street corner, took off his coat, seized hold of the old woman, struck, kicked, and finally threw her from the car with great force, tearing her clothes and inflicting personal injury.

The usual defense was raised: the conductor was only carrying out the rules of the company which prohibited colored passengers on the cars. Judge Allison, however, charged the jury that, while common carriers could keep out obnoxious individuals of any race or class, they could not make color distinctions. He went further, declaring:

The logic of the past four years has in many respects cleared our vision and corrected our judgment, and no proposition has been more clearly wrought out by them than that the men who have been deemed worthy to become defenders of the country, to wear the uniform of the soldier of the United States, should not be denied the rights common to humanity.

The jury, probably startled to hear such words uttered in a Philadelphia courtroom, quickly returned a verdict in favor of the Negro passenger and awarded her damages of fifty dollars "for the indignity that had been put upon her."

The *Evening Bulletin* which had the distinction of being one of the two newspapers in the entire city to venture editorial comment on the policies of the streetcar companies—the *Press* was the other—hailed the judge's charge to the jury and the latter's verdict. It was a hard-hitting editorial, and so unusual for Philadelphia that it merits quotation in full:

The public highways are not the exclusive property of persons of any particular shade of complexion, and the railway companies that have obtained the use of them without cost to themselves, and to the complete exclusion of every other vehicle of public conveyance through the streets, have no more right to refuse to carry well-

behaved colored passengers, than the owners of the Penrose Ferry Bridge have a right to forbid black men crossing the Schuylkill by means of their structure. Fastidious persons who do not like to ride with "niggers," can, if they can afford it, loll in their own private coaches, with company of their own choosing. They can exclude blacks from their private halls, forbid them pressing their velvet carpets—but when they take to the public conveyances, they must submit to such associations, under proper restrictions, as chance throws in their way. The right of transit is not the exclusive privilege of any particular class, and the common carrier has no more right to refuse the privileges he pays for to the colored passenger, than he has a right to block his foot-passage through the common highway, or deprive him of the common blessings of light, air and water. Where a mullet of fifty dollars will be sure to follow every expulsion of a respectable colored person from a city railway car, such expulsions will become very rare, and the strong arm of the law will be found more potent than the influence of common sense or the sentiment of fair play have proved, in breaking down a cruel and unreasonable prejudice.<sup>9</sup>

In the battle against streetcar segregation, optimistic predictions invariably proved to be wrong, and the *Bulletin's* conclusion, that conductors would now think twice about ejecting colored passengers, was no exception. None of the companies changed their regulations, and the difficulty of obtaining white witnesses who would testify against conductors made civil cases ineffective. Like petitions to the companies, the courts proved to be a frail reed for foes of streetcar discrimination to lean on.<sup>10</sup>

Defeated at all levels in the city itself, the champions of equal rights turned to the state legislature. Particularly important in advancing the cause in the legislature was the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League. The league was an offshoot of the great National Convention of Colored Citizens of the United States, held in Syracuse, New York, October 4-7, 1864, and at-

<sup>9</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, May 10, 1865; *Derry vs. Lowry*, *Philadelphia Reports*, 30; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, May 11, 1865.

<sup>10</sup> *Why Colored People of Philadelphia Are Excluded from the Street Cars?* (Philadelphia, 1866), 4-5. An appeal was taken to the State Supreme Court from a verdict in a civil case against a Negro passenger ejected from a car, but no decision was handed down before discrimination on the streetcars was banned by state law.



tended by 144 Negroes from eighteen states, including seven slave states. The convention adopted resolutions calling for equal rights and justice in the reconstruction of the Union, issued an "Address to the People of the United States," written by Frederick Douglass, and organized a National Equal Rights League, with John Mercer Langston of Ohio as president, to work for equal rights and equal opportunities for Negroes.<sup>11</sup> By the beginning of 1865 state leagues had come into existence in eight states, one of them in Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania league published its constitution in January, 1865, and held its first convention in Harrisburg the following month. The call for the convention emphasized three issues: voting rights, officer commissions for colored soldiers, and equal public schools.<sup>12</sup> But the convention adopted a resolution dealing with civil rights which read: "As the nation has cast off slavery, let them destroy restrictions which prevent colored people from entering libraries, colleges, lecture rooms, military academies, jury boxes, churches, theatres, street cars, and from voting."<sup>13</sup>

The abolition of streetcar segregation became a major early objective of the league. Alfred M. Green, Octavius V. Catto, and John Oliver, already deeply involved in the streetcar battle, represented the organization in lobbying in the state legislature for passage of a law to prohibit street railway companies from excluding persons on account of color.<sup>14</sup>

In this activity the league worked closely with Morrow B. Lowry, senator from Erie and Crawford counties. Lowry was a *rara avis* in the Pennsylvania legislature. Fit to be ranked in many ways with his great predecessor, Thaddeus Stevens, he was described by Garrison as "a most radical abolitionist."<sup>15</sup> Already in

<sup>11</sup> *Proceedings of the National Convention of Colored Men Held in Syracuse, New York, October 4-7, 1864* (New York, 1864); Philip S. Foner, *Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass* (New York, 1953), III, 49-51, 408-421.

