

The Philadelphia Race Riot of 1918

WITH the entrance of the United States into World War I in April, 1917, many Americans, especially blacks, hoped for a cessation or at least a decrease in mob violence throughout the nation. It is a common phenomenon for domestic hostilities and conflicts to subside and a "united front" to be created when a foreign foe threatens the further existence of the entire society. However, the mobilization of America for war against Germany did not seem to provide sufficient cause to end large-scale violence by whites against black Americans. Although there was a decrease in the number of lynchings between 1916 and 1917 from 54 to 38, racial violence flared up in several places, including Houston, Texas; Chester, Pennsylvania; and, most notably, East St. Louis, Missouri.¹ By 1918 the number of lynchings rose dramatically to 68; mob violence increased throughout the nation and waxed even greater in the immediate post-war period (1919).²

These domestic hostilities were utilized by the Germans for propaganda purposes, both in the United States and abroad. And, as a result, pressure was exerted on President Woodrow Wilson by domestic and foreign journalists and diplomats to make a public statement condemning the violence.³ It is ironic that on the very day that President Wilson issued his statement violence broke out in Philadelphia which eventuated in one of the city's most serious racial conflagrations.

¹ Jessie P. Guzman, "Lynching," Allen D. Grimshaw, ed., *Racial Violence in the United States* (Chicago, 1969), 58-59; Edgar Schuyler, "The Houston Race Riot, 1917," *The Journal of Negro History*, XXIX (1944), 301-338. There has been no study of the Chester Riot of 1917, but for an account of the riot, see *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 28, 1917, pp. 1 & 4; Aug. 4, 1917, p. 1; see also, Elliott M. Rudwick, *Race Riot at East St. Louis, July 2, 1917* (Carbondale, Ill., 1964).

² Guzman, 58-59.

³ The statement of President Wilson on mob violence was printed in most newspapers on July 26 or 27, 1918; see, for example, *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, July 26, 1918, p. 1; *North American*, July 27, 1918, p. 14. For a discussion of the N.A.A.C.P. protests to Wilson against mob violence, see Charles F. Kellogg, *A History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (Baltimore, 1967), I, 227-230.

America's mobilization for the war necessitated an increase in the supply of labor at a time when immigration from Europe had virtually ceased and thousands of American workers had been conscripted into the Army. In order to fill this gap, employers turned to women and blacks.⁴ In the period 1914-1917, hundreds of thousands of blacks migrated to many northern industrial centers and gained jobs in railroad maintenance, steel production, meat packing and automobile production. Migrants to Philadelphia throughout the war period were employed in some industries, but most importantly in the new shipbuilding facility in Hog Island Yard, located in the southern section of the city.⁵

The influx of newcomers into Philadelphia placed an additional strain on the already overcrowded housing available to blacks. According to the census of 1910 there were 84,459 blacks in the city. By 1920 this figure had jumped to 134,229, a fifty-eight percent increase, with the largest numbers arriving in the period 1915-1920. According to Emmett Scott, advisor to the Department of Labor on Negro Problems: "Housing facilities (in Philadelphia) being inadequate, temporary structures were quickly built and when these did not suffice, in the case of railroads, ordinary tents and box cars were used to shelter the new laborers."⁶ Attempts were made to improve these conditions. Committees of concerned citizens, black and white, worked to try and assist the migrants in gaining suitable housing. The Armstrong Association, the National Urban League affiliate in the city, involved itself not only in finding employment for the recent migrants, but also joined in the search for suitable shelters. In December, 1917, the Association coordinated a meeting between the various social agencies serving the black community, and several of the corporations employing Negro labor. At this conference it was agreed that renewed efforts would be made by both groups to improve the housing situation for black workers.⁷

⁴ John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans* (New York, 1956), 466-467; Frank Friedel, *America in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1960), 183-185.

⁵ Friedel, 185-186.

⁶ For an excellent short discussion of the changes in the Negro population in Philadelphia in the period 1900-1960, see E. Digby Baltzell, "Introduction to the 1967 Edition," of *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (New York, 1967), ix-xlv; Emmett Scott, *Negro Migration During the War* (New York, 1920), 134-135.

