The Monster Meetings
at the Negro YMCA in Indianapolis

Stanley Warren*

In today's political, social, and economic arena remembering segregation in negative terms seems both logical and natural. However, the necessity of finding a way to survive within a limiting system driven by segregationist tendencies has been the base from which many great African-American traditions and organizations have begun. One such organization was a branch of the Young Men's Christian Association. In 1900 the formation of a Young Men's Prayer Band presaged the birth of the Negro YMCA in Indianapolis and led to the inception of an incredible social, civic, and educational institution.

In 1905, shortly after the state YMCA officially recognized the Prayer Band, members initiated a series of public forums, headlined for the first ten years by local religious, business, and political figures. The forums, commonly known as Monster Meetings, eventually showcased almost every black leader in the country and provided a means for bringing national issues to the Indianapolis area. Rebuffed by his superiors when he requested permission to call the forums "The Big Meeting"—that name, it seems, was being used by the statewide YMCA organization for its own meetings—Executive Secretary Thomas E. Taylor, playing the game of one-upsmanship, suggested "monster" as an alternative to "big." In retrospect, the unusual name choice was fortuitous.

Soon after the colored YMCA became a fully approved entity, the push for a new building began. Word about the creation of the new YMCA branch had spread throughout the United States. Early on, Booker T. Washington declared support for the fledgling effort. In January of 1906 he committed himself to a fund-raising speaking engagement for March of the same year. Also involved in the fund-raising effort was Julius Rosenwald, Sears, Roebuck and Company executive and philanthropist, who offered a one-for-three

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1 Bertram E. Gardner, "The Negro Men's Christian Association in the Indianapolis Community" (Master's thesis, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1951), 50.

2 Indianapolis Recorder, January 27, 1906.
match calling for his $25,000 to be joined with $75,000 from the local community. The pledges were raised in ten days with the “white” team raising $59,000 and the “colored” team, $20,100. The news of this astounding success spread very rapidly, particularly through the churches and other YMCA branches. At the forefront of citizen participation in the fund-raising effort was Madam C. J. Walker, who gave $1,000. Fittingly, the Senate Avenue YMCA building was dedicated by Washington in July, 1913. In appreciation the branch raised $3,000 for a memorial fund at Tuskegee Institute in Washington’s name.

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2 Madam C. J. Walker became one of the wealthiest black women in America because of her innovations in cosmetic and hair preparation formulas for black women. Her will stipulated that two-thirds of the profits from her company should go to charitable organizations. Walker’s penchant for supporting civic efforts in the black community was recently evidenced by a July, 1993, gift of $7,500 to the Indianapolis Fall Creek YMCA from the remainder of the Madam Walker Trust Fund. Ralph Christian, executive secretary of the Fall Creek YMCA, conversation with author.

3 Mercer, One Hundred Years of Service, 86.
Faburn E. DeFrantz, more than anyone else, has been credited for the extraordinary political and social awareness and the phenomenal growth of the Negro YMCA in the Hoosier capital. He came to Indianapolis as physical director of the Senate Avenue YMCA in 1913. Three years later he was appointed the first black executive secretary. From 1916 until his retirement in 1952, membership in the Senate Avenue branch grew from 350 to 5,270. DeFrantz believed that members of the black YMCA must “go forth into battle against the evil forces which were impeding the progress of the Kingdom of God and the Brotherhood of Man.” It was this challenge that provided the impetus for the growth of the Monster Meeting concept into the largest and most prestigious public forum in the country.6

With DeFrantz’s encouragement and leadership the Monster Meetings served as focal points for protest and constituent educa-

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FABURN E. DEFRANTZ

Fahurn E. DeFranti. Jr.

As an arm of the Monster Meetings, the Citizen's Committee of One Hundred, with its very active subcommittees, scrutinized pending legislation and other city and state activities that were likely to have a negative impact on housing, education, and employment in the black community. Further, the Monster Meetings played a central role in galvanizing the community around such important issues as the relaxation of racial restrictions at Indiana University, the opening of downtown theaters to blacks, the integration of the Indiana High School Athletic Association, preparation of the Anti-Hate Bill that became law in 1947, employment of

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blacks in the city administrations, and preparation of the Anti-Segregation Bill that became law in 1949. Each of these issues was discussed in open forums and reported on by knowledgeable, interested individuals and the appropriate committees. Committee reports were often made directly to the Monster Meeting audiences with the confidence that every organization interested in matters affecting the race was represented there.