<sup>12</sup> *The Christian Recorder*, January 28, 1865, Jonathan Gibbs, born in Philadelphia and educated at Dartmouth College and Princeton Theological Seminary, was the league's first president. Gibbs later became a member of the Radical Reconstruction convention in Florida and eventually was appointed superintendent of public instruction in that state.

<sup>13</sup> *Liberator*, March 3, 1865.

<sup>14</sup> Minutes of the Executive Board of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League (1864-1872), *Ms.*, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP).

<sup>15</sup> William Lloyd Garrison to Helen Garrison, November 5, 1865, William Lloyd Garrison Papers, Boston Public Library.

1861 Lowry had introduced a bill in the Senate to prohibit segregation in public transportation, only to see it bottled up in the committee of the judiciary. On January 19, 1865, after conferences with a delegation from the State Equal Rights League, Lowry again introduced his bill, and this time it was considered by the Senate.<sup>10</sup>

The language of the bill was simple. It stated: "That it shall not be lawful for any passenger railway company, within this Commonwealth, to make or enforce any rule, regulation or practice, excluding any race of people from its passenger cars on account of color." But Lowry's speech in favor of his bill was a detailed presentation of the necessity for such legislation, expressed in strong, often passionate, words. "Slavery is the cause of the war," he began, "and it alone made rebellion possible. He is the best friend of the Union, who goes farthest and fullest for the destruction of the Union's great enemy. We can no longer ignore truth. Upon its treatment of the black man, rests the fate of the Republic." It was not enough, he insisted, to make the black man "nominally Free." It was not enough to cease to make him a slave. "We must make him, also, truly a freeman." It might not be possible "to pull down the whole fabric of wrong and outrage at once," but it was possible and necessary to remove "one by one" the disabilities under which black people lived and suffered. One of the most galling of these disabilities was the "wholesale exclusion" of blacks from the passenger railways, especially in Philadelphia. The proposed bill was not the result of rumors, it was the product of his own personal observations:

I have seen it made impossible, for the friends and families of sick and wounded soldiers, to go to them on errands of mercy and missions of love. I have seen a soldier with but one leg—the other having been given to his country—rudely prohibited from entering the cars, and forced to plod his weary way through storm and darkness, as best he might! Outrages of this nature, are liable to be of daily occurrence. What a spectacle for the civilized world to contemplate! A soldier of the

<sup>10</sup> Minutes of the Executive Board of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League, Ms., HSP; M. B. Lowry to William Still, March 29, 1867, in *A Brief Narrative of the Struggle for the Rights of the Colored People of Philadelphia*, 21.

republic, having done heroic battle, and risked his life that his country may live, returning to his home in Philadelphia, scarred, and perhaps permanently disabled, is denied the privileges extended to the very lowest and most repulsive vagabond of the city—denied by men for whose sake and safety he has periled all, even life itself! Can we rationally hope to have the curse of war lifted from our land, so long as we tolerate such wrongs upon the race, to *avenge* whose wrongs “God has let upon us the dogs of war?”

Lowry warned that if a railway company had the legal right to exclude men and women because of the complexion of their skin, it could next exclude those with red hair, short or tall people, or members of any race or religion the managers disliked. Where would it all end? He accused the companies of allowing their policies to be determined not by the decent elements of society, intelligent men and women of character, but by “political hucksters” who catered to what they supposed to be popular prejudice and by the lowest elements in the community—“the swaggering, bullying loafer,” the prostitute; those, in short, who sought to elevate themselves at the expense of the Negro.

After a fulsome tribute to the contributions of the Negro to the Union cause, in the course of which he called the blacks “the only loyal class, *as a class*, in the whole land,” Lowry remarked bitterly that upon returning to their homes after fighting for the nation, “we drive them from our street cars as though they were ministers of death rather than of life. Behold the spectacle of a people calling upon the black man to help save their government, and then basely denying them civil and social rights under the government which they have helped to save!” He closed his eloquent speech by conceding that he had been subjected to vile attacks because of his crusade for equal rights on the streetcars. But he scorned such critics. They swore by the Dred Scott decision; he by the Golden Rule; they would “re-enslave the Negro after the danger is past and the war over—I would reward him with freedom and justice.”<sup>17</sup>

The Philadelphia Press urged the legislature not to adjourn

<sup>17</sup> *The Christian Recorder*, January 28, 1865; *Pennsylvania Telegraph*, January 20, 1865; *Liberator*, January 27, 1865.

before enacting Lowry's bill. It was bad enough when Negro men, women, and children were not allowed to ride the streetcars, but increasingly Philadelphians were required to read of their city's "shame" over the exclusion of colored soldiers "by people who care nothing for the struggle in which we are engaged, and who, while realizing fortunes out of profitable enterprises, use their power to insult brave men who are ready to offer their lives for the old flag." Unless the legislature acted, "men who peril their lives for the Republic" would continue to be "insulted under the rules of these companies while on the way to their headquarters."<sup>18</sup>

The state senate passed Lowry's bill by a close vote, but in the house it was smothered in the Passenger Railway committee. Delegations from the Colored People's Union League, the Social, Civil, and Statistical Association of Colored People, and the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society pleaded with the twelve Republicans of the fifteen-member railway committee—eight of them from Philadelphia—to report the bill to the house. They were told that compliance with the request would guarantee their defeat in the next election. To make certain that Lowry's bill never saw the light of day, its opponents resorted to the tactic of having it stolen from the chairman's file so that it could be said that there was no such measure under consideration by the railway committee.<sup>19</sup>

Before the state and municipal elections of 1865, the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society appointed an interracial car committee to query every candidate on whether, if elected, he would use his influence in favor of colored persons riding in the passenger railway cars. The circular letter pointed out: "In view of the momentous issues arising out of the present condition of the Southern States, and the demands made for the abolition of all unjust distinctions on account of complexion, we deem it right to rid ourselves most promptly of the shameful practice of excluding colored persons from our cars, and to have your reply at the earliest moment possible." A number of Republican candidates indicated they would favor equality in the cars, but all of the Democrats made it clear they would oppose removing

<sup>18</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, March 22, 1865.

<sup>19</sup> *Why Colored People of Philadelphia Are Excluded from the Street Cars?*, 4; *Philadelphia Press*, February 17, 1865.

the restrictive ban, and several accused the abolitionist committee of seeking to open the doors to "amalgamation of the races."<sup>20</sup> In any event, throughout 1866 neither the Republicans nor the Democrats moved in either the city council or the state legislature to alter the *status quo* on the car issue.

Here is how the situation stood at the end of 1866 almost eight years after the battle to end segregation on the streetcars had been launched. Philadelphians were now spared having to read reports of incidents of mistreatment of blacks, for the simple reason that Negroes rarely entered the cars, knowing that they risked severe beatings and arrests, and, at the very least, humiliation, cruelty, and injustice. The incident that finally convinced Negroes that it was better to walk, hire a carriage, or simply stay at home rather than make an effort to ride the cars occurred in the fall of 1866. Miles Robinson, his wife, and infant entered a car on Spruce street, and being light-skinned, the conductor did not make an objection until he noticed, on asking for Mrs. Robinson's fare, that she appeared to be darker than her husband. Taking no chances, he ordered them to leave the car. The weather was bitter cold, it was night, the walk was long, and the exposure would have been hazardous to their little child, so they refused. This time the white passengers, about twenty in number, supported the Negro family. But the conductor, insisting he would lose his job if the Negroes remained in the car, shouted that he would have to follow company rules, throw the car off the track, and empty it of passengers. This he proceeded to do. When the Robinsons still remained in the car alone, the conductor threw open the doors and windows and even removed the cushions with the aim of "freezing them out." Finally, the Robinsons had to leave the car, and they walked home in the freezing cold, while the following car picked up the white passengers standing in the dark.<sup>21</sup>

Shortly after this incident, the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society met at Franklin Institute for its twenty-ninth annual meeting. Lucretia Mott pleaded for a new campaign to end streetcar

<sup>20</sup> Minutes of the Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage, and for Improving the Condition of the African Race, September 28, 1865, Ms., HSP; *A Brief Struggle for the Rights of the Colored People of Philadelphia*, 15.

<sup>21</sup> *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 23, 1867.

segregation. "The hour has come to demand it now," she cried. Several speakers replied that it was pointless to try to change the existing situation. Henry Peterson, editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*, predicted that all efforts and funds expended in the streetcar campaign would be wasted. "Even an army of occupation here could not put the negro into the street cars," he told the black and white delegates to the convention.<sup>22</sup>

Black Philadelphians were almost unanimously of the same opinion. At the December 17, 1866, meeting of the Social, Civil, and Statistical Association of Colored People, Stephen Smith insisted that nothing further would be gained by attempting to change the streetcar regulations since there was nothing to expect in the way of meaningful support from the white people of the city. He had an "entire lack of confidence in them."<sup>23</sup> The Reverend B. F. Barrett stressed the same theme in a sermon to his congregation. "It is the city of Philadelphia, then, that I arraign. . . . It is the community, and not merely the street railway companies, that exclude or eject colored people from the cars; for it is the community that justify and uphold the companies in their wrong and unchristian conduct."<sup>24</sup> A group of white Philadelphians, all of whom had been involved in the streetcar campaign, conceded that the indictment was justified. In a pamphlet published in 1866 entitled *Why Colored People in Philadelphia Are Excluded from the Street Cars?*, they summarized the long and futile battle to end streetcar segregation and observed gloomily:

We are forced then to the conclusion that this community, as a body, by long indulgence in the wicked habit of wronging and maltreating colored people, has become, like a moral lunatic, utterly powerless, by the exercise of its own will, to resist or control the propensity. And unless it finds an authoritative and sane guardian and controller in the Supreme Court—unless this Court has itself, by chance, escaped this widely spread moral imbecility of vicious type, there seems to be no cure for the disease, nor end to its wickedness. And Philadelphia must continue to stand, as she now

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, December 1, 1866.