⁷ Scott, 138-139; see also, Philadelphia Housing Authority, "Negro Migration Study, 1917" (copy), Philadelphia Housing Authority Papers, Temple University, Urban Archives.

However, it was difficult to get around the real problem of migrants being forced to settle in the "colored" sections, which were already overcrowded. Eventually, blacks began to move out of the "ghetto" and into all- or mostly all-white areas, and another dimension was added to the problem of housing. The potentiality for racial friction existed throughout the period, with violence finally breaking out during the summer of 1918.⁸

The first widely reported racial incidents occurred on June 29th and 30th, in the 2500 block of Pine Street in South Philadelphia. These incidents involved attacks upon two black families by white neighbors and the burning of the household furnishings of one of the families. Although personal injuries suffered were minimal, the incidents provoked an acerbic editorial by the city editor, G. Grant Williams, of the *Philadelphia Tribune*, the leading black newspaper in the city. In the editorial, entitled "Dixie Methods in Philadelphia," Williams discussed several of the attacks upon blacks by whites since the fall of 1917 and described the situation as "smoldering." He then went on to give some advice to blacks who might become victims of attack.

We favor peace but we say to the colored people of the Pine Street war-zone, stand your ground like men. This is a free city in a free country and if you are law-abiding you need not fear. Be quiet, be decent, maintain clean wholesome surroundings and if you are attacked defend yourselves like American citizens. A man's home is his castle, defend it if you have to kill some of the dirty foul-mouthed, thieving crew of Schuylkill rats that infest the district. They have ever been a menace to the peace and decency of the district and many of the police either feared or worked in collusion with them.

You are not down in Dixie now and you need not fear the ragged rum-crazed hellion crew, prototypes of your old cracker enemies. They are enemies of all decent law-abiding citizens and the time has come to clean out this nest of dirty curs. . . . They may burn some of the property, but you burn their hides with any weapon that comes handy while they are engaged in that illegal pastime. We stand for law and order, decency and cleanliness, but knowing as we do the facts, that our people are driven from pillar to post looking for houses to rent and that they pay more rent than whites for the same shacks, our patience runs out.

⁸ Louise V. Kennedy, "Race Relations," *The Negro Peasant Turns Cityward* (1930, reprinted New York, 1968), 212-220.

Be at peace with all men at all times is our motto, if they will let you be; but when they tread upon your rights, fight them to the bitter end. While the world is being made safe for Democracy, Philadelphia must be made a safe city wherein to dwell and if the law is insufficient we'll meet the rowdies of the town and give them shot and shell. These skunks are shouters for home rule but they represent the scum of Erin's sod.⁹

On July 26, 1918, just three weeks after this editorial appeared, racial violence erupted.

The precipitating incident involved Mrs. Adella Bond, a probation officer in the Municipal Court, who purchased and moved into her new home in the 2900 block of Ellsworth Street on July 24. On Friday evening, July 26th, a large crowd of whites gathered outside her home. Finally someone in the mob hurled a large rock through Mrs. Bond's parlor window. According to Mrs. Bond, "I didn't know what the mob would do next, and I fired my revolver from my upper window to call the police. A policeman came, but wouldn't try to cope with the mob alone, so he turned in a riot call."¹⁰ During the commotion, a white man named Joseph Kelly was shot in the leg. Kelly and several other men were arrested and were later held by Magistrate Carl Baker for rioting.¹¹

The only major incident reported for Saturday, July 27th, involved William Box, a Negro who was accused of thievery and chased by a group of white men. At Second and Bainbridge Streets Louis Sacks, a clerk in the Bureau of Police, attempted to stop Box, who then allegedly pulled a knife and cut Sacks on the arm. Several policemen arrived on the scene, but were unable to curb the mob of whites and "the negro was struck many times by persons in the crowd. Cries of 'lynch him' caused the police to send for help, and a squad of reserves arrived in time to prevent the mob doing serious injury to the negro." Box was arrested and taken to the hospital.¹²

Early Sunday morning hostilities broke out again between blacks and whites, this time near the corner of Twenty-sixth and Oakford

⁹ Editorial, *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 6, 1918, p. 4.