Shortly after the beginning of the DeFrantz era of leadership, the Monster Meetings took on a national flavor with more than a hint of radicalism. In the words of the executive secretary: "They say that DeFrantz is too aggressive, but as long as I stay in this town I shall see to it that the Negro is in the picture of what is going on." Representatives of local and state organizations continued to receive invitations to speak, but nationally known figures at the Monster Meeting rostrum became commonplace. As the popularity and importance of these mass education meetings grew, both the public and YMCA members exhibited a higher level of community activism. The meetings were used to showcase young men of talent, to provide financial support to promising youth, to further political education, to pay tribute to the achievements of great men from around the country, and to provide a platform for discussions about national, state, and local issues. The roll call of speakers is an indication of the significance of the programs.

In general, both the Monster Meeting speakers and the audiences were black, but there were many exceptions. At various times mayors, governors, and legislators, all of whom were white, shared their views with and answered the questions of the Monster Meeting participants. Occasionally, speakers requested that their meetings be opened to women and, sometimes, to children. In a few instances women were invited to be Monster Meeting speakers. Marjorie Penny, director of Fellowship House in Philadelphia, appeared in 1953, as did Eleanor Roosevelt; and Irene M. Gaines, president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, spoke in 1955.

Because local hotels were not open to black travelers, an informal gathering for "insiders" at the home of "Chief" DeFrantz or one of the other important individuals generally followed the Monster Meetings themselves. If the speaker was from another city, often he spent the weekend at the home of DeFrantz, attorney Henry J. Richardson, or Freeman B. Ransom, attorney and manager of the Madam C. J. Walker Company, and on Monday addressed the Mon-

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8 *The Y's Man*, November 21, 1931.


10 Organized originally to fulfill the evangelistic purpose of the YMCA, the Monster Meetings were, technically, exclusively for men. According to all indications, however, women were involved in the meetings from the beginning, either as members of the audiences or as participants in the celebrations surrounding the events. "The Monster Meetings," 20-21.
day Luncheon Club at the Coffee Pot restaurant in the Walker Building. In some instances on Monday following the Sunday Monster Meeting, the guest, sponsored by the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, spoke at a tea in the Crispus Attucks High School cafeteria.\(^{11}\)

The season for the Monster Meeting series ran from November to March. When the public forums began in 1905, organizers attempted to have several speakers each month. Weekly Sunday forums during some months caused great concern about financial matters as well as about the quality of the meetings. In April, 1953, the Monster Meeting Planning Committee decided to reduce the number of sessions during the 1953–1954 season to ten or twelve with emphasis on significant, well-known individuals. At that time there was a $273 deficit in the Monster Meeting budget.\(^{12}\)

An analysis of the origins and development of the Monster Meetings provides significant information concerning the Senate Avenue YMCA itself. An extremely family-oriented organization, the YMCA instituted a Monster Meeting for children in 1927. Professional and business leaders spoke to the Sunday afternoon sessions, which followed much the same format as the adult forums. The success of the Negro YMCA under DeFrantz's leadership also spawned a movement to create a YWCA based on many of the same tenets as the men's organization. Strong support came from YMCA members. In 1927 Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Brokenburr donated $1,000 to the YWCA building fund drive and Mr. and Mrs. Freeman B. Ransom donated $1,100. When asked why he and his wife had been so generous, Ransom answered: "My wife and I gave $1,100.00 to the YWCA building fund because we felt the Association's appeal was a direct challenge to our Christianity, and a test as to our interest in the women and girls of the YWCA. We felt that we could not afford to give more, and we were dead sure we could not afford to give less."\(^{13}\)

Long an advocate of racial integration, DeFrantz also created an annual Emblem Club Racial Amity award to be presented by the Senate Avenue YMCA to the white man in the state who had done the most for Negroes during the year. Recipients of the awards from 1947 until DeFrantz's retirement in 1952 were:

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11 Willard B. Ransom, son of Freeman B. Ransom, and Faburn B. DeFrantz, Jr., conversations with author. Wallace Waugh or his successor, Dr. Benjamin Osborne, chaired the meetings of the Monday Luncheon Club for many of the years under discussion. Founded in 1927 as a result of pressure to separate the races in the Indianapolis schools, Crispus Attucks High School consolidated the enrollment of all of the city's black high school students at one location.

12 Indianapolis Recorder, April 4, 1953. Other meetings with goals similar to those of the Monster Meetings were held at various times during the year: The Salons, Intercollegiate Club, Open Meetings, etc.

13 "Reflections of Eight Decades: History of Indianapolis Alumni Chapter Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.,” 44, undated manuscript (Kappa Alpha Psi, Indianapolis).
A close examination of the list of Monster Meeting speakers and their backgrounds provides further reasons to reappraise the dynamics of the Negro YMCA prior to the 1970s. Perusing such a list out of context, one would never guess that in all of Indiana and the Midwest during the relevant decades, racial exclusion rather than inclusion was the order of the day. The many appearances of Howard E. Jensen, professor at Butler University, as speaker at the Sunday afternoon forums underline the apparent inconsistencies in segregationist policies. Although several Senate Avenue "Y" boys attended Butler, it was common knowledge that, unlike today, the number of black students allowed on campus at any one time was limited. Ironically, Jensen’s favorite topic, social equality, often included discussions about the Butler enrollment issue.

Even the segregation of public facilities in Indianapolis was inconsistently applied. The Monster Meetings often brought such important speakers to the city that the limited seating capacity at the Senate Avenue YMCA was insufficient. In 1953 Eleanor Roosevelt spoke, without incident, to an unsegregated audience at the Murat Temple rather than at the YMCA. In 1958 Martin Luther King, Jr., made a trip to Indianapolis to address a Monster Meeting forum. Approximately 1,100 people listened to his speech in the Cadle Tabernacle, a frequent site of Crispus Attucks High School graduation ceremonies.

The climate of cooperation, achievement, and pride that was created by the Monster Meetings affected many people and organizations in the Indianapolis community. There was a tremendous amount of crossover between black churches and black civic and

14 Mercer, One Hundred Years of Service, 88-89.
16 The Y’s Man, December 12, 1953. The Murat Temple, an ornate structure of Middle Eastern and Egyptian design, was built in 1909 as the home for the Ancient Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine. Later, the building became part of the Shubert Theatre chain. Today it exists primarily as a rental hall in which as many as two hundred events are held yearly.
17 The Y’s Man, December 18, 1958. Like the Murat the Cadle Tabernacle was long a significant symbol in the Indianapolis community and a favorite site for large meetings. With its sizeable auditorium, Cadle was in general used by religious, educational, and political groups. Purchased by the Indiana National Bank in 1968, it was subsequently razed. Prior to the 1924 election the tabernacle was, ironically, the center of Ku Klux Klan activity in the area.
social organizations in the Hoosier capital. Segregation relegated black citizens to a relatively small world in which lawyers and truck drivers had a great deal in common and often found themselves in each other's company. In the words of Dr. Mordecai Johnson, long-time president of Howard University: "The redcap and the lawyer, the laborer and the doctor, seek together to find answers to social and political questions . . . herein is the very genius of Christianity." A classic example of the full measure of this concept was found in the bylaws of the El Amigo Club, a social club with a traditional sense of civic pride. A requirement for membership in the El Amigos carried a stipulation that new members would also join the YMCA. As part of their community responsibility, El Amigo members acted as ushers at Monster Meetings.

Cooperation extended to other organizations as well. The Intercollegiate Club, composed of local college students, had fully integrated branches around the city. In September, 1927, the Senate Avenue YMCA sponsored a dinner and smoker for all male teachers in the city schools, and by 1931 all men on the staff of Crispus Attucks High School were members of the YMCA. Consequently, the school facilities were often used to support the activities of the YMCA, the Intercollegiate Club, the YWCA, and the Monday Luncheon Club. Over the years the faculty of Crispus Attucks and the YMCA presented a united front in attempts to persuade the central school administration to improve both academic and athletic facilities at the school.

It was, no doubt, this quality of experience for those involved that helped to balance life in segregated Indianapolis, particularly during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. It is not unusual to hear black senior citizens speak fondly of that time in their lives in spite of the pressure from local civic organizations, city officials, and state legislators to create racially separate institutions in Indiana. It was, for those who embraced the Monster Meeting concept, a time of foundation building for the changes that were to take place in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Johnson captured the spirit of the DeFrantz era when he stated: "we must work as hard for integration as if it could come tomorrow; yet, at the same time, be as efficient in our segregated positions as if they were to be maintained forever . . ." 

Throughout the 1950s the Sunset Terrace Ballroom in its advertisements claimed to be located at the heart of the colored

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18 Faburn E. DeFrantz, "Autobiography," 52. The unpublished autobiography is in the possession of Faburn E. DeFrantz, Jr.
20 The Y's Man, September 24, 1927, September 19, 1931. Several of the unmarried male teachers lived at the YMCA.
population in Indianapolis. Indeed, thirty thousand Negroes lived within a radius of ten city blocks of the ballroom's Indiana Avenue location. The compact nature of the black residential areas in the Hoosier capital, imposed in part by the racism and segregationist tendencies of the day, helped sustain activities at the Negro YMCA and other Negro institutions. Within this ten-mile radius there were Negro churches, theaters, and restaurants as well as Crispus Attucks High School, the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, and the Senate Avenue YMCA. With the onset of integration in housing and employment, blacks began pushing north and east out of the area centered around Indiana Avenue. Perhaps there is no direct correlation between changes in residential and commercial patterns in the Negro community and the loss of support for programs at the Senate Avenue YMCA and its successor, the Fall Creek YMCA. The evidence strongly suggests, however, that integration, though a sign of progress, contributed significantly to the end of support for the Monster Meetings.

The Monster Meeting concept, with a local, religious slant, began shortly after the Prayer Band became a full-fledged branch of the Indianapolis YMCA in 1905. However, the crystallization of the meetings into a public forum for local issues with a national connection seemed to coincide with the tradition of having Johnson as the series-opening speaker each November. With one exception the Howard University president performed this function every year for more than forty years. The following schedule of Monster Meeting programs, though incomplete, provides significant information concerning the dynamics of the Indianapolis Negro YMCA prior to the 1970s. Appropriately, the first meeting on the list coincides with the beginning of Johnson's presidency at Howard.
Monster Meeting Speakers  
1926–1963*  

Mordecai W. Johnson (11/13/26) “Religion or Christianity”  
[Johnson had just become first Negro president of Howard University, Washington, D.C.]  

Alain L. Locke (11/28/26)  
[Professor of philosophy and religion, Howard University]  

Dr. Max Yergan (12/5/26)  
[Author; expert on African issues]  

Countee Cullen (2/25/27)  
[Poet. Meeting held at Caleb Mills Hall, Shortridge High School, Indianapolis]  

Ralph Metcalf (11/5/27)  
[Record-holding track star]  

John W. Russell and F. Caldwell (?/?/27)  
[Gary, Indiana, attorneys who fought against segregated school movement]  

Mordecai W. Johnson (11/13/27)  

Dr. E. W. Moore (11/17/27) “The Second Emancipation of the Negro”  
[Regional director of education and missionary work of Northern Baptists]  

Dr. Howard E. Jensen (11/19/27) Question and answer session  
Questions to be answered: (1) Is the limitation of the number of Negro students to be admitted to Butler University right? (2) Is it Christian? (3) Is it American?  
[Sociology professor, Butler University, Indianapolis; on program for preceding eight years]  

Alain L. Locke (11/26/27) “Shall We Live in the World or a Ghetto?”  
[Tea and reception at Crispus Attucks High School on the following Monday; spoke on “The Negro in Drama in America”]  

[Presiding elder, Lexington Conference of the Methodist Church]  

Dr. John Hope (12/10/27) “Some Recent Gains along the Color Line”  
[President, Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia]  

George W. Cable (12/17/27) “Egypt”  
[Novelist; women invited]  

George S. Schuyler (1/7/28) “The Negro’s Next Step”  
[Managing editor, The Messenger]  

Dr. Howard E. Jensen (1/15/28) Question and answer session  
L. Ert Slack (1/21/28) “Good Citizenship”  
[Mayor of Indianapolis]  

*Information about Monster Meetings was compiled from copies of The Y’s Man and the Indianapolis Star and from conversations with Willard B. Ransom, Faburn B. DeFrantz, Jr., and Ralph Christian, current executive secretary of the Fall Creek YMCA. Dates are accurate to the week rather than the day, and some speech titles are missing because of the unavailability of data.
Chandler Owen (1/28/28) “A Negro in Congress Now”
[Coeditor, The Messenger]
Dr. Howard E. Jensen (2/4/28) “Social Equality”
Alain L. Locke (2/12/28) “Some Recent Gains in Race Relations”
[Interracial Sