"Black and White, Unite and Fight": Interracial Working-Class Solidarity and Racial Employment Equality

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How do the policies and practices of rival workers' organizations affect the level of racial inequality under advanced capitalism? This article addresses this theoretical question by assessing how the interracial unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, as opposed to the racially exclusionist affiliates of the American Federation of Labor, affected the level of employment equality between black and white workers during the 1940s. The study finds that in the 37 nonsouthern states, and especially in the 15 highly unionized states, the stronger the CIO unions were, the more equal were the reductions in the unemployment rates of white and black workers during 1940–50.

No other working class is as diverse in "race, creed, color, or national origin" as America's, and none has experienced as much continual re-

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1 We presented the gist of the substantive theory and some preliminary findings of this analysis in a session at the 1997 ASA annual meeting (Zeitlin and Weyher 1997), at which Fernando Gapasin and D. W. Livingstone made helpful comments. We are especially indebted to Walter Allen, Aldon Morris, Howard Kimeldorf, and Doug McAdam for their detailed and constructive comments on a working paper that was an earlier (and much longer) version of this article (Zeitlin and Weyher 1998). We also benefited from incisive comments on a previous draft of this article by AJS reviewers. Along the way, we also received helpful comments from Elwood M. Beck, Edna Bonacich, Duane Champagne, Dahlia Sabina Elazar, Reynolds Farley, Lani Guinier, Gary Sandefur, Rick Halpern, Herbert Hill, Stanley Lieberson, Nelson Lim, Rob Mare, Ruth Milkman, Judith Stepan-Norris, Roger Waldinger, Bruce Western, and Robert Zieger. We also thank Orley Ashenfelter for providing a copy of his 1972 data set for our "pilot" study on unionization and racial employment equality and the National Bureau of Economic Research for providing a copy of Leo Troy's unpublished unionization data (1956) and granting us permission to utilize them in our analysis. Direct correspondence to Maurice Zeitlin, Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles, California 90095-1551. E-mail: zeitlin@soc.ucla.edu

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composition since its formation.  How to deal with this diversity, especially the relationship between "black" and "white" workers, has been a recurrent, and bedeviling, issue for organized labor.  But this is not a uniquely American dilemma. Workers everywhere in the capitalist world must decide how to deal with competition in the aggregate labor market from unemployed, underemployed, and lower-paid workers, who often also differ in color or ethnicity. They have to try to defend themselves against the drive of employers to lower labor costs both by gaining access to cheaper labor supplies and by raising productivity through the mechanization and rationalization of production and the consequent displacement of employed labor. This tendency toward the cheapening and displacement, and thus inegalitarian differentiation, of labor is an inherent dynamic of capitalist accumulation that goes on regardless of the sex, creed, ethnicity, or color of potential or actual competitive labor.  So to gain a modicum of job security and protect their wages and working conditions, organized workers are compelled to choose between a strategy of exclusion, which may also take the form of ethnic or racial discrimination, or of inclusion, and class-wide solidarity (Botwinick 1993, pp. 9, 99, 101, 164; Williams 1991, p. 86; Rubery 1978, p. 34).

The choice they make, both in principle and in practice, is contingent, we argue, upon the struggle among rival workers' organizations to define their common identity and collective interest; in turn, this "intraclass struggle within the class struggle" (Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin 1989, p. 504) is relatively autonomous, given the dynamics of capitalist competition, in

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2 This quoted phrase is from Franklin D. Roosevelt's June 1941 executive order establishing the Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC); it repeats almost verbatim the declaration of aims in the 1938 founding constitution of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).

3 We use the conventional labels "black" and "white" here, for they least distort the common usages and meanings of the era examined here (from the mid-1930s through the mid-1950s); "black" and "Negro" (or "colored")—as in National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) were used synonymously (although the term "Afro-American" was used by some black intellectuals, e.g., the newspaper, the Washington Afro-American). Just as these labels have shifted historically both in usage and meaning, with the label "African-American" now apparently in vogue, so too has the term "race"; for "race" in this sense is "constructed and transformed sociohistorically through competing political projects" (Omi and Winant 1994, p. 71). Our focus here is precisely on how the "competing political projects" of rival working-class organizations affect the meaning, and relevance, of "race" for workers getting hired or fired.

4 Max Weber put it well: "Under the pressure of competition, profitability depends on the elimination of human labour as far as possible by new, labour-saving machines, and especially the highest-paid type of workers who cost the business most. Hence skilled workers must be replaced by unskilled workers or workers trained directly at the machine. This is inevitable and it happens all the time" ([1918] 1994, p. 284).
determining the structure of inequality—and of racial inequality, in particular—within the working class.

THE CIO ERA

In this analysis, we focus on the "CIO era," a historical moment when the struggle of America's workers for self-organization impelled them, as never before, to choose between bigotry and brotherhood (Lubell 1956, pp. 48–49). The Congress of Industrial Organizations embodied the most "sustained surge of worker organization in American history" (Zieger 1995, p. 1). From the moment of its conception in late 1935 as a rebellious "committee for industrial organization" inside the American Federation of Labor and its subsequent expulsion for "fomenting insurrection," the CIO's organizers sought to appeal to the workers' own sense of ethnic or racial identity as a way, paradoxically, not of separating them but of "articulating worker unity" (Bernstein 1970, pp. 217, 422–23; Cohen 1990, p. 339). Under the old radical banner of "black and white, unite and fight," the CIO embraced the aspirations of black workers and stood for black/white equality, "as had no previous sustained American labor organization" (Zieger 1995, pp. 153, 372). For most of its 20 years of independent existence, 1935–55, the CIO was a potent, organized expression of interracial working-class solidarity.

"Like a Bad Dream Gone"

Nearly half a century before the CIO's birth, discrimination in hiring, job classification, and job allocation by employers had created and consolidated a racial division of labor, or a "color-caste system," in which black workers, if they were hired at all, were "the last hired, and the first fired"; they were relegated, compared to white workers, to the more dangerous, filthy, and menial jobs. Black workers were all but excluded (or expelled) from the skilled (and supervisory) jobs and occupations, and when—rarely—they held the same jobs, they were paid less than white workers, through discriminatory wage scales, for the same work (Stevenson 1993, p. 45; Hill 1985; Cochran 1977, p. 222n; Ross 1967). In opposition to the AFL and its affiliates, which were long implicated in this system and disfigured by both overt and tacit racism, CIO organizers asked every worker who joined up to sign a pledge saying: "I do sincerely promise, of my own free will, . . . never to discriminate against a fellow worker.

Overall, union membership rose from 3.5 million to over 14 million between 1935 and 1945, when some 30% of all workers were union members (Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997, p. 90).
on account of creed, color, or nationality” (Levinson 1938, p. 299). CIO organizers, many of whom were black, told workers that the cause of “industrial unionism,” in opposition to narrow craft exclusionism and the “race ideas” in which it was often expressed, represented “a new conception of our class duty . . . and class identity”: in a word, “class solidarity” (CIO 1936; Kampelman 1957, p. xiv; CIO 1937). At the start of the CIO drive at Inland Steel in 1935, for example, a white steel worker exclaimed to his fellows that he now realized that “you must forget that the man working beside you is a ‘Nigger,’ Jew or ‘Pollock.’ . . . [He] is a working man like yourself and being exploited by the ‘boss’ in the name of racial and religious prejudice. You work together—[So] Fight Together!!” (Cohen 1990, 333–34).

The CIO’s interracial organizing had “done the greatest thing in the world gettin’ everybody who works in the yards together,” said a black packinghouse worker in 1939, “and breakin’ up the hate and bad feelings that used to be held against the Negro.” Or as another black worker described the change wrought by the CIO at Armour’s sheep kill, “The white butchers hated the Negroes because they figured they would scab on them when trouble came and then get good-paying, skilled jobs besides. . . . [But] with the CIO in, all that’s like a bad dream gone. Oh, we still have a hard row, but this time the white men are with us and we’re with them” (Cohen 1990, pp. 333–34, 337).

The CIO proclaimed that it was “determined to build an organization that would rob the exploiters of the weapon of disunity. . . . The CIO is a people’s movement, for security, for jobs, for civil rights and freedom. It speaks for all the working men and women of America, Negro and white . . . excluding none, discriminating against none” (CIO 1942, pp. 4, 10). In 1930, according to an NAACP survey, the country had “no more than 50,000 colored members of national unions” (Wolters 1970, p. 172).6 By late 1945, about a half million black workers belonged to CIO unions—or roughly one in 10 CIO members, and a far higher proportion in the heartland of basic industry (Foner 1976, p. 231).

So what difference did CIO unions make in determining the level of employment equality between black and white workers? The answer, we will show, is that CIO unions substantially increased the level of em-

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6 Union membership records for these years generally made no distinction by race or color. Available estimates of black union membership are quite inconsistent (see Reid 1930, pp. 101–3; Wolters 1970, p. 172; Marshall 1967a). Foner guesses that “barely 100,000 blacks” were members of any union in the immediate pre-CIO years (1976, p. 231). A CIO publication states that “there were fewer than 125,000 Negroes in the labor movement before the CIO” (1942, p. 4).
ployment equality between black and white workers during the 1940s. In an epilogue, we briefly explore the implications of this finding for the deepening black/white unemployment gap and the making of the so-called black underclass since the CIO’s demise.