¹⁰ The statement of Mrs. Bond was reprinted in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 31, 1918, p. 15; *Philadelphia Tribune*, Aug. 3, 1918.

¹¹ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 28, 1918, p. 8; *North American*, July 28, 1918, p. 18.

¹² *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 28, 1918, p. 8; *North American*, July 28, 1918, p. 1.

Streets. A mob of whites began chasing Jesse Butler as he returned home from a party. While running, Butler fired a shot into the mob of pursuers and it was alleged that it hit Hugh Lavery, a white man, who was in the midst of the action. In a short time, police arrived and found that Butler had also been wounded in the melee. They took both wounded men to Polyclinic Hospital, but Lavery died before arriving.¹³

Violent clashes between groups of whites and blacks continued throughout the day. At about three on Sunday afternoon, a mob of whites encountered Henry Huff, a black, in the vicinity of Twenty-seventh and Titan Streets. Huff was said to have dared the crowd to attack him and brandished a pistol, before running into a house on Titan Street. When Thomas McVay, a patrolman in civilian clothes, followed Huff and attempted to take the gun away, he was shot and killed. Another policeman, Detective Thomas Myers, rushed after Huff and received a bullet in the thigh. Frank Donohue, a civilian who was behind Myers, was shot in the groin as he approached the house into which Huff had fled. Police finally rushed the house and captured Huff as he was reloading his revolver. He was beaten and arrested and finally dragged from the building.¹⁴

The news of the shootings spread and a general outbreak of hostilities followed. Groups of whites attacked blacks as they alighted from trolley cars or walked through the streets. Policemen from all over the city were ordered into the riot zone to bolster the police of the area.¹⁵ The Home Defense Reserves, made up of civilians who were used in emergencies during the wartime shortage in police manpower, were mobilized and assisted the police in their activities. By nightfall Sunday, approximately 250 police and Home Defense Reservists were patrolling the section, but violent flare-ups continued.¹⁶

On Monday, July 29th, rioting was renewed and attacks on

¹³ Variations of the story appeared in the following Philadelphia papers on July 29, 1918: *Public Ledger*, *Record*, *Press*, *North American*, *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, *Inquirer*. See also, Walter White, *Philadelphia Race Riots of July 26 to July 31, 1918* (published by N.A.A.C.P. and Philadelphia branch, November, 1918), 4.

¹⁴ See same newspapers listed above, and W. White, 3-4.

¹⁵ For pictures of whites attacking blacks, see *Public Ledger*, July 29, 1918 p. 2; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 29, 1918, p. 2. See also, *North American*, July 29, 1918, pp. 1 & 4.

¹⁶ *North American*, July 29, 1918, p. 4; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 29, 1918, p. 4.

blacks became more frequent. A large mob attacked the home of Henry Huff, allegedly to avenge the slaying of Patrolman Thomas McVay. Although the family was able to escape unharmed, the mob wrecked the interior of the house on Titan Street, hurled out the furniture, and set it on fire. According to one account, "Policemen arrived only after the damage had been done, although nearly one hundred men took part in the raid upon the house, and the houses of half a dozen other colored families living in the same neighborhood were destroyed."¹⁷

Saloons in the riot area were ordered closed on Monday by Captain William Mills, the Acting Superintendent of Police. This occurred, however, only after F. M. Holden, depot quartermaster of the Federal Arsenal, threatened to close them. Holden was reacting to the shooting of William Black, a Negro employee at the Arsenal, in one of the saloons near the government installation.¹⁸ Superintendent Mills also decided to accept the assistance of the local armed forces and allowed sixty-five sailors and fifteen marines to aid the police in patrolling the riot zone.¹⁹

The killing of the one black who was to die in the racial disturbance took place that Monday morning. Patrolmen Roy Ramsey and John Schneider encountered Riley Bullock on Point Breeze Avenue. The policemen stopped Bullock, searched him, and finding a pocket knife, decided to beat and arrest him. According to early accounts, after the patrolmen were able to "subdue" Bullock, they brought him to the rear entrance of the Twenty-first and Federal Streets Station. While taking him into the station, Bullock was shot by "a negro, who was seen making his escape. The police gave chase, but the alleged assailant managed to escape."²⁰ It was later revealed, however, that Bullock was killed by a bullet from the

¹⁷ Quoted from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 30, 1918, p. 1; see also, *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, July 30, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 30, 1918, p. 3; *North American*, July 30, 1918, pp. 1 & 4.