<sup>23</sup> Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Social, Cultural and Statistical Association of the Colored People of Pennsylvania, Ms., HSP.

<sup>24</sup> *The Christian Recorder*, October 6, 1866.

does, alone, among all the cities of the old free States in the exercise of this most infamous system of class persecution.<sup>25</sup>

Yet only a few months after this hopeless note was sounded, the street railway corporations of Philadelphia ceased either to exclude or segregate colored passengers. To understand the reason for this remarkable development, one must focus not on Philadelphia but on Washington and Harrisburg. In the two years since Morrow B. Lowry's bill to outlaw discrimination on the streetcars had passed the Senate but failed in the House, the Radical Republican program of Reconstruction had been moving forward in Congress over the opposition of President Andrew Johnson. The Radical Republicans, under the leadership of Pennsylvania's Thaddeus Stevens and Massachusetts's Charles Sumner, had put through the Civil Rights Act and the Fourteenth Amendment, which conferred state and national citizenship on "all persons born or naturalized in the United States" and provided to any person the equal protection of the law. In February, 1867, the Pennsylvania legislature ratified the Fourteenth Amendment. Thus equal rights for Negroes was now, at least in intent, state policy. On March 2, 1867, Congress overrode President Johnson's vetoes and passed the Radical Reconstruction acts. New governments were to be established in the South by delegates to conventions elected by universal manhood (including Negro) suffrage, and these governments were to guarantee Negro voting and office holding rights, and to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment. It was clear even to a political novice that the Negro in Pennsylvania would soon again be armed with the ballot, and he would have to be reckoned with as a political force. In the fall elections of 1866 the *Age* had raised the spectre of a Haiti-like rule in Philadelphia if the blacks received the vote, and the anti-Negro sentiment was so whipped up by the Democrats that mobs attacked and burned the Union League House. Still the Radical Republicans won a narrow victory, and Negro suffrage now appeared to be certain.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Why Colored People of Philadelphia Are Excluded from the Street Cars?*, 18.

<sup>26</sup> Charles D. Cushdollar, "Andrew Johnson and the Philadelphia Election of 1866," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Bibliography*, XLII (July, 1968), 379-383; Philadelphia *Age*, September 4, 29, October 2, 3, 4, 1866.

It is to the credit of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League that it quickly sensed that developments in Washington would have an important influence in producing a change of heart among the very members of the General Assembly who had refused in 1865 even to report Senator Lowry's bill. In January, 1867, the league's car committee, in cooperation with the committees of the Colored People's Union League and the Statistical Association, began a new and more intensive lobbying campaign in the legislature, pointing out to members of that body that when he received the vote, the black man would know how to use it for his friends and against his enemies, and that how a member of the legislature voted on the car issue would be a major test of friendship.<sup>27</sup> The Equal Rights League's car committee prepared a bill which Senator Lowry introduced into the Senate on February 5, 1867. The measure was more specific and detailed than the one he had sponsored two years before. The bill made it an offense for railroad corporations within the Commonwealth to make any distinction with their passengers on account of race or color and stipulated punishments for corporations, their agents, and employees for the commission of such offenses. The corporation would be liable in an action of debt to the person injured or aggrieved in the sum of five hundred dollars, and any agent, conductor, or employee of any railroad or railway corporation who excluded or allowed to be excluded, or assisted in the exclusion "from any of their cars, set apart for the accommodation of passengers, any person, or persons, on account of color, race, or who shall refuse to carry such person, or persons, on account of color, or race, or who shall throw any car, or cars, from the track, thereby preventing persons from riding, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof, shall pay a fine, not exceeding five hundred dollars, nor less than one hundred dollars, or be imprisoned, for a term not exceeding three months, nor less than thirty days, or both, at the discretion of the court."<sup>28</sup>

Once again Lowry spoke in favor of equal rights in transportation, repeating many of the points he had made in his speech two years before. But this time he was sharper in his indictment

<sup>27</sup> Minutes of the Executive Board of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League (1864-1872), January-February, 1867, Ms., HSP.

<sup>28</sup> *Pennsylvania Laws*, (March 22, 1867), 38-39.



of the City of Brotherly Love. In words that must have caused even calloused Philadelphians to blush with shame, the Senator from northwestern Pennsylvania declared scornfully:

Philadelphia stands disgraced before the world, for her conduct in attempting to block up the highway of the colored man in his great and unequal contest in the battles of life. I arraign Philadelphia, her newspapers, her corporations, her judges, her lawyers, her churches, and her citizens, and pronounce them hostile to the execution of justice between man and man. History will be just toward Philadelphia, and the fact will be recorded to her everlasting discredit, that she left her weak, her poor, and her defenseless citizens to be trodden down by the Copperheads, and the demoralized, the wealthy, the wicked and the strong. Philadelphia, in the face of the judgment of God for our sins of oppression upon a weaker race, is the last city that inflicts this cruel barbarity upon a redeemed race, and denies the right of equal facilities of transportation to black and white. Philadelphia is the only city, where the Lord's prayer is repeated, which compels a respected woman of color to borrow a white baby before she can receive admission into the streetcars. Philadelphia will not permit a colored woman to take her honest-begotten child in her arms into a street car to be carried to a baptismal font, but a base-born white child will protect her from being kicked into the streets by a conductor. . . .<sup>29</sup>

Democratic senators did not blush. They stoutly defended the practice of excluding Negroes from the cars. W. H. McCandless, Democrat of Philadelphia, said flatly, "I do not desire to ride with them" and charged that the Republicans were supporting the bill simply to get the Negro vote. To "eke out their lease of political power a little longer, they will grovel in the dust before this black god of their idolatry." Senator William A. Wallace of Clearfield, chairman of the state Democratic committee, asked bluntly if the legislature was willing "to give to the most brutal and degraded negro a seat side by side with the cultivated and intellectual lady. Shall the barbarous and brutal negro, just emancipated from slavery, be your equal? Shall he sit side by side with you?" He concluded, "if you are ready for

<sup>29</sup> *Legislative Record*, (February 5, 1867), Appendix, lxxiv.

this thing, we are not; and I, as one of the representatives of the people of Pennsylvania, assert that they are not ready for it.”<sup>30</sup>

Other Senators shared this view, but not enough to prevent passage of the bill on February 10 by the vote of eighteen to thirteen. Nine days later the car committee reported to the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League that for the first time in eight years there was reason for optimism. “The prospects for its (the bill’s) passage through the House are cheering,” said Octavius V. Catto, for the committee. “It will be brought up at the earliest possible moment. The (Committee) are sanguine that the governor will sign it without hesitancy.”<sup>31</sup>

For once a prediction related to the car issue came true. In the house the bill was referred to the Passenger Railway committee, but now the very members, who had previously refused to report it to the body for consideration, acted quickly to send it along. On March 18 the bill came up for consideration in the house. The Democrats refused to allow a vote, hoping to force adjournment while they could round up opposition and exhaust time by parliamentary tactics. At a late hour only forty-five Republicans could be found in the house. Since this was not a quorum, the bill could not be acted on. The Democrats remained in their seats, refusing to vote. Very late in the night the Democratic side of the house was declared in contempt for refusing to vote; this was followed by an agreement under which a vote could be taken, and the Democrats purged of contempt. The bill finally went through the house by a vote of fifty to twenty-seven.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxvii-lxxxviii.

<sup>31</sup> Minutes of the Executive Board of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League (1864-1872), February 19, 1867, *Ms.*, HSP.

<sup>32</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, March 19, 1867. The vote in both houses was almost entirely on party lines, with Republicans in favor and Democrats opposed. Interestingly enough, a bill to permit the streetcars of Philadelphia to operate on Sunday was defeated. During the debate on the “Sunday-car” bill, characterized by predictions that passage of the measure would cause immorality to rise in Philadelphia, one member of the house observed “that these persons who are opposing the passage of this bill on the principle of morality and Christianity are stultifying themselves by their very acts when they refuse respectable colored or any other persons to enter their cars. Now, if there is one spark of humanity in the people of Philadelphia, or any number of those people, or in members of this House, who oppose the passage of this bill on grounds of morality, I appeal to that principle of humanity if this action of theirs is consistent when they would hurl people of color, because they are colored, from the cars and let them lie broken in the streets? Where is your humanity? Where is your

In 1773 the Philadelphia reformer, Benjamin Rush, at the suggestion of another Philadelphia humanitarian, Anthony Benezet, published *An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements in America Upon Slave-Keeping*. This remarkable anti-slavery essay, one of the finest products of the Age of Enlightenment, called upon the legislators of America, and especially those of Pennsylvania, to reflect upon the trust imposed upon them, and to "Extend the privileges we enjoy, to every human creature born among us, and let not the Journals or our Assemblies be disgraced with the records of laws, which allow exclusive privileges to men of one color in preference to another."<sup>33</sup> It had taken almost a century before the legislators in Harrisburg moved to apply this great principle. The first important step in this direction was the passage of the law in March, 1867, forbidding railway corporations either to exclude or segregate colored passengers and providing both civil and criminal remedies. Once this step had been taken, it would be easier to move forward in a similar direction. This was discerned by Senator William A. Wallace when he noted, in opposing passage of the car bill: "Are you willing to recognize this equality in the railroad car? If you are, then the next step is, of course, to recognize their equality with you at the ballot-box."<sup>34</sup> Two years later, in March, 1869, the state legislature proved Senator Wallace a good prophet by ratifying the Fifteenth Amendment, thereby restoring to Negroes of Pennsylvania the right to vote, which had been taken away in 1838.<sup>35</sup>

Christianity? I cannot see that there is a particle of either in such acts." (Speech of Mr. Pennypacker, *Legislative Record* [February 6, 1867], Appendix, xci.) The Philadelphia correspondent of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* on February 15, 1867, commented wryly: "Our people had all along been so good, so pious that they could not allow the black man to ride in the cars. And so, of course, they were too good to permit the cars to run on Sunday. Now that they have become so bad as to permit that, by-and-by they may come to this." The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society's comment was equally to the point. It noted that had Philadelphia's churches "made half the effort to abolish this practice (of streetcar segregation), which they made to prevent the running of Sunday cars, it would have ceased long ago." (*Thirtieth Annual Report of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society* [Philadelphia, 1867], 27.)

<sup>33</sup> Benjamin Rush, *An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements in America, Upon Slave-Keeping* (Philadelphia, 1773), 20-22.

<sup>34</sup> *Legislative Record* (February 5, 1867), lxxviii.

<sup>35</sup> Ira V. Brown, "Pennsylvania and the Rights of the Negro, 1865-1887," *Pennsylvania History*, XXVIII (January, 1961), 52. Segregation in education was not abolished until June, 1881. In May, 1887, the General Assembly

On March 23, 1867, the *Philadelphia Press* carried the following telegraphic item: "Harrisburg, March 22.—Gov. Geary today signed the act requiring railroad and railway companies to carry all passengers, without distinction or color."

Two days later Miss Carrie Lacount, a teacher in a colored school, was refused admission to a city passenger car at 9th and Lombard streets. In response to her signal, the conductor refused to stop and shouted out, "We don't allow niggers to ride." The young teacher immediately complained to a magistrate who told her he knew nothing officially of the passage of the car bill and would not rely on newspaper reports. Miss Lacount went to the Commonwealth Secretary of State who was then in the city, obtained a manuscript copy of the bill certified by the official, and returned with it to the magistrate. The conductor was arrested and fined \$100. With this incident segregation on the streetcars of Philadelphia finally came to an end.<sup>36</sup> An abolitionist journal rejoiced:

Henceforward, the weary school-teacher, returning from her arduous day's labor, shall not be condemned to walk to her distant home through cold and storm; henceforward invalid women and aged men shall be permitted to avail themselves of a public conveyance, even though their complexion may not be white. And their scornful brothers and sisters who cannot comfortably sit beside a colored fellow-citizen in a car, will have the right to walk, or indulge in the luxury of a private carriage, if their purses will afford it, and their prejudice is, in their estimation, worth the expense.<sup>37</sup>

The Negro community of Philadelphia celebrated the car victory with a mass meeting in Liberty Hall, but it was featured more by discord than rejoicing. While some speakers hailed William Still for his "self-sacrificing efforts" in behalf of equal rights on the cars, others raised the cry that he and his fellow-

passed "An Act to provide Civil Rights for all People, Regardless of Race or Color." It prohibited discrimination by any person, company, or corporation in restaurants, hotels, theatres, concert halls or places of amusement and on railroads, street railways, and omnibus lines. It provided for a fine of not less than fifty or more than one hundred dollars. (*Pennsylvania Laws* [May 19, 1887], 130-131.)

<sup>36</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, March 26, 1867; *The Christian Recorder*, March 30, 1867.

<sup>37</sup> *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, March 30, 1867.

members of the Statistical Association's car committee had retarded the day of victory by their attempts to distinguish between those Negroes who were entitled to ride in the cars and those who should be excluded because of where, and the conditions under which, they lived. There was also some dispute over which of the various car committees of the Negro organizations—that of the Colored People's Union League, the Social, Civil and Statistical Association of Colored People, or the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League—deserved the most credit for the final victory. There was agreement only on the fact that the bill outlawing discrimination on the streetcars was drawn up by the committee representing the Equal Rights League, and there was common satisfaction expressed that the Democrats must be mortified to learn "*that a bill drafted by colored men, passed the Legislature of the Keystone State.*"<sup>38</sup> Politeness probably kept the speakers from pointing out that the initiative throughout the battle against streetcar segregation had come from the blacks themselves; that they had provided the first committees to challenge existing practices, and that it was not until after seven years of Jim Crow transportation on the horse-cars that the first important white citizens' committee to demand a change in the companies' regulations had come into existence.

Disturbed by the tone of the victory celebration, *The Christian Recorder* expressed the hope that the "brilliant success" scored in the legislature would not be tarnished by a feud over who deserved the most credit for the achievement and called for an end to "personal and party feeling."<sup>39</sup> But this did not assuage the critics of William Still who continued to charge that he had denigrated the masses of Philadelphia Negroes in order to elevate the rights of the elite of the black community. A boycott of Still's coal business was launched, and the poorer classes of Negroes were urged to patronize Copperheads rather than the man who had abused and insulted them.<sup>40</sup>

On April 8, 1867, another meeting was held in Liberty Hall, this time to allow Still to defend his role in the streetcar battle.

<sup>38</sup> *The Christian Recorder*, March 30, 1867.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Alberta S. Norwood, "Negro Welfare Work in Philadelphia, Especially as Illustrated by the Career of William Still, 1775-1930" (M.A. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1931), 63.

The meeting was chaired by Robert Purvis and was devoted entirely to a two-hour address by Still tracing the history of his contributions in the car campaign from his first letter to the press in 1859 to the passage of the car bill eight years later. The lengthy speech—interrupted at intervals by shouts of disagreement from a group of young Negroes—was later published by Still at his own expense as a pamphlet. The back cover was devoted to an advertisement for Still's coal business and two tributes from the Philadelphia newspapers testifying to his "high reputation" for integrity and promptness in business transactions, the "good quality" of his coal, and the "liberal terms" on which it might be purchased by dealers.<sup>41</sup>

Following the second Liberty Hall meeting, *The Christian Recorder* gave the anti-Still elements a stern lecture. "We must differ among ourselves on many public questions pertaining to men and measures," it began. "But let us differ on fair statements of facts and arguments, and study to avoid violence, selfishness and falsehood." Then it got down to the heart of the whole dispute. The black youth of Philadelphia, it cautioned, should not disdain the advice of older members of the Negro community, nor "throw aside the advice and good wishes of worthy, discreet well-wishers and friends." It became clear that what was really at the root of the conflict was the existence of a real generation gap in the Philadelphia community. During the battle against car segregation younger and more militant blacks, like Catto and Oliver, had voiced scorn for the elitist position of the older leaders of the Negro community, and they had resented their tendency to rely more on the good will of upper class whites than on mobilizing the black masses in the struggle for their rights. Moreover, they had never been too impressed by the fact that so many ministers, merchants, lawyers, and politicians had signed petitions and attended the Concert

<sup>41</sup> The pamphlet was entitled *A Brief Narrative of the Struggle for the Rights of the Colored People of Philadelphia in the City Railway Cars; and a Defence of William Still. Relating to His Agency Touching the Passage of the Late Bill, &c. Read Before a Large Public Meeting, Held in Liberty Hall, Lombard St. below Eighth, April 8th, 1867*. It was reprinted in 1969 as part of the Afro-American History Series, Historic Publication No. 240, edited by Maxwell Whiteman. However, this edition does not include the back-cover advertisements of the original. The two papers quoted in this advertisement were the *North American and United States Gazette*, February 9, 1867, and the *Press*, April 1, 1867.

Hall protest meeting. Only three of these ministers—the Reverends William H. Furness, B. F. Barrett, and Phillips Brooks—had ever dared to express opposition to car segregation in sermons to their congregations. Most of the merchants and lawyers who had signed the petitions had publicly endorsed Mayor Henry, a vicious foe of equality for Negroes in Philadelphia, for re-election. And several of the politicians had bottled up the car bill in the House Railway Committee in 1865 and had only acted favorably when they feared future reprisals at the polls by Negroes armed with the ballot. In short, a conflict had emerged in the Negro community during the battle to end street-car discrimination which was to increase in intensity as the struggle for equality continued.<sup>42</sup>

On one point all involved in the car controversy agreed. Regardless of color or age, Philadelphia deserved no credit for the success of the long struggle to end segregation on its streetcars. "No thanks to Philadelphia for this thing," wrote the local correspondent of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*:

It is no compliment to the community or the churches that the Legislature was at last obliged to interfere in behalf of justice. Indeed, it is mortifying to know that it was a power abroad and not humanity at home that accomplished this act for human rights. How much more worthy the character of an enlightened community had it sprung from a willingness to be just, a voluntary movement unto all their rights.<sup>43</sup>

The Concert Hall Committee, reporting in 1867 on the conclusion of its work, made much the same point. It noted that neither it nor any of the committees organized by the Negro people had received support from the press and pulpit; that of seven daily newspapers, only two had lent their aid to the movement for equality on the cars, that only three white clergymen had ever referred to the question in their pulpits, and that only "the near approach of negro suffrage in the State" had produced the change in the legislature which had made victory possible. Somewhat sadly, it concluded that "love to

<sup>42</sup> *The Christian Recorder*, April 13, 1867; *Why Colored People in Philadelphia Are Excluded from the Street Cars?*, 26-27.

<sup>43</sup> *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 16, 23, March 30, 1867.

the Lord and the neighbor has had little to do with this change."<sup>44</sup> One commentator noted:

No laws that can be passed to-day can blot out the wrongs hitherto done, or efface the memory of many outrageous scenes of the past. They cannot atone for the injuries that the colored people have endured, or give redress for their manifold grievances in the years gone by. It furnishes another chapter of "man's inhumanity to man," the long suffering and patient endurance of the victims.<sup>45</sup>

Still there were some who saw great hopes for the nation from the triumph. Soon, one commentator predicted, "the presence of colored persons in railway cars will attract no more attention in Philadelphia than it does in other cities; and many foolish persons, who have been horrified by the prospect of such innovation, will wonder at their own folly, for a while, and then forget it." And if this could happen in Philadelphia, the most backward city in the North in according justice to her colored population, then it must be clear that "the equal rights of man, *as man*, are destined to receive universal acknowledgment and respect." Who, in the light of what had happened in the City of Brotherly Love, could now "doubt the final glorious result?"<sup>46</sup>

Philadelphia Negroes had doubts, and it did not take long before these were justified. The year following the enactment of the law forbidding segregation on the streetcars, the Democrats won the election. On April 1, 1870, Hiram R. Revels, black senator from Mississippi, the first Negro to be seated in Congress, was denied the right to use the Academy of Music for an address. The board of directors deemed it "inexpedient" for a black man, even though a Senator of the United States, to use the leading auditorium in Philadelphia. The *Philadelphia Post* commented:

Surely a Senator of the United States might be allowed to speak in our Academy of Music. But Mr. Revels is a

<sup>44</sup> *Report of the Committee Appointed for the Purpose of Securing to Colored People in Philadelphia the Right to the Use of the Street-Cars*, 3; see also *Why Colored People in Philadelphia Are Excluded from the Street Cars?*, 4-5.

<sup>45</sup> *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 15, 1867.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, March 30, 1867.



colored man, and this respectable Board has the negro-phobia so bad that it cannot bear the idea of hearing eloquence from any one who is not lucky enough to be white. It has repeatedly refused Frederick Douglass the privilege of lecturing in the Academy, although he alone has more brains than almost any six members of the Board together.

Of these six directors, all were Republicans except one; the Republicans had cast their votes against Revels as a speaker, while the lone Democrat had voted for him.<sup>47</sup>

In the fall of 1870, when Philadelphia Negroes went to the polls for the first time since 1838, federal troops had to be sent to the city to see that they were permitted to cast their ballots. The following year no federal troops came, and three Negroes were killed by mobs and many injured. Among those killed was Octavius V. Catto, the young colored high school principal who held a commission as a major in the infantry of the Union army and was one of the leaders of the successful battle to end streetcar segregation.<sup>48</sup>

But even Philadelphia progressed; in 1899 W. E. B. DuBois, in his monumental study of the Philadelphia Negro, noted that while "a deep-rooted and determined prejudice still remained, . . . it showed signs of yielding."<sup>49</sup> The streetcar issue continued to be a disturbing element in relations between black and white Philadelphians, but it now revolved around the opportunities for Negroes to be hired other than as porters and sweepers. The struggle over this issue came to a climax in 1944 following a War Manpower Commission order, enforcing a directive of the Fair Employment Practice Committee, upgrading eight Negroes to platform workers on the streetcars. A wildcat strike of less than 200 men against the order, aided and abetted by the Transit Company and local political leaders, broke out and lasted from August 1 to 7, 1944. It was accompanied by a small riot in the angry Negro community. The strike was broken when President Roosevelt sent 10,000 troops into Philadelphia.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> *The Nation*, April 7, 1870; Elizabeth Lawson, *The Gentleman from Mississippi: Our First Negro Senator* (New York, 1960), 33-34.

<sup>48</sup> *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, October 11, 14, 1871; Brown, "Pennsylvania and the Rights of Negroes," 53-54.

<sup>49</sup> W. E. B. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (Philadelphia, 1899), 43.

<sup>50</sup> *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, August 1-10, 1944; American Council on Race Relations, *Negro Platform Workers* (Chicago, 1945), 3-20; Joseph

While a goodly number of Philadelphians condemned the strike solely because it interfered with the war effort, others squarely faced the issue of discrimination and racism which had triggered the walkout. On the fifth day of the strike, the *Evening Bulletin* carried an advertisement inserted by a coalition of black and white organizations in Philadelphia, including the A. M. E. Church, American Jewish Congress, Catholic Interracial Council, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Urban League, CIO Committee to Abolish Discrimination, Committee on Race Relations of the Society of Friends, and the Inter-Racial Discussion Group. The signers called for a grand jury investigation of the strike on the ground that it was not only "treason against the American war effort" but also "traitorous to the fundamental principles of American liberty and the right of all men for equal opportunity to live and to earn their living—without discrimination."<sup>51</sup> On October 17, 1944, the *Evening Bulletin* had the following notice: "As a direct result of this summer's Philadelphia Transportation Company strike, a number of Germantown citizens have banded together to form 'The Good Neighbors of Germantown,' an organization set up to promote interracial friendship."

Contradictions between American ideals and the reality of life for black Americans during the ante-bellum and Civil War years were not confined to Philadelphia. What the battle to desegregate the streetcars of Philadelphia reveals, perhaps more so than elsewhere, is that while they gained some valuable white allies, black Americans had to fall back primarily upon their own resources to pierce the ice of indifference and change the pattern of segregation imposed by a hostile, white world.

E. Weckler, "Prejudice Is Not the Whole Story," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, IX (Summer, 1945), 126-139; G. Gordon Brown, *Law Administration and Negro-White Relations in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1947), 122-130. The wildcat strike was condemned by the Transportation Workers Union (CIO).

<sup>51</sup> Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin*, August 5, 1944. The other organizations listed in the advertisement were: Allied Veterans Association of Pennsylvania; A. M. E. Preachers Meeting of Philadelphia; Baptist Ministers Conference of Philadelphia and Vicinity; Department of Race Relations of Federation of Churches; Fellowship Commission; Fellowship House; Germantown-Chestnut Hill Ministerial Association; Jewish Peoples Fraternal Order, I. W. O.; National Alliance of Postal Employees; National Bar Association; National Conference of Christians and Jews; National Lawyers Guild; North Philadelphia Civic League; Pennsylvania Baptist State Convention; Philadelphia Industrial Union Council, CIO; Philadelphia Metropolitan Council for Equal Job Opportunity; and South Philadelphia Civic League.