The AFL versus the CIO
Organizing black workers certainly had an element of pragmatic necessity to it (compare Stevenson 1993, pp. 45–46), because the CIO’s organizing targets included plants where large numbers of them were employed or departments where they were critical to the entire production process (e.g., the production foundry at the Ford Rouge megaplant or the killing floors in Chicago packing houses). Yet for the CIO’s most committed organizers, unifying black and white was both a moral imperative and a strategic choice. The “CIO’s equalitarian racial policies,” as Ray Marshall observes, “stemmed directly from the ideological positions held by many of its leaders, who were young, idealistic people with broad social outlooks. Some of them were Communists, a group which has almost always adopted equalitarian racial positions” (1967a, p. 24).

Black organizers stood out in many of the CIO’s organizing drives, even in plants where only a few blacks were employed. Exemplary was Walter Hardin, an ex-Wobbly and Communist who had been an organizer in steel and auto since the great steel strike of 1919. “He could move white union audiences,” as a coworker recalled, “because they respected his long fight for working people.” In a June 1939 feature article, CIO News called Hardin—who had been “kidnapped and flogged, clubbed on the picket line, threatened with ‘bodily violence’ a score of times”—“an inspiration to both his colored and his white brothers. . . . His courage in refusing to be bullied by vigilante mobs symbolizes the driving spirit of the CIO” (Meier and Rudwick 1979, p. 41).

As of the mid-1940s, 29 of the CIO’s 36 durable international unions had an explicit constitutional guarantee that any eligible worker could join “regardless of race or color,” whereas only 13 of 89 AFL affiliates surveyed had such a guarantee (calculated from information in Summers 1946, pp. 192–207). By then, the number of AFL affiliates that “formally barred Negroes from equal membership” was down to seven (from 26 in 1940); but many others continued to impose other sorts of restrictions on black membership, and excluded them de facto by secret Jim Crow ini-

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7 By “employment equality” here, we mean a situation in which employers tend to hire and fire, or layoff, workers, regardless of “race” or “color,” so that, consequently, fluctuations in the overall rate of unemployment tend to affect black and white workers equally.
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tiation rituals, tacit consent, or by allowing them to affiliate only in segregated locals (Marshall 1965a, pp. 167, 184; Edmonson and Norsworthy 1965, p. 56). As Gunnar Myrdal wrote at the time, the AFL “has never done anything to check racial discrimination exercised by its member organizations” (1944, p. 475).8

Spurred by the CIO’s organizing successes and aided and abetted by employers who preferred the AFL’s philosophy of “business unionism” and its “antiproletarian, pro-capitalist character,” as Fortune put it (1951, pp. 92–93), the AFL also organized industrial unions, for example, in aircraft manufacturing, shipbuilding, steel, and transportation. Yet these AFL industrial unions refused to admit black workers and cooperated with management’s refusal to hire them or used closed-shop contracts to compel employers to fire those who were already on the job. By 1943, the CIO and AFL could “no longer be differentiated along craft versus industrial lines,” but the AFL’s policies remained “craft minded” and de facto racially exclusionist (Northrup 1943, pp. 215, 217n48, 220, 220n58; Foner 1976, pp. 247–50).

The AFL and its affiliates generally accommodated or even supported racially regressive policies. When wildcat “hate strikes” by white workers opposed to the employment or upgrading of blacks occurred during World War II, CIO officials and the industrial unions involved tried to defuse the hostilities; they disciplined the strikers and forcefully condemned racial discrimination.9 National AFL officials, in contrast, said nothing when some of the AFL’s major industrial affiliates inflamed white against black (Northrup 1944, pp. 199–210, 1943, pp. 220–21; Winn 1943, p. 342; Geschwender 1977, pp. 32–37; Keeran 1980, p. 232; Foner 1976, pp. 264–68; Zieger 1995, pp. 154–55, 227; Cochran 1977, pp. 221–22).

The CIO consistently supported efforts by the federal Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to combat discrimination, while the AFL

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8 The AFL claimed a black membership of 300,000, or 3.4% of its total membership in 1945 (up from a claimed 2.8% in 1926–28; Marshall 1967a, p. 29). We know of no estimate of how many of these 300,000 AFL black members in 1945 (aside from those in the nondiscriminating but nearly all-black Sleeping Car Porters) were still in separate “Negro affiliates” or segregated or “auxiliary” locals; our learned guess is that most were.

9 In June 1943, a “race riot” unprecedented in scale and violence broke out in the streets of Detroit; 34 persons were killed and over a thousand wounded. Yet, as U.S. attorney general Francis Biddle told FDR, “no disorder [occurred] within [Detroit] plants, where colored and white men [belonging to the UAW and other CIO industrial unions] worked side by side, on account of efficient [CIO] union discipline” (quoted in Lee and Humphrey 1943, p. 17).
opposed and tried to hobble them (Reed 1991, 1973). In response to pressure from black unionists, the CIO’s leadership created the Committee to Abolish Racial Discrimination (CARD) in 1942, to do more to promote racial equality in employment (Stevenson 1993, p. 48). CARD and its many state and local committees around the country (80 by 1944, 100 by 1945) worked in alliance with the national FEPC and a dozen regional FEPC offices, as well as with other wartime federal agencies and with active “metropolitan councils for fair employment practices” in major cities, to enforce, and extend, the ban against employment discrimination, both in hiring and upgrading (e.g., the Steel Workers in Pittsburgh cooperated with the U.S. Employment Service to secure black workers for employment where labor “bottlenecks” existed; Dickerson 1986, pp. 152–53, 173). The FEPC had no direct enforcement power, but its well-publicized investigations, in alliance with the CIO, served to expose racial injustice and encourage black activism, and they often succeeded in pressuring employers to end discriminatory practices (Korstad and Lichtenstein 1988, p. 787; Rosen 1968, p. 189; Reed 1991, pp. 10, 85, 353; Zieger 1995, pp. 157–58).

CARD representatives and CIO union officials testified at FEPC field hearings on discriminatory hiring and treatment of railroad, smelter, shipyard, and other workers, “many of whom were held captive in collusive and openly discriminatory AFL closed shop agreements” (Zieger 1995, p. 158). In contrast, AFL witnesses at FEPC hearings usually engaged in evasions and denials, and AFL representatives on the FEPC’s national directorate, reflecting pressures from many national craft unions that were “notorious opponents” of the FEPC, regularly opposed any action against racial discrimination (Reed 1991, pp. 10, 85, 353; Dickerson 1986, p. 173).

During the war, black workers walked out repeatedly to protest employment discrimination—22 times, according to the FEPC, between July 1943 and December 1944 alone (FEPC 1945, p. 80). The CIO unions involved typically supported them and, often in alliance with the FEPC,

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10 President Roosevelt established the FEPC in June 1941 under pressure by the all-black March on Washington Movement (MOWM) led by A. Philip Randolph, head of the AFL’s Sleeping Car Porters. Over 100,000 “loyal Negro-American citizens,” in Randolph’s words, were expected to converge on Washington, D.C. to demand “the right to work and fight for our country” (quoted in Foner 1976, p. 240). Randolph called off the march after Roosevelt issued his directive, which stated that it was the “duty” of employers and labor unions in “defense industries” not to discriminate. Roosevelt issued a second directive in May 1943 expanding the FEPC’s jurisdiction to all industries affecting the national interest (Hill 1985, p. 179). Harry Truman ended FEPC in 1946.

11 Next to blacks, who filed 80% of FEPC complaints, the “minority groups . . . most frequently subjected to discrimination during the war, as recorded by charges filed with the FEPC, were Jews [and] Mexican-Americans” (FEPC 1946, p. x).
tried to put an end to employers’ discriminatory hiring and job allocation practices. In contrast, at FEPC hearings, AFL union leaders complained “against being forced by the government agency to bring about social equality between black and white workers” (Foner 1976, p. 249).

_Egalitarian and Inegalitarian Mechanisms_

Although employers guarded (and still guard) “the right to hire and fire” as a sacred “management prerogative” (Goldfield 1993, p. 6), CIO affiliates were able to increase racial employment in several ways.

_Fair employment committees._—They set up “special equalitarian racial machinery” (Marshall 1964, p. 249) or their own fair employment committees to fight discrimination in hiring, for example, New York city locals of the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers (UE) led an anti-discrimination campaign (sending “applicants” of various colors or creeds [e.g., Jews] to test discrimination in hiring), which, in less than a year, raised the number of blacks in the city’s electrical machinery plants from 172 in May 1942, to over a thousand by January 1943 (Weaver 1946, pp. 220–21).

_Seniority provisions._—They also enforced seniority provisions to open up black workers’ chances of promotion; in turn, this enhanced their employment security, for instance, by almost all CIO internationals, though with considerable local variation (Baron and Hymer 1968, p. 274; Rosen 1968, pp. 201–7).