¹⁹ The incident that led to the decision to use local servicemen was the reported shooting of Mrs. Sarah Abrams, a white woman, in the arm by a Negro man; and the shooting of Rosanna Hill, a nine-year-old white girl, in the leg on Monday afternoon. See *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, July 30, 1918, p. 1; *Philadelphia Press*, July 30, 1918, p. 7; *North American*, July 30, 1918, p. 4.

²⁰ Most of the daily newspapers carried the unconfirmed story that Bullock was shot by a "negro" on July 30, 1918. The papers reported that he was killed by a bullet from the gun of Officer Ramsey on July 31, 1918.

gun of Patrolman Roy Ramsey. The officer later claimed that he slipped on the steps and the gun "went off" as he was taking Bullock into the station. This incident was to form the basis upon which black citizens would enter into extended litigation to determine whether or not the killing was really an "accident."²¹

One of the most controversial and brutal incidents of the race riot also involved Officers Ramsey and Schneider. This incident was not reported in the daily newspapers. In the arresting of Preston Lewis by Ramsey and Schneider on Monday morning, it was alleged that Lewis was beaten so badly that he had to be taken to Polyclinic Hospital. While under the care of several doctors and nurses of the Hospital, it was reported that Schneider began striking Lewis as he lay on the operating table. White officers present did nothing to stop him, and the hospital attendants became frightened and rushed from the room. Finally, a black policeman intervened, whereupon an altercation began between the two officers. At that point, several white officers grabbed Schneider and carried him from the room.²² This incident also became the subject of litigation involving many members of the black community.

Frequent arrests were made throughout the four days of rioting, but most of those arrested were black, although many observers agreed that whites were the instigators of the vast majority of the riotous situations.²³ After receiving reports of sniping, Acting Superintendent Mills ordered the search of homes of blacks for weapons. On Sunday and Monday, attempts were also made to keep nonresidents from entering the riot zone after it was reported that Negroes from other sections were bringing "reinforcements by the automobile-load into the riot torn area." Rain on Monday evening kept incidents to a minimum as police and reservists patrolled riot sections.²⁴

On Tuesday, July 30th, only a few flare-ups were reported, the

²¹ White, 3-5.

²² *Ibid.*, 4-6. Depositions of eye-witness accounts of the attack on Preston Lewis may be found in N.A.A.C.P. Records: Administrative Files, Subject Files, Lynching, Philadelphia, Pa. (Race Riots) July-Nov. 1918, Box C 364, Library of Congress.

²³ In the four days of rioting, approximately sixty blacks were arrested, and three whites. See White, 6.

²⁴ Quoted from *Philadelphia Record*, July 29, 1918, p. 1; *Philadelphia Press*, July 30, 1918, p. 7.

most noteworthy being the attempted lynching of Harold Freeman for allegedly stealing a watermelon from the store of Julius Swisky at 518 South Lombard Street.²⁵ Thus, after four days of disturbances, three persons were dead, one lay dying of wounds received during the rioting, and several hundred persons were recovering from injuries sustained.

To protest these events a meeting was scheduled by B. G. Collier, head of the Knights of Pythias, for Monday evening, July 29th, in order to plan an organized black response to the rioting. Representatives were chosen at that meeting, and on Tuesday morning two delegations of prominent black Philadelphians called on city officials. One delegation led by Collier represented the lay organizations, the other led by the Rev. R. R. Wright, Jr. represented the black Methodist ministers of the city. Unable to meet with Mayor Thomas Smith, the delegations spoke with the Director of Public Safety, William H. Wilson, and left a letter stating the position of some members of the black community on the causes and consequences of the riot. Subsequently reprinted in several newspapers, the letter expressed the disgust of blacks over the lack of protection they had received from mob violence. With respect to the rioting, the letter stated that "we put the whole blame upon your incompetent police force. But for the sympathy of the police, their hobnobbing with the mob, what had now become the disgrace of Philadelphia would have been nothing more than a petty row. Your police have for a long time winked at disorder, such as the beating up of negroes, the stoning of their homes and the attacking of their churches." The letter went on to deplore the wholesale arrests of Negroes, while allowing "white hoodlums to roam free to do damage." It ended by suggesting that the riot would not have been as bloody if black policemen had been allowed to patrol the riot zone.²⁶ G. Grant Williams of the *Tribune* wrote the Mayor and asked "Is it not lawful Mr. Mayor, for a man to protect his home if anyone attempts to damage it? Why then do your police arrest a colored man or woman for protecting their home? . . . The colored people of Philadelphia are law-abiding citizens and ask your protection,

²⁵ *North American*, July 31, 1918, p. 2; *Philadelphia Record*, July 31, 1918, p. 10.

²⁶ *White*, 6-7; *Philadelphia Tribune*, Aug. 3, 1918, p. 1; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 31, 1918, p. 1; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, July 30, 1918, p. 1.

and if you don't protect them, they shall and will defend themselves."²⁷

After the initial arrests on Sunday, July 29th, black lawyers led by G. Edward Dickerson were in the courts defending blacks who were arrested during the rioting. However this was just one of the many problems blacks faced in Philadelphia in the immediate aftermath of the riot. Many persons felt that as a group they needed to insure the future protection of their civil rights through an organized effort. Thus, during the week of August 10th, several leading ministers and representatives of many black lay organizations met and formed the Colored Protective Association. Under the leadership of the Rev. R. R. Wright, Jr., the Association was to serve several purposes. It was to work "to protect colored people who have been arrested unjustly, and who are sent to prison often because they have no friends to speak for them. The Association will speak for the friendless Negro in the courts. . . . In a year thousands of Negroes are sent to prison, not because they are guilty, but because they have no one to represent them." At the same time, the Colored Protective Association was going to involve itself with the ongoing problems of the Philadelphia black community. It was to support the right of blacks to live anywhere in the city. The Association would provide counsel in cases of discrimination involving not only housing, but also the schools, places of amusement and employment. It had as its ultimate goal, "to reach the last Negro in the city of Philadelphia, to bring all colored people into one organization for the purpose of having a permanent organization of protection."²⁸

In its early days, the Colored Protective Association was quite successful in securing contributions for its efforts from the black community. Hundreds of dollars were raised at rallies sponsored by black churches. Many of the most important members of the black community were listed among its officers, directors, and membership.²⁹ The Association virtually took upon itself the prosecution of

²⁷ Editorial (G. Grant Williams), *Philadelphia Tribune*, Aug. 3, 1918, p. 4.

²⁸ Extended reports on the activities of the Colored Protective Association are found in the *Philadelphia Tribune*, Aug. 17, 1918, p. 1; and Sept. 28, 1918, p. 1.

²⁹ Colored Protective Association, Officers: Pres. R. R. Wright, Jr.; Vice-Presidents, R. J. Williams, A. R. Robinson, C. A. Tindley, A. Hanum; Secretary, J. C. Beckett; Asst. Secretary, F. H. Butler; Treas., F. W. Graham. Advisory Board: Bishop Levi J. Coppin,

Patrolman Roy Ramsey for the killing of Riley Bullock, and Patrolman John Schneider for the assault on Preston Lewis. It also spearheaded an investigation of the practices of the police in the Seventeenth District. In all three instances, it met with some degree of success.

One of the main reasons for the organization of the Colored Protective Association was the lack of activity of the Philadelphia branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.) on behalf of the blacks who were victims of racial discrimination and police brutality in the city. The N.A.A.C.P. from its beginning in 1911 remained highly centralized and the main office maintained close contact with and control over its branches. However, within this centralized structure, local branches were not only supposed to supply information about the activities of the Association and hold mass meetings to raise funds, but they were also supposed to work to lessen race discrimination and "to secure full civil rights and political rights to colored citizens and others. . . ." ³⁰ Whereas the Philadelphia branch was fairly successful in the former obligations, it was sadly lacking in the latter.

Early in July, 1918, John Shillady, National Secretary for the N.A.A.C.P., received two letters from white Philadelphians mentioning racial incidents that had occurred in Philadelphia, which the writers felt should be investigated. The first from a Mrs. Helen Marshall provided the National Office with detailed information on the attacks on the black families in Philadelphia at the end of June, 1918. ³¹ The second letter came from a Mr. Edward C. Gumby, who described the discrimination leveled against black soldiers who stopped to eat at the Normandie Hotel, located at Thirty-Sixth and Chestnut Streets in Philadelphia. Mrs. Marshall stated that the

Bishop J. A. Johnson, Bishop J. S. Caldwell, Bishop G. L. Blackwell, Bishop W. H. Heard, Bishop E. Tyree, Bishop P. A. Boulden, Bishop B. Ramsey, Hon. J. C. Dancy, the Revs. J. A. Whitted, W. G. Parks, E. W. Johnson, L. J. Jordan, S. C. Jackson, H. L. Philips and P. Scott. Among the Directors were: W. A. Harrod, I. H. Ringgold, W. A. Creditt, E. C. Brown, C. L. Knox, H. M. Minton, W. H. Moses, W. H. Barnes, C. D. Atkins and others. *Philadelphia Tribune*, Aug. 17, 1918, p. 1.

³⁰ C. F. Kellogg, *NAACP, A History*, 120.

³¹ Mrs. Helen R. Marshall to N.A.A.C.P., July 18, 1918, N.A.A.C.P. Records, Box C 364.

reason she had not brought her matter to the attention of the Philadelphia branch of the Association was because she had been told by two people that "the local branch would not consider the matter, and that the matter would be referred to a certain lawyer, who would do nothing but would be sure to secure a good fee."³² Walter White, the Assistant Secretary of the Association, was sent to Philadelphia to investigate the riot and was informed by Shillady of the charges in the letter.³³

In the numerous accounts of the riot that appeared in the daily white press and the weekly black press, no mention was made of the Philadelphia branch of the N.A.A.C.P. However, in the account of the riot written by Walter White and published by the Philadelphia branch of the Association, one of the largest sections of the report was devoted to a discussion of the "Action Taken by the Philadelphia Branch of the N.A.A.C.P." In that section, White pointed out that the Association was represented at the protest meeting called by B. G. Collier on Monday evening, July 29th, and that J. Max Barber, President of the Philadelphia branch, was a member of the delegation that called on Mayor Smith on Tuesday, July 30, 1918.³⁴ This was followed by an appeal to Philadelphians to support the Association in the fight for civil rights in the city, rather than "many duplicating organizations with overlapping purposes. . . ." In concluding, White, speaking for the Philadelphia branch, pointed out that "we wish expressly to disclaim the slightest hostility of purpose or intent to any movement heretofore or hereafter to be organized. Our appeal is not for prestige or preferment but for a united Philadelphia that we may better serve the common cause to which our organization is dedicated."³⁵ It was too late, however, and the Colored Protective Association, which had early taken the initiative to support and protect the black victims of mob violence and police brutality, had become identified with the legal

³² *Ibid.*; Edwin C. Gumby to Editor of *The Crisis*, July 16, 1918, *ibid.*

³³ John R. Shillady to Walter White, July 31, 1918, *ibid.*

³⁴ Statement of J. Max Barber, Nov. 6, 1918. It is interesting that in the three earlier drafts of the report of White's investigation, there was also no mention of the action of the local N.A.A.C.P. branch. However, much of the information presented by Barber in the statement of November 6, appears in the final published pamphlet. N.A.A.C.P. Records, Box C 364.

³⁵ White, 6-7.

struggle to redress the grievances of black Philadelphians in the aftermath of the July riot.

The most notable success of the newly mobilized black community following the riot was the transfer of the commander and all of the police officers in the Seventeenth District, the district where most of the rioting had taken place, to other districts throughout the city. The accusations of lack of protection of black citizens and close association with the white criminal element in the district finally resulted in the removal of the entire force by the Director of Public Safety. This event was hailed as a major victory for Philadelphia's black community.³⁶

The Colored Protective Association involved itself very closely in the two cases of alleged police brutality. Its representatives were present with witnesses at the various inquests into the death of Riley Bullock, and in the subsequent court hearings the Association worked to bring about the conviction of Officers Roy Ramsey and John Schneider. The most disappointing aspect of the entire affair, and one of the main reasons why both Ramsey and Schneider were not convicted, was the poor performance in court of the black policemen who were present at the killing of Bullock and the assault on Preston Lewis. In court, the colored policeman, who was supposed to have kept Officer Schneider from killing Lewis as he lay on the hospital bed, claimed that he "saw nothing." The two colored policemen who were supposed to have been in the station at the time of the shooting of Bullock, went so far as to claim in court that they "never saw Officer Ramsey before."³⁷

Nevertheless, the Colored Protective Association did succeed in mobilizing the black community and in informing blacks of their civil rights under the law and of the alternatives to gross racial discrimination. Speeches were given in numerous churches by representatives of the organization to inform black citizens of its existence and activities. Legal assistance was provided for those blacks who were arrested or victims of assaults by whites.³⁸ In the months following the riot, attacks on blacks were given wide coverage in the

³⁶ *Philadelphia Tribune*, Aug. 31, 1918, p. 1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Sept. 28, 1918, p. 1.

³⁸ *Ibid.* For the list of churches that sponsored rallies for the Colored Protective Association see also *Philadelphia Tribune*, Aug. 17, 1918, p. 1.

Philadelphia Tribune. Protests were made to government officials when white sailors stationed in the city were involved in attacks on black citizens. These complaints eventually led to an official investigation of the situation by the commander of the Fourth Naval District. Black Philadelphians received guarantees from as high as the Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, that these incidents would be investigated and steps would be taken to see that they would not recur.³⁹ These were the more significant and graphic results of the organized efforts of blacks to improve their situation in the City of Brotherly Love in the aftermath of the July, 1918, riot.

This race riot fits very closely into several of the patterns of American racial violence suggested by Allan Grimshaw.⁴⁰ As in other "northern-style riots" the causes of the riot were primarily "secular," that is, the competition for limited housing between blacks and whites generated the racial frictions. The precipitating event, the attack on the home of Mrs. Bond, can also be considered a "secular" event, although several newspapers did report the rumor that the riot started because two white girls had been insulted by a group of black men.⁴¹ A second characteristic of northern-style riots, also found in the Philadelphia situation, was the fact that white aggression and violence were met with black aggression and violence. A third characteristic, the failure to restore the earlier accommodative pattern of race relations, also occurred in Philadelphia. Whereas in "southern-style riots" no major disturbances usually occurred after the riot, in northern riots, such as those in Philadelphia and Chicago, minor violence continued to erupt sporadically in the following months and years.⁴²

At the same time, however, the Philadelphia riot took place primarily in what can be described as an "ecologically contested

³⁹ Josephus Daniels to G. Grant Williams, Sept. 23, 1918; Commander F. W. Hoffman to G. Grant Williams, Sept. 30, 1918. Letters were reprinted in *Philadelphia Tribune*, Oct. 5, 1918, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Allan D. Grimshaw, "Three Cases of Racial Violence in the United States," *Racial Violence in the United States*, 105-115.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 107. Grimshaw contrasts "secular" incidents, those involving "assaults (by blacks) upon the accommodative pattern related to secular spheres," with "sacred" incidents, those that challenge the sacred doctrines of white supremacy, in differentiating causes of racial violence.

⁴² Grimshaw, "Three Cases of Racial Violence," 113-115.

area," and only secondarily in the "Negro slum" area of the city. This was contrary to the pattern identified by Grimshaw, who found that "violence in time of major race riots has been concentrated in Negro slums, which in many cities were served largely by white businesses. Casualties and fatalities occurred most often in slums or along their fringes, and destruction of property, particularly looting, was greatest there."⁴³ As was mentioned above, the riot in Philadelphia began when blacks began to move into areas that were previously all or mostly white, *i.e.* a contested area.

The accounts of the riot in the Philadelphia white press fit into the "general pattern of misreporting" suggested by Terry Ann Knopf.⁴⁴ Most of the newspapers were guilty of "rumor-mongering," that is disseminating unverified reports which reflect "the gamut of rumors about blacks circulating in the white community." One newspaper went so far as to suggest that blacks were amassing weapons to drive the whites out of South Philadelphia.⁴⁵ Some papers used loaded language in describing blacks who were merely defending themselves, such as "hoodlum" or "vicious brute." And many times the papers published stories that might excite the white community without checking these accounts for their accuracy.⁴⁶

William M. Tuttle, Jr. in the preface to his lengthy study of the Chicago race riot of 1919 castigated white liberal and black scholars who have focused on the negative aspects of the black experience in America: "on the failure, not the success; on group statistics, not on individual human beings; on passive recipients of injustice,

⁴³ Grimshaw, "Urban Racial Violence in the United States: Changing Ecological Considerations," *Racial Violence in the United States*, 290.

⁴⁴ Terry Ann Knopf, "Race, Riots and Reporting," *The Journal of Black Studies*, IV (March, 1974), 303-327.

⁴⁵ *The Philadelphia Record*, July 30, 1918, p. 2, reported erroneously that "a dozen or more loaded revolvers, four modern repeating rifles, one of them loaded with dum dum bullets, and a shotgun were displayed in the hearing room to show that the negroes had prepared to 'clean up' the white population of the section in which the rioting occurred."

⁴⁶ The most widely-reported example of "misinformation" appeared in white dailies on July 29, 1918. These papers reported that upon hearing that her husband had been killed, Mrs. Lavery, who was pregnant, dropped dead. The newspapers also reported that her baby did not survive. This information was completely wrong and retractions appeared on the following day. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 29, 1918, p. 1; July 30, 1918, p. 1; *North American*, July 29, 1918, p. 1; July 30, 1918 p. 4.

not on people capable of adjusting to and ordering their own lives within a caste society." But, Tuttle felt that because his was a study of a race riot, it "has little to say about the healthy or positive aspects of life in the nation's black communities. To most observers, of course, urban riots represent the ultimate failure in a city's race relations."⁴⁷ Though this may have been the case with respect to the Chicago riot, it does not characterize the consequences of the Philadelphia race riot of 1918. The riot had the effect of mobilizing the black community. Black victims of police brutality became the "rallying points" around which the community gathered its resources and began to challenge anew the dominant white establishment. The citizens' committees, and especially the Colored Protective Association, were well aware of the connection between the overt brutality of the mob, and the more subtle discriminations to which blacks were subjected in the schools, theaters, and other public places. And though many of the committees and associations were short-lived, they did have the effect of pushing the lethargic N.A.A.C.P. branch in Philadelphia into action on behalf of civil rights for blacks.⁴⁸ These Philadelphia Negroes were not victorious in all of the legal and political battles in which they became involved in the years following the riot, but they did win a few. And those few victories could set a formidable precedent for any future challenges to the dominant political establishment in the city.

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⁴⁷ William M. Tuttle, Jr., *Race Riot: Chicago in The Red Summer of 1919* (New York, 1970), vi-vii.

⁴⁸ The writer has read *The Philadelphia Tribune* for the period 1918-1930 and there was no further mention of the activities of the Colored Protective Association after 1920. However, during the 1920s, the Philadelphia Branch of the N.A.A.C.P. became more active in the protection of rights of Negroes in Philadelphia. N.A.A.C.P. Branch Correspondence, Philadelphia Branch, 1920-1930, boxes G-186 and G-187, N.A.A.C.P. Records.