_Retraining and upgrading._—They won retraining and upgrading of black workers by employers (some at new employers’ apprentice training schools) who otherwise would have been displaced either because they lacked seniority (having only recently, in comparison to white workers, gained employment in the plant or industry) or as a result of technological advances that eliminated production processes in which they were concentrated, for instance, by UAW Local 600 at the Ford Rouge megaplant in Dearborn, Michigan, and the Marine and Shipbuilding Workers, in Kearny, New Jersey, and Baltimore (Northrup 1943, pp. 218, 220; Holmes 1946, p. 48).

_Union-controlled hiring halls._—They won union-controlled hiring halls to replace the employers’ usually corrupt and racist “shape-up” system on docks and ships, for example, by the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union on the west coast, the National Maritime Union (which established a strict rotary system for job allocation), the Marine Cooks and Stewards, and the Inland Boatmen’s Union of the Pacific (Foner 1976, pp. 226, 204; Friedman 1952).

“Super seniority.”—They won a “super-seniority system” or other arrangements to protect black workers from disproportionate layoffs be-
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due of low seniority, for example, UE Local 450, in Nassau County and Brooklyn, won a postwar contract requiring the maintenance of the war-time ratio of black to white workers; similar arrangements were won by UAW Ford Local 600 at the Rouge and a few of the smaller Communist-led internationals (Winston 1946, p. 154; Glazer 1961, p. 181; Record 1951, pp. 272–73).

Clauses prohibiting discrimination.—They made antidiscrimination-in-hiring clauses basic contractual demands, for example, by the United Packinghouse Workers, the Rubber Workers, the Shipbuilding Workers, and the National Maritime Union (Halpern 1997; Halpern and Horowitz 1996; Zieger 1995, p. 157; Foner 1976, p. 260).

Closed shop.—They used closed-shop contracts, which granted the union the authority to make selections and referrals to employers, to open up opportunities for black employment (CIO CARD 1943, pp. 5–7).12

In contrast, AFL affiliates obstructed black employment in several ways.

Segregation.—They barred, either formally or tacitly, black craftsmen from membership or, if admitted, restricted them to segregated seniority rosters or, most often, to segregated locals “represented” by the nearest white local in dealings with employers or to “auxiliary locals controlled entirely by whites” (Marshall 1965a, pp. 170–71, 185), for instance, AFL affiliates throughout mass production industries and in related employment such as maritime and longshore (East Coast) and the building and construction trades (Hill 1985, p. 180).

Closed-shop contracts.—They used closed-shop contracts to exclude (or even expel) already employed blacks from skilled crafts employment and employment in the mass production industries, for example, by the Machinists (IAM) at Boeing Aircraft in Seattle and by the Boilermakers at certain west coast shipyards, including Kaiser in Richmond, California, the Oregon Shipbuilding Company, and Consolidated Steel’s shipbuilding division, or by cooperating with employers who already excluded blacks, for example, by IAM at Vultee Aircraft and North American Aviation in Los Angeles (Foner 1976, p. 235; Northrup 1943, pp. 218–19, 220n58; Hill 1985, pp. 174, 178).

Apprenticeship training.—They excluded black workers from union-controlled apprenticeship training programs, for example, through the monopoly on trainees’ upgrading by unions in the AFL Metal Trades Department (Hill 1985, p. 178).

Special requirements.—They used “peculiar devices,” such as requiring the purchase by black craftsmen of special working permits from the

12 The closed shop was banned by the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act.

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union, to restrict black employment when total exclusion was not possible \cite{Fortune 1942, p. 73; Foner 1976, p. 247}.

Racism.—They consistently condoned or deliberately inflamed racial animosities. For example, the IAM’s San Francisco local distributed union cards urging white workers to join so as to prevent employment of blacks, and the Amalgamated Street Car Workers in Philadelphia denounced its CIO rival Transport Workers Union for race mixing \cite{Foner 1976, pp. 266–68; Meier and Rudwick 1982}.

In sum, the AFL formed an organized working-class core of accommodation with, if not support for, racially regressive politics and hostility toward civil rights activities and organizations \cite{Marshall 1967a, pp. 29, 149}.

Class, Race, and Community

The main terrain of the struggle for employment equality was at work. But the activities of CIO local and regional “industrial union councils” (IUCs) and, from mid-1943 on, of CIO state and national “political action committees” (CIO PACs) fused class and community struggles for racial employment equality and civil rights. The CIO’s 500,000 black workers were in the vanguard of the struggle to transform race relations during the 1940s. In cities such as Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, as a Rosenwald Fund study concluded \cite{Korstad and Lichtenstein 1988, p. 787}, “the characteristic movements among Negroes [were] now for the first time becoming proletarian” \cite{Korstad and Lichtenstein 1988, p. 787; Winn 1943, p. 357; also see Dalfiume 1969, p. 306; Sugrue 1996, pp. 26–27}. On the West Coast, the CIO ranked along with the NAACP and the Urban League as one of the “the three organizations most important to black activism during this period” \cite{Reed 1991, p. 315}. Between 1940 and 1948, the number of black voters in the northern states doubled \cite{Korstad and Lichtenstein 1988, p. 786} and CIO PACs, which had helped many of them register, also got them out to vote. Black rights was thus an issue that could not be ignored by politicians, hesitant union officials, or employers. In the immediate postwar years, the self-confidence and militancy of black workers together with CIO unions’ continuing (if uneven) commitment to black/white solidarity inhibited attempts by em-

\footnote{As late as 1960, an NAACP investigation concluded that “anti-Negro employment practices” were still integral to an “institutionalized pattern” of discrimination by AFL affiliates, especially in the building trades \cite{NAACP 1960, pp. 163, 162}.}
players to make black workers bear the brunt of layoffs (Milkman 1987, p. 126; Korstad and Lichtenstein 1988).

The CIO’s racially egalitarian role was affirmed by the Urban League and leading black observers, and even by NAACP leaders who had denounced it originally as a “radical organization” (Cayton and Mitchell 1939, pp. 414–15). For “the forgotten black workers of American history,” a columnist wrote in the Urban League’s Opportunity in late 1942, “the coming of the CIO has been the most important experience in 75 years of struggle.” The NAACP Bulletin declared in early 1943, “The CIO has proved that it stands for our people within the unions and outside the unions” (Foner 1976, p. 268). W. E. B. Du Bois, then the nation’s pre-eminent black leader, declared in 1948: “Probably the greatest and most effective effort toward interracial understanding among the working masses has come about through . . . the organization of the CIO in 1935. . . . As a result, numbers of men like those in the steel and automotive industries have been thrown together, black and white, as fellow workers striving for the same objects. There has been on this account an astonishing spread of interracial tolerance and understanding” (1948, p. 236).

As late as 1952, the NAACP’s Thurgood Marshall called the CIO’s program “a Bill of Rights for Negro labor in America” (Marshall 1967a, p. 26). As Gunnar Myrdal put it well, the “increasing power of the [CIO] labor unions . . . is to the Negroes one of the most significant of all recent changes in the institutional framework of the American economy” (1944, p. 401; emphasis added).

The dawning Cold War and Red Scare triggered internecine attacks on the CIO’s “Communist-dominated” unions and prompted raiding of their members. This escalating assault on the Left undermined militant black leadership and severely undermined the CIO’s commitment to racial justice. CIO liberals even collaborated at times with overt racists in raids on Communist-led unions. Much of the CIO’s energy from 1948 through 1950 was expended in this anti-Communist campaign, which culminated in the pseudo-trials and expulsions of 11 Communist-controlled international unions between November 1949 and July 1950, accompanied and followed by an effort “to ‘cleanse’ virtually all the unions in which Communist influence had been significant.” The result, whatever the intentions of CIO officials, was to rid the CIO of its “more militant and devoted advocates of racial justice” (Rosen 1968, pp. 199–200). Soon enough even anti-Communist radicals who dissented from CIO policies and remained fully committed to equality for black workers were also “frozen out of union politics, and often hounded out of the labor movement because of their alleged ‘subversiveness’” (Zieger 1986, pp. 131–32).

Communists and their allies, as even their enemies attest, were “the staunchest supporters of the Negro unionists’ struggle for job equality”
Employment Equality

(Northrup 1943, p. 93). "There can be little question," as Marshall says, "that . . . the Communists forced white union leaders into paying more attention to racial matters" (1967a, p. 24; see Myrdal 1944, pp. 235, 508; Zieger 1995, pp. 159, 277–93, 374–75; Kelley 1990).

By the time the CIO merged with the AFL in 1955, the CIO’s rallying cry of black/white unity and class solidarity had been muted; the AFL had been steadily outstripping the CIO in organizing and now claimed twice the CIO’s membership; and their leaders’ differences in principles and policies had narrowed to the vanishing point (Zieger 1995, pp. 358–60; also see Levenstein 1981; Lichtenstein 1991). Already in mid-1949, sections of the black press had been accusing the CIO’s CARD of doing "little or nothing to overcome discrimination against Negroes" (Marshall 1964, p. 185; also see 1965a, 1965b). CARD, lamented a writer for the Pittsburgh Courier, had become merely "nice window dressing" (Foner 1976, p. 288). In the half-decade preceding the merger, the CIO had "largely abandoned any vigorous commitment" to eliminating racial barriers to hiring, retention, promotion, and equal treatment on the job through direct union action, and had "relegated African American workers to the margins" (Zieger 1995, p. 345; Rosen 1968, p. 190).

SOURCES AND METHODS

In this analysis, we exclude the 11 ex-Confederate states that formed the core of the Old South and confine our analysis to the 37 "northern" states or, more precisely, the "capitalist states."4 Without proper historical specification—which we hope to do in a future analysis—our substantive theory is not applicable to the South’s peculiar fusion of class/race relations and form of white supremacist rule. In this regard, we want to stress four points.

Migration and New Deal policies.—Specifying the South’s class/race relations during the CIO era is especially troublesome for two main reasons. First, over 2 million black men and women left the South during the 1940s, while another million moved from farm to city within the South (Korstad and Lichtenstein 1988, p. 786). Second, the policies of the Roosevelt administration, "sometimes deliberately and often unintentionally," were attacking and trying to undermine and transform the ruling "alliance of planters and low-wage industrialists [that] maintained a firm grip on the region’s economic institutions" (Schulman 1991, p. ix).

Employment inequality.—The measured unemployment gap between

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4 The excluded ex-Confederate states are Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.
black and white workers in the South during these years was smaller than in the North, but this conceals the actual level of black/white employment inequality. Much as in other underdeveloped, mainly agrarian, regions of the globe, the "employment" of black workers in the South was, to an unknown extent, disguised or hidden unemployment, in the form of inadequate or marginal employment at bare subsistence earnings, predominantly in agriculture, as sharecroppers, tenants, and laborers or in other menial and servile, "service" jobs (Frazier 1949, pp. 599–600; Vedder and Galloway 1993, p. 274n72; Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997, pp. 34, 35, 246; compare also Lichter 1989, pp. 775–77; Hauser 1974).

Weak unionization.—The Old South’s overall level of unionization, both absolutely and in comparison with the other 37 states, was very low, though a few of the ex-Confederate states had unionized enclaves, especially in coal or iron mining or steel making (Huntley 1977; Marshall 1967b; Regensburger 1983; Honey 1993; Zieger 1991). As of 1953, the mean level of unionization of nonagricultural workers in the 11 ex-Confederate states was barely over half that in the 37 capitalist states: 15.7% versus 28.2%. Not one of the Old South’s 11 reached the 37-state mean, although in two, Alabama (23.7%) and Tennessee (21.1%), unionization was substantial. The other nine were distributed by level of unionization, in percentages, as follows: four at 15%–20%, three at 10%–15%, and two under 10%. In sum, in Marshall’s words, “unions . . . [were] not strong enough in the South to have much influence on total employment” (1968, p. 143).

CIO accommodation.—It is also a contentious question as to how much CIO officials and local leaders were committed, in practice, to pushing interracial unionism in the South (see, e.g., Goldfield 1993, 1995; Stein 1991a, 1991b, 1993; Zieger 1991). For instance, at least seven CIO internationals had one or more segregated locals “at one time or another” in the South (Marshall 1965b, p. 107; 1968, p. 204; Rosen 1968, p. 204).15 When the CIO launched “Operation Dixie,” its postwar Southern Organizing Campaign (SOC)—which began in 1946 and faded soon after—SOC bypassed industries in which large numbers of blacks were employed. SOC’s functionaries insisted that the campaign involve “no extra-curricular activities—no politics—no PAC [political action committee]—no FEPC [Fair Employment Practices Committee], etc.” SOC’s head, Van Bittner, declared in April 1946 that CIO organizers are not “mentioning

15 Neither Marshall nor Rosen give the number of segregated locals in the South belonging to these seven CIO internationals or say when they existed. Another two CIO internationals had segregated locals in the northwest (Marshall 1964, p. 195).
the color of people." As far as the CIO is concerned, he said, there is "no Negro problem in the South" (Zieger 1995, p. 233).16

Data

We used census data (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1952, table 27) on the states to construct our measures of relative unemployment reductions among white and black male workers (1940–50) and the relative size (1940) and the change in size (1940–50) of the black segment of the working class,17 as well as civilian labor force growth (1940–50), to indicate long-term labor demand (compare Cohn and Fossett 1995, p. 523).18

The fact that the unemployment rates of both white and black male workers changed in the same direction between the 1940 and 1950 cen-

16 Zieger notes also, however, that "unionists associated with a dozen or so affiliates in which pro-Soviet leaders were prominent . . . suggested [making] use of black workers' proven support for the CIO to extend organization into food processing, wood and lumber working, transport and goods handling, and tobacco working." But their view that "bimacial unionism and . . . recruitment of black workers held the key to CIO success in the South," was rejected by CIO officials (1995, pp. 233–34, 239–40, 437–38n95; also see Griffith 1988).

17 The two basic categories of "color" in the census are "white" and "nonwhite." Of the nonwhite population nationally, only a fraction were not black: in 1940, 95.6% of the nonwhites were black and in 1950, 95.1% (Glenn 1963, p. 109n1). In 13 of the 37 capitalist states, however, blacks were outnumbered in the nonwhite population by other nonwhites, predominantly American Indians (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1953, table 59). But Indian men in these states were virtually excluded from the labor force, as a result of their confinement, during the 1940s, to reservations or other Indian lands (see Neils 1971, pp. 23, 27). The vast majority of Indians—ranging from 90.0% to 67.7%—in these 13 states were "rural," and "rural" coincided almost entirely with reservations (Neils 1971, p. 23). Even the few Indians who lived off near the reservations in these states were integrated into the Indian community and were typically not in the labor force (Sandefur 1998; Champagne 1998). In eight states (Maine, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, New Mexico, and Arizona), American Indians composed half or more of the nonwhite population; the eight-state Indian mean was 73.2% of the median, 75.7% (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1953, table 59). As late as 1960 in these eight states, 94.2% of the Indian population still lived on reservations (calculated from figures in Neils 1971, p. 27). Nationwide in 1950, an estimated 63.1% of the Indian population 14 years and older was not in the labor force; among Japanese, in contrast, the corresponding proportion was 38.8% (calculated from data in SAUS 1960, table 26). So it seems safe to assume that in the labor forces of these 13 states, "nonwhite" and "black" were virtually identical.

18 We measure changes in unemployment only among men to keep the analysis of white/black reductions in unemployment uncomplicated by the effects of gender differences (compare Lichter 1989, pp. 777–78n6). Dramatic changes both in the labor force participation rates of women and in the differences between the participation rates of black and white women during these years also raise "serious questions about the reliability of trends and comparisons for women" (Fairlie and Sundstrom 1996, p. 111; also see Fairlie and Sundstrom 1997; Anderson 1982, pp. 82–85; Milkman 1987, pp. 55–56).
susess, namely, downward, in each of the 37 capitalist states allows us to use a simple, straightforward measure of the relative equality of the white and black reductions in unemployment: the ratio of the percentage reduction in white male unemployment (1940–50) to the corresponding black reduction (calculated separately for each state). We term this the white/black unemployment reduction ratio (URR, or reduction ratio, for short). The higher the URR, of course, the greater the inequality in the reduction of the unemployment rates among white and black workers, and the closer to 1, the greater the equality. So, for example, if a state’s unemployment rate among white workers dropped by 13.05%, and the unemployment rate among its black workers dropped by only 5%, then the reduction in the white rate was 2.61 times the reduction in the black rate (i.e., URR = 2.61:1).

This reduction ratio is a valid measure for the purposes of this analysis, whatever the flaws in the official definitions of unemployment and of the labor force that have tended in recent decades to camouflage racial employment inequality (that is, by missing black “subemployment,” or so-called discouraged workers, and “marginal employment”; compare Lichter 1989, pp. 776–78; Boston 1988, p. 49). In any case, the differential employment prospects of black and white male workers in the labor force is “a category,” as economist Steven Shulman says, “that all agree captures the role played by labor-market discrimination per se” (1991, p. 6; emphasis added).

The discrepancy between measured and hidden unemployment among black and white men in the capitalist states, and especially in the 15 “highly unionized states” (see below), was probably close to nil during the 1940s. The employment opportunities of black men—given the combination of war economy, wartime federal employment policy (FEPC), and the CIO-led leap in black union membership—rose sharply during the first half of the 1940s, and black employment in manufacturing more than doubled between 1940 and 1950, from 479,000 to 998,000 (Ross 1967, p. 17). So it is likely that relative black male subemployment also dropped sharply. According to Jeremiah Cotton, even during the dozen years after 1954, when the enduring two-to-one racial gap in male unemployment first emerged, “the ratio of black to white male labor force participation rates was fairly constant at around .98.” Between 1954 and 1966, “the rates of both groups were declining at about the same rate.” Only after 1966 did “the [yearly] labor force participation rates of black males [start] declining relatively” (1989, p. 811; also see Shulman 1991, pp. 6, 31).

We measure union organization among nonagricultural wage and salaried workers, and the aggregate size of CIO and AFL unions in each state using union membership data compiled by Leo Troy, for the years 1939 and 1953 (1957, table 1, pp. 4–5). The CIO held its founding con-
vention in late 1938, so 1939 was the first full year of the CIO’s formal independence. No other published membership data are available on any years of the CIO era. Using the 1953 membership figures to indicate 1950 union membership is reasonable, we think, because any change in their comparative membership from 1951 to 1953 was probably inconsequential. To approximate more closely the real size of CIO membership during the 1940–50 decade, we added the 1953 combined membership of five of the expelled Red-led unions on which Troy provided state data. This still underestimates the CIO’s size, especially its size as of 1948 and 1949, first, because by 1953, the expelled five had already lost, as a result of raiding by other unions, many of the members they had a few years earlier; second, because the combined membership of the other six expelled unions is missing (see Kampelman 1957, pp. 45–47, 157, 249). We also added the membership of the United Mine Workers and its “District 50” (consisting of workers in industries using coal by-products and chemicals). UMW was a major biracial union (Marshall 1968, p. 138) and the most important founding member of the CIO. Though John L. Lewis withdrew UMW from the CIO in late 1942, its effects on the labor market continued, and we retained it in this analysis so as not to exaggerate the AFL’s strength (and thereby the strength of racial exclusionism) in the coal-mining states. The CIO’s 37-state mean adjusted share of total non-agricultural workers in 1953 was 9.0%, the AFL’s mean share was 19.2%.

We single out the 15 states in which the mean percentage of workers belonging to AFL and CIO unions combined in 1953 was above the 37-state mean and refer to them as the “highly unionized” states. (All but one of these 15 highly unionized states was also above the 1939 mean.)

We use six measures of the size of CIO unions in a state. Four measures

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19 Troy’s estimates systematically understate union membership because they refer only to “full time dues paying members”; he excluded not only part-time dues paying members, but also members who were on strike, laid-off, or unemployed, or who held good-standing withdrawal cards, at the time of his survey. But since his estimates are systematic for all AFL and CIO locals, they do not bias the measurement of their relative membership strength.

20 “Unaffiliated” unions are identified only by code numbers in Troy’s unpublished table (1956, table C.1.c). The codebook was not available. We identified the five Communist-led unions by comparing the 1953 membership figures in Troy’s unpublished table to those in his published 1953 figures (1965, table A3).

21 The Communist-led international unions’ combined share of the adjusted total national CIO membership in 1953 was only 13.55%, or almost exactly half of their peak membership of 27.4% in 1946. Even with the intensified raiding of their members, the Communist-led unions’ combined share was still 26.1% in 1948, and 23.7% in 1949. A decade earlier, in 1939, their share had stood at 25.5% (calculated from data in Troy 1965, tables A2, A3; for details, see Zeitlin and Weyher 1998, app. table 1, p. 56).

22 Excluding West Virginia, the prime UMW state, does not alter our central findings.
are, so to speak, "static" (sets $a$ and $b$), representing the size of CIO membership at only one point in time, that is, in 1939 and in 1953, and two are "dynamic" measures of the change between these years (set $c$). Set $a$ represents the absolute size of the CIO itself, that is, the percentage of non-agricultural workers belonging to CIO unions in 1939 and 1953. Set $b$ represents the relative size of the CIO versus the AFL, that is, the ratio of the percentage of workers in the CIO to the percentage in the AFL in 1939 and 1953. Set $c$ represents the changes in both the absolute size and relative size of the CIO, that is, the 1953 figures minus the 1939 figures.

From these six measures, we constructed two different overall estimates of "the intraclass balance of power" in a state: a scale of CIO strength, based on state-by-state comparisons among only the 15 highly unionized states and an index of the CIO/AFL balance of power, which combines the six measures into a single numerical score for each of the 37 capitalist states. The scale of CIO strength allows us to present our findings in an easily accessible cross-tabular form, which makes the relationship visible between the level of CIO strength and the level of black/white inequality, given a succession of controls, among the 15 highly unionized states alone.\(^2\) Only where the combined organizational strength of the AFL and CIO unions was sufficient to enable them to exert some control over the labor market could their opposed racial policies and practices have affected the level of employment equality between black and white workers.

\(^2\) The cross-tabular relationships based on the scale show the results of the empirical analysis in an intuitively understandable form, whether or not the reader is trained in regression diagnostics. Nor, in cross-tabular analysis, are restrictions imposed on the form of the relationships among variables; whereas in linear regression analysis, the relationships are assumed to be additive. As our substantive theory and specification of egalitarian and inequalitarian mechanisms ought to have made clear, we do not think that the relationship between the level of CIO strength (or any of the other independent variables) and the level of black/white employment inequality is additive. Showing the cross-tabular relationships also avoids basing inferences about causality on statistical models alone, in which significance tests per se often are misinterpreted to reveal causal relationships, and $p$-values become the theoretical arbiter (see Meehl 1978; Berk 1988; Freedman 1991, 1999; Sørensen 1998). As a courtesy to its proponents, however, we also present a set of regression models below. The scale is also an expository convenience to minimize tedium. In fact, we examined all of the relationships measure by measure among the 37 capitalist states and among the 15 highly unionized states alone (see Zeitlin and Weyher 1998, tables 1 and 2). We found that even among the 37 capitalist states, without controls, the states in which the CIO's organizational strength was "high" (above the median) on five of the scale's six component measures had more equal unemployment reduction ratios than the states in which CIO strength was "low." Only on the measure "percentage of workers in CIO unions in 1939" was the reduction ratio for the "high" states not closer to equality than for the "low" ones—probably because the CIO was still in its infancy in 1939. Many major CIO organizing drives were still underway or yet to begin, and the overall level of unionization was still low.
Employment Equality

So the highly unionized states constitute the optimal, and most appropriate, test case of our theory. The index of the CIO/AFL balance of power allows us to calculate correlation coefficients between the index and the URR, given some crucial controls, and to construct a number of OLS regression models both among all 37 capitalist states and, separately, among the 15 highly unionized states alone.

To construct the scale, each of the six measures was dichotomized into "high" (i.e., equal to or above the median) and "low"; and the 15 highly unionized states were then grouped into four levels of CIO strength, according to their particular combination of being high or low on the "static" and "dynamic" measures. The index was constructed by ranking the 37 capitalist states from least (= 1) to most (= 37) CIO strength, then taking, first, the average rank on the four static measures and, second, the average rank on the two dynamic measures, and then taking the average of these two averages. This calculation gives the dynamic measures slightly more weight than the static measures. The index scores range from a low of 5.625 (for South Dakota), where the CIO was weakest vis à vis the AFL, to a high of 36 (for Michigan), where the CIO was strongest.

INTERRACIAL UNIONISM AND BLACK/WHITE EMPLOYMENT EQUALITY

How, then, did the intraclass balance of power between the CIO and the AFL among the 15 highly unionized states affect the degree of black/white employment equality achieved during the 1940–50 decade? If the differences between successive types on the scale are small, they nonetheless form an internally consistent pattern: the stronger the CIO was, the closer to equality were the reductions in the white and black unemployment rates. The average unemployment reduction ratios were, level 1 (lowest CIO strength), 2.61; level 2, 1.16; level 3, 1.08; and level 4 (highest CIO strength), 1.04. This consistent pattern remains intact, as we shall see, as we go through a series of four theoretically relevant controls (table 1).

\[\text{We took the set of six highly unionized states in which CIO strength was high on all four static measures and the set of five in which CIO strength was low on all four of them, and dichotomized these sets, high or low, on the two dynamic measures; this yielded four levels of CIO organizational strength with the designated states distributed in them as follows (H = high, L = low): level 1, LLLL-LL (Oregon, California); level 2, LLLL-HH (Illinois, Missouri, Minnesota); level 3, HHHH-LL (West Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York); and level 4, HHHH-HH (Michigan, Ohio, Indiana). For the remaining four highly unionized states, we simply counted the number of each one's "highs"; this added one state to each level: level 1, Washington (HLLL-LL); level 2, Montana (HLLL-LL); level 3, Wisconsin (LLHH-HH); and level 4, New Jersey (LHHH-HH).}\]
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TABLE 1

AVERAGE RATIO OF WHITE TO NONWHITE PERCENTAGE REDUCTIONS IN UNEMPLOYMENT (URR), 1940–50, BY THE FOUR LEVELS OF CIO STRENGTH IN THE 15 HIGHLY UNIONIZED STATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The 15 highly unionized states</td>
<td>2.611</td>
<td>1.160</td>
<td>1.076</td>
<td>1.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Large” nonwhite states (9)*</td>
<td>2.552</td>
<td>1.127</td>
<td>1.092</td>
<td>1.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Small” nonwhite states (6)</td>
<td>2.641</td>
<td>1.193</td>
<td>1.026</td>
<td>1.080</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“High” growth states (6)*</td>
<td>2.611</td>
<td>. .</td>
<td>. .</td>
<td>1.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Low” growth states (9)</td>
<td>. .</td>
<td>1.160</td>
<td>1.076</td>
<td>1.022</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Large” nonwhite states:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“High” growth (3)</td>
<td>2.522</td>
<td>. .</td>
<td>. .</td>
<td>1.028</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Low” growth (6)</td>
<td>. .</td>
<td>1.127</td>
<td>1.092</td>
<td>1.022</td>
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<td>“High” growth (3)</td>
<td>2.641</td>
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<td>“Low” growth (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE.—The greatest AFL strength is on the left (group 1), and greatest CIO strength is on the right (group 4). Ns are in parentheses.

* “Large” vs. “small” nonwhite civilian labor force dichotomized at the 1940 mean percentage for the 37 capitalist states.

† “High” vs. “low” civilian labor force growth dichotomized at the mean percentage for the 37 capitalist states, 1940–50.

The Black Working-Class Segment

Some authorities argue that a union’s “racial policy” during the CIO years was determined, in economist Orley Ashenfelter’s formulation, not by “the leadership’s ideological commitments per se,” but by the “extent to which the [union’s] jurisdiction [was] composed of actual, or potential, black workers” (1972, pp. 440–41). Or, as Herbert Hill, the NAACP’s former national labor secretary, puts it, CIO unions “found it necessary at their inception, to accept black workers into membership in order to organize . . . industries . . . [with] a significant concentration of black workers.” In Hill’s view, the “imperative of race” (that is, the relative racial composition of the union’s potential membership) was “decisive” in determining the “racial practices” of CIO unions (1996, pp. 201–2).

That the actual or potential number of black workers employed made a difference in determining the unions’ organizing strategies and concrete struggles over racial issues is undeniable (Olson 1970). The question, how-
ever, is what sort of difference it made and why. Again, it has to be emphasized (contrary to Hill’s reasoning) that none of the new AFL industrial unions whose jurisdictions already had “a significant concentration” of black workers, “found it necessary, at their inception, to accept” them—to the contrary, these AFL unions tried to push out already employed black workers and prevent others from being hired. In contrast, some CIO unions with a small black membership made a special effort to promote racial equality (see Critchlow 1976; McClooch 1992; Gilpin 1992; Goldfield 1993, p. 22). Thus, what unions try to fight for and how they fight on the same political terrain, within the same circumstances, we suggest, is not determined by the extent of the black concentration in itself, but, indeed, by the “ideological commitments” or, more precisely, the political consciousness of the workers and their leaders. Indeed, we find that whether the black segment was “large” or “small” (dichotomized at the 1940 mean for the 37 capitalist states, which was 3.98%), the stronger the CIO, the more equal were the reductions in black and white unemployment. Note also that in the states where the black segment was small and the CIO had the least strength, the level of inequality was highest (table 1).

Labor Demand
The opening up of jobs for blacks, their increased occupational and industrial diversification, and the reduction of the white/black economic gap during the 1940–50 decade is often attributed to the operation of “market forces” alone, especially during the war years. Supposedly, in this view, the leap in labor demand and the consequent war-induced labor shortages or tightness of the labor market, in an economy “operating at full tilt,” now compelled employers who had discriminated until then to hire blacks (Miller 1963, p. 375). So, for instance, the Thernstroms assert that the “remarkable gains” made by blacks during World War II were simply the result of “an acute labor shortage that made it difficult for employers to indulge in the luxury of refusing to hire qualified workers who had the ‘wrong’ skin color” (1997, p. 72). Historian David Brody, while granting some efficacy to the FEPC, concludes that “Manpower shortages actually played the more important part in breaking down discrimination in employment” (1975, p. 275; see also Baran and Sweezy 1966, p. 259; Bernstein 1968, pp. 297–98; Fredrickson 1997, pp. 71–72; Polenberg 1972; Wynn 1976, pp. 48–49, 55, 57–59).

Surely “the condition of the labor market” affects how willing employers are to refuse “to hire qualified workers who [have] the wrong skin color” and how willing workers and their unions are to combat or go along with (if not actually encourage) such discrimination (compare Weaver 1946, p.
252). But, as we said, what unions try to do is not predetermined: neither so-called "racial consciousness" as the response to falling employment (i.e., the attempt by white workers to protect themselves at the expense of black workers) nor "class consciousness" (i.e., interracial solidarity) as the response to rising employment, comes naturally (but see Northrup 1944, p. 236; compare also Shulman 1991, p. 31).

Rather, what unions do depends, given the condition of the labor market, on the political consciousness of their leaders, at all levels, and thus on the policies they advocate and are able to convince their rank and file to implement. In the same buoyant "condition of the labor market," we again emphasize, CIO and AFL industrial unions took opposed stances on the issue of racial employment equality—on the eve of World War II, through the war, and during the immediate postwar years. Without the CIO, we suggest, the tight labor market alone would not have made much of a dent in the prevailing pattern of racial employment inequality. In the auto industry, for instance, during World War II, "even as the labor supply dwindled, auto employers were loath to forsake their prewar hiring preferences for white males" (Milkman 1987, p. 54). To the extent that the auto employers did forsake their so-called preferences, it was a result of the UAW's racially egalitarian demands. The UAW had more black members than any other union. Under the UAW's "center-left" leadership coalition, until its defeat by the Reuther forces in the autumn of 1947, the union actively pushed a program of nondiscriminatory employment, not only directly in the shops, but also in local politics, in alliance with newly revitalized and "proletarianized" civil rights organizations (Rosen 1968, p. 202). During the war and immediate postwar years, auto employers (especially in Detroit) who pursued racially discriminatory employment policies, were likely to provoke the "vigorous protests" of a unified labor/civil rights movement (Milkman 1987, p. 126; Sugrue 1996, p. 106; Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin 1996, pp. 130–49).

Without the CIO's racially egalitarian efforts to take advantage of "the condition of the labor market," high growth in labor demand alone would not have compelled employers to hire black workers. Rather, as the Urban League's Opportunity put it precisely: "Even the labor shortages of the war boom would not have opened the factory gates for [the black worker] . . . , had he not had the protection of the pan-racial policy of the CIO" (Foner 1976, p. 257; emphasis added).

If this argument is correct, then with labor force growth (as a measure of long-term labor demand) held constant, and even where labor force

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25 Increased black employment and industrial and occupational diversification during World War II were limited almost entirely "to the field of manual labor" (Ross 1967, p. 17; Weaver 1946).
growth was high, the pattern we have found so far should hold. Indeed, this is what we do find. Although some comparisons are not possible, because of empty cells, the pattern revealed is clear and consistent. Controlling for labor demand (dichotomized at the mean percentage civilian labor force growth in the 37 capitalist states, 1940–50, which was 13.99%), the stronger the CIO, the more equal were the reductions in unemployment among black and white workers (table 1).

Finally, when we control simultaneously for the size of the black segment and labor demand, the pattern, despite the number of empty cells, is replicated. Whether the black segment was large or small and labor force growth high or low, we find again that the stronger the CIO, the more equal were the reduction ratios (table 1).

Correlations and Regression Analysis

Now, as instances of statistical technology, the relationships shown in table 1 are not remarkable. Yet the cumulative convergence of the evidence they present, with each successive test, is compelling. To clinch the point for readers who prefer statistical models, however, we also replicate the preceding cross-tabular analysis using the index of the CIO/AFL balance of power. But before doing so, we also present the correlation coefficients between the index scores and the white/black unemployment reduction ratios, given specific controls.

Correlation Coefficients

Remembering that the higher the score on the index of the intraclass balance of power, the greater was the relative strength of the CIO, but the higher the white/black unemployment reduction ratio (URR), the greater was the inequality, we expect to find a negative correlation, which increases in strength with each successive control. The correlation coefficient between the index score and the white/black unemployment reduction ratio among the 15 highly organized states is −0.689, as opposed to −0.052 for the 22 low unionization states, and even among the 37 capitalist states as a whole, the coefficient is a respectable −0.340. The coefficients for each specification (paralleling the controls in table 1) are extraordinary; most indicate a nearly perfect negative correlation between the strength of the CIO vis à vis the AFL and the white/black unemployment reduction ratio (table 2).
Regression Analysis

The results of the OLS regression analyses are presented in two sets: set one shows the relationship between the scores on the index of the intraclass balance of power and the white/black unemployment reduction ratios, with each control variable included separately, both among the 37 capitalist states and among the 15 highly unionized states alone (table 3). Set two shows the relationships between the index scores and the reduction ratios, given multiple controls (table 4).

Even among the 37 capitalist states, the regression models with each control taken separately show that the more the balance of power favored the CIO, the closer to equality were the reductions in black and white unemployment, and the relationship is strongest among these 37 states when the level of unionization is included as the control. Where unionization is low, no relationship is likely between CIO strength and the reduction ratio, so we now limit the regression analysis to the 15 highly unionized states alone. With the same controls among these 15 unionized states, as predicted, each comparable relationship between the CIO’s relative power and racial employment equality is much stronger than among the 37 capitalist states as a whole.

We also have added a control variable, that is, the change in the size of the black segment between 1940 and 1950. Hill and Ashenfelter both overlooked this as a possible determinant of a union’s racial policies and practices. We suggest, however, that the growth in the size of the black segment, as well as its size in the earliest years of organizing (i.e., Ashenfelter’s “actual or potential black membership”), should be taken into account in assessing the impact of the concentration of black workers on the struggle for racial justice. The relative inflow of black workers and their competition for jobs constituted either a threat or a promise to white
TABLE 3
REGRESSION MODELS: THE INTRACLASS BALANCE OF POWER AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT REDUCTION RATIO, WITH SUCCESSIVE CONTROLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>INDEX OF BALANCE OF POWER $\beta$</th>
<th>MODEL STATISTICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>$R^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 capitalist states:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1: index alone</td>
<td>-.340*</td>
<td>.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-2.142)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2: index + unionization</td>
<td>-.439**</td>
<td>.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.257)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3: index + labor force growth</td>
<td>-.248</td>
<td>.436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-1.901)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4: index + %nonwhite growth</td>
<td>-.335*</td>
<td>.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.627)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 5: index + change in %nonwhite</td>
<td>-.397*</td>
<td>.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-2.335)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 highly unionized states:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1a: index alone</td>
<td>-.689***</td>
<td>.474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-3.424)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3a: index + labor force growth</td>
<td>-.500***</td>
<td>.932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9.002)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4a: index + %nonwhite growth</td>
<td>-.671**</td>
<td>.483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-3.171)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 5a: index + change in %nonwhite</td>
<td>-.774**</td>
<td>.498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-3.305)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $P < .05$.  ** $P < .01$.  *** $P < .005$.

Note.—Since unionization is controlled for by limiting the analysis to the 15 highly organized states, model 2 is not reproduced in the second part of the table. $t$-statistics are in parentheses.

workers, depending on whether or not they adopted a collective stance of interracial hostility or solidarity over the decade.

Now among the 37 capitalist states as a whole, and among the 15 highly unionized states alone, with either of these two controls taken singly (i.e., the size of the black segment and the change in its size), the CIO's relative power had a greater effect in reducing inequality than either of these control variables. In fact, the growth in the size of the black segment in itself increased black/white inequality (table 3).

But seeing the relationship with multiple controls is more revealing (table 4). Among the 37 capitalist states as a whole, in the model including all of the controls, both the size of the black segment in 1940 and its growth over the decade each had a significant, sizable independent effect in closing the gap between white and black unemployment reductions,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Index of Balance</th>
<th>Labor Force Unionization Growth</th>
<th>Change in % Nonwhite</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37 capitalist states:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 6</td>
<td>-2.20</td>
<td>-0.084</td>
<td>-1.25***</td>
<td>0.500***</td>
<td>5.060</td>
<td>.11281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 7</td>
<td>-2.27*</td>
<td>-0.120</td>
<td>-0.84*</td>
<td>-1.25***</td>
<td>-2.433</td>
<td>9.343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 8</td>
<td>-2.05***</td>
<td>-0.321</td>
<td>-1.92***</td>
<td>-1.25***</td>
<td>9.840</td>
<td>.8840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 highly organized capitalist states:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 9</td>
<td>-3.90***</td>
<td>-0.339</td>
<td>-2.03***</td>
<td>-0.120</td>
<td>9.32</td>
<td>50.407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 10</td>
<td>-4.286*</td>
<td>-0.472</td>
<td>-1.886*</td>
<td>-0.120</td>
<td>9.50</td>
<td>47.488</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $P < .05$  
*** $P < .005$
whereas the CIO’s relative power had almost no effect. In contrast, however, among the 15 highly unionized states, the effects of both the size of the black segment (1940) and the change in its size (1940–50) on employment equality tend to disappear, whereas the effect of the CIO’s relative power turns out to make the difference. It was where the intraclass balance of power shifted in favor of the CIO unions that the level of employment equality increased between black and white workers. Substantively, we interpret this to mean that black workers won greater equality where their interests and the interests of white workers merged within the CIO’s solidary industrial unions, and in effect became common, class interests. In short, the struggle for racial equality was most effective where it coalesced with the class struggle.

Unionization

Now it should be noted that unionization per se had the effect of increasing employment inequality. This finding is, first, consistent with the finding of Elwood M. Beck’s time series analysis, 1947–74, that unionization during these years increased black/white income inequality. But, second, Beck’s finding also suggests that his analysis may be defective and the theoretical conclusion he draws wrong. Consistent with his argument “that labor unionism [per se] has helped maintain the privileged position of white workers vis-à-vis minority workers,” his analysis does not differentiate between AFL and CIO membership (or even between craft and industrial unionism) (1980, p. 793; compare Szymanski 1976; Bonacich 1976, 1981). The once big differences between the racial policies and practices of the CIO and AFL did tend to diminish rapidly from 1947 on (in the wake of the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act), and especially after the anti-Communist purge. But it is still not satisfactory to fail to distinguish AFL and CIO unionism during the 1947–50 period.

In contrast, a systematic quantitative analysis by Orley Ashenfelter sought to assess the differential effects of AFL and CIO unionism on the income inequality of black versus white workers in 1940 and 1950 (1972; also see 1971). Using Troy’s 1939 and 1953 state-by-state union membership data (as we do here) and using relative “occupational position” as a proxy for earnings, he reports that the difference between CIO and AFL effects indicate that in 1940 and 1950 the CIO had a greater effect in reducing earnings inequality than did the AFL.26

26 Ashenfelter attributes this finding to the difference between “craft” and “industrial” unions. He assumes the latter are inherently “less discriminatory (more egalitarian)” than the former. Yet he notes that although “the CIO affiliates were all industrial unions and all of the craft . . . unions were AFL affiliates, a large fraction of the AFL
Labor Demand

Labor force growth by itself, as a measure of long-term labor demand, also had the effect, in every regression model, of increasing white/black employment inequality. This finding is contrary to the prevailing neoclassical wisdom but consistent with our own earlier reasoning that the magnitude of labor demand provides an opportunity, but no guarantee, for otherwise excluded workers—the underemployed and discouraged, women, black, and other shunned minorities—to join the actively employed. For "labor mobility" is not, as neoclassicists imagine it, "a benign, nonantagonistic process involving minimal costs for both capital and labor" (Botwinick 1993, p. 113). Mobility by underemployed and unemployed workers, or from the low-wage sectors of the economy, regardless of their sex, race, or ethnicity, can impose significant costs on employed workers—whom employers may try to replace by these cheaper, and more desperate, workers.

Now if the unemployed (or lower-paid) are, in fact, a stigmatized minority, what unions do—whether they pursue interracial unity or racial discrimination—becomes decisive, given the dynamics of capitalist competition, in the determination of racial inequality. Job vacancies, even when they are abundant, and especially the better jobs, are always "rationed among a chronic surplus of applicants" (Reynolds 1951, p. 246). Nor is there any necessary equilibrium between the demand and supply of labor. Labor mobility, as occurred often during the 1940s boom years, can result in a surplus of workers applying for the same jobs. Who fills the job vacancies is decided by employers, but within the kinds of constraints that unions are ready, willing, and able to impose: they can try either to exclude black workers or to ensure that employers treat them no differently than white workers in filling job vacancies.

affiliates were industrial unions" (1972, p. 461; emphasis added). But contrary to his assumption (as we have already emphasized), AFL industrial unions were not "less discriminatory," even in the midst of the war, than their fellow AFL craft unions. Richard Child Hill's analysis (1974) of the relationship between unionization and racial income inequality also uses aggregate unionization as of 1968 to measure working-class solidarity; but as opposed to Beck, he finds that unionization decreases black/white income inequality. What probably accounts for these opposed findings, however, is Hill's focus on metropolitan areas, where the BLS measure of unionization "tends to favor the selection of industrial union membership over craft unionism" (1974, p. 513; emphasis added). That is, Hill's "unionization" probably is roughly equivalent to the membership of major ex-CIO industrial union locals in these metropolitan areas, e.g., the UAW in Detroit or the Steel Workers in Pittsburgh, which certainly raised the level of earnings equality for employed black and white workers.
CONCLUSION

This, of course, is to reiterate the thrust and the findings of our entire analysis. How organized labor chooses to confront competing labor supplies, especially those consisting of workers stigmatized on account of their race or ethnicity, is not predetermined—not by the fact of unionization itself nor by the actual or potential concentration of the stigmatized group nor by the level of aggregate labor demand. Rather, what unions do is determined, within unknown limits, by the meaning unionism has to union leaders and rank and file members—by their conception of who they are and what they represent. In a word, how they act depends on their level of “class consciousness” or, more precisely, on the substantive content of their political consciousness or worldview, and thus on their social objectives and the strategy they follow to achieve them. These “historical choices” in turn are the product of the intraclass struggle within the class struggle—and who wins or loses the leadership of the organized working class makes a profound difference. Where the balance of power in organized labor favored the CIO, and especially in the highly unionized states, the CIO’s interracial unionism and class solidarity, as opposed to the AFL’s racial exclusionism, increased employment equality between black and white workers, 1940–50.27

EPILOGUE

Early in 1950, as the CIO’s anti-Communist purge was occurring, the CIO’s militancy in the struggle for black workers’ rights had already waned to such an extent that a columnist for the Washington Afro-American charged: “This new CIO policy . . . calls for conformity with America’s traditional policy of segregation and Jim Crowism” (Foner 1976, p. 292).

27 An AJS reviewer suggests that we discuss the alternative hypothesis “that the CIO grows in strength in states with particular industrial mixes, and the action really comes from the industrial settings, not the CIO strength.” Although this is a plausible hypothesis, worth investigating by future research designed to replicate this analysis, we doubt that controlling for the “industrial setting” would affect our present findings. For locals of CIO internationals often were organized and grew in the same industry—and even the same plants—as, and in competition with, new AFL industrial union affiliates, but their racial practices continued to be diametrically opposed, e.g., the AFL’s International Association of Machinists (IAM) vs. the CIO’s Marine and Shipbuilding Workers in West Coast shipyards, the IAM vs. the UAW among aircraft workers in Southern California, the AFL’s Amalgamated Street Car Workers vs. the CIO’s Transport Workers Union in Philadelphia, the AFL’s Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen vs. the CIO’s Packinghouse Workers in Chicago slaughterhouses, and the AFL’s Seafarers vs. the CIO’s International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union in the West and the National Maritime Union in the East.
In mid-1950, the Cold War erupted into bloody war in Korea. The U.S. "police action" (June 26, 1950–July 27, 1953) resulted in "swelling labor rolls" and tight labor markets. But, unlike World War II, this war-induced manpower shortage and high labor demand did not lead to any substantial increase in black employment in manufacturing. Most white workers who had worked in defense plants during World War II and had then been laid off during the postwar reconversion were now called for reemployment. But the Urban League reported on February 4, 1952, after an investigation of hiring practices in 30 industrial cities, that there was "a uniform pattern" of discrimination against black workers in nearly all of these cities. In most cases, employers were bypassing even those black workers who had been directly employed in war production during World War II, and they were hiring new white recruits instead.28 The director of the league's industrial relations department warned: "Unless drastic steps are taken to curtail discriminatory practices in the majority of the nation's industries having defense contracts, there will be very few Negro workers in the manpower mobilization program" (Foner 1976, p. 271).

Despite the burst in industrial labor demand, the national unemployment gap between white and black workers did not narrow during the Korean War.29 At the state level, the relationship between the CIO's relative power and reduced white/black employment inequality characteristic of the 1940–50 decade was to disappear in the next.30 As the 1950s unfolded, in the words of historian Robert Zieger, "Few in the CIO regarded the concerns of black workers as central. . . . Since the [expelled] pro-Soviet unions had highlighted civil rights, ardent racial progressivism might suggest pro-Communist sympathies. . . . When it came to racial matters within the CIO, the response of the white-led federation and its

28 Despite a serious Korean War–induced labor shortage in Detroit, for example, where the UAW under Walter Reuther was no longer aggressively pushing for nondiscriminatory hiring, employers refused to hire qualified black workers, and they frequently turned them away at the factory gate. So, for instance, in 1951, in one month of acute labor shortage, 308 unskilled jobs, 423 semiskilled jobs, and 719 skilled jobs listed in the offices of the Detroit State Employment Services offices went unfilled, although 874 unskilled, 532 semiskilled, and 148 skilled black applicants were available for immediate employment (Sugrue 1996, p. 108).

29 The gap actually widened slightly, from 1950 to 1953: the ratio of the black male unemployment rate to the white male rate in the nation rose from 1.98 to 2.00 (calculated from figures in Ross 1967, table 6). By 1954, the new pattern of the black male rate being double the white rate had been established. "This ratio temporarily fell below two to one in the later 1960s, but climbed back to about two to one in the [1970s])" (Farley 1977, p. 196; also see Kessler 1963); since then, the ratio has remained more or less the same (Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997, p. 246).

30 The absence of any pattern here is consistent with Ashenfelter's finding that the differential effect of the AFL and CIO on earnings tended to vanish between 1950 and 1960 (1972, p. 462).
Employment Equality

affiliates was [now] modest . . . [or] dilatory and often insincere" (1995, p. 346; see also Business Week 1950).

In 1955, having lost its own radical identity, the CIO returned to the bosom of the AFL and, as Herbert Hill observes, "after the merger . . . , the CIO's enlightened racial policies were, in many cases, replaced by the traditional racial practices of the major AFL affiliates" (1971, p. 121).

A Pocket of Neglect

Remarkably, in the welter of writings on contemporary race relations in the United States, the CIO era is rarely even mentioned: the CIO's struggles, and achievements, and their implications for our own time, are ignored. Even studies of the Civil Rights movement and "black insurgency" ignore this struggle for racial justice by organized workers (e.g., McAdam 1982; Morris 1984; but see Korstad and Lichtenstein 1988; Goldfield 1993, 1995; Geschwender 1977).

Similarly, the various contending attempts to explain the widening white/black unemployment gap since midcentury or the emergence of the so-called black underclass share a common silence on the CIO's historic effort to transform, as Myrdal put it, the American economy's racist "institutional framework." John Kasarda argues, for instance, that "fundamental changes in the structure of city economies . . . led to a substantial reduction of lower-skilled jobs in traditional employing institutions that attracted and economically upgraded previous generations of urban blacks" (1989, p. 27; emphasis added).

In the same vein, William Julius Wilson writes: "The ten cities that accounted for three-fourths of the increase in ghetto poverty in the United States during the 1970s . . . [were] all industrial centers [where] a massive industrial restructuring and a loss of blue-collar jobs [occurred]. . . . Out-of-school inner city black males [cannot] . . . obtain blue-collar jobs in the industries that had previously employed their fathers . . . . Manufacturing industries [were] a major source of black employment in the twentieth century. . . . One of the major factors involved in the growth of

31 Some analysts of racial economic inequality at least allude to the possible implications of the CIO's racial egalitarianism (e.g., Lieberson 1980, pp. 353–54; Marable 1983, pp. 35–36; Farley and Allen 1987, p. 116; Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997, pp. 90–91). However, none of the following works, which are diverse in theoretical construction and political orientation, even mention the CIO or industrial unions: Baran and Sweezy (1966); Auletta (1982); Kasarda (1985, 1989); Lemann (1986); Wilson (1987, 1991); Johnson and Oliver (1992); Vedder and Galloway (1992, 1993); Fairlie and Sundstrom (1996).
ghetto poverty is [this] industrial restructuring" (1991, pp. 7-8; emphasis added).

James H. Johnson and Melvin Oliver, too, attempt to explain "black male joblessness," as the result of two decades of prior "fundamental change" in the "basic structure" of the U.S. economy. "This restructuring includes . . . the decline of traditional, highly unionized, high-wage manufacturing employment. . . . Capital flight [in American cities], in conjunction with plant-closings, has essentially closed off black access to what were formerly good paying, unionized jobs" (1992, p. 115; emphasis added).

What these authors and others who focus on "restructuring" since the 1970s or on earlier "technological change" or the growth of a "spatial mismatch" between jobs and residence, fail to ask is, What opened up the "manufacturing industries . . . [as] a major source of black employment" in the first place and made it "traditional" for "previous generations" of black men to hold "good-paying unionized jobs"? Unasked, the question cannot be answered, and the struggle waged by the CIO and its constituent unions (until the purge of the Left) to pry open, and keep open, the door to vastly increased black manufacturing employment, goes unnoticed (and unsung).32

Cognizance of the CIO's achievements and recognition of the consequences of the CIO's decline, and its merger with the AFL in 1955, is essential to an adequate explanation of the growing employment inequality between white and black workers since then. To forget that the CIO's class-conscious radicalism and militant commitment to interracial solidarity increased the equality of black and white workers distorts both theory and history.

The suppression of historical memory, whether intentional or not, has pernicious intellectual consequences, for when the real past is obscured, the sources of the actual present—and of what else was possible—are

32 That some sort of "fundamental change" in industry hit black workers the hardest is scarcely a new refrain. Paul Baran and Paul M. Sweezy's theory of "monopoly capitalism and race relations" (1966), for instance, explains "the rapid deterioration of the Negro employment situation since the Second World War" as a result of "mechanization, automation, and cybernation," which disproportionately displaces black unskilled and semiskilled workers (1966, p. 259). This analysis by two distinguished Marxist economists is curiously bereft even of any mention of the CIO's then recent interracial organizing and industrial battles. Baran and Sweezy's only reference to organized labor is to the AFL craft unions' racial exclusionism (1966, pp. 263-64). This is also the gist of Wilson's remark in his 1987 book (1987, pp. 12, 122), although seven years earlier he had at least noted that the CIO's interracial unions "contributed to a nationwide reduction of racial strife in the industrial sector after World War II" and encouraged interracial solidarity (1980, pp. 76-77, 84); but he also asserts, much like Herbert Hill, that the CIO unions organized black workers only to avoid the weakening of their class power.
mystified. Surely the prevailing explanations of the widening white/black unemployment gap provide some important insights. But, because they are ahistorical and depoliticized, they are inherently misleading if not simply false.

Over 30 years ago, Arthur M. Ross observed that “the analyses of structural unemployment have been misplaced in time. Practically all of them have dealt with the period since 1957, but the damage [to Negroes] was done in an earlier part of the decade. The question of why the Negroes slipped backward, relative to whites, in a decade of generally full employment is still clouded in mystery” (1967, p. 30; emphasis added).

No solution to this mystery is possible, we suggest, by analyses that ignore a simple historical fact: it was in the wake of the decline and demise of the CIO as a potent organizational expression of interracial working-class solidarity that black Americans “slipped backward.”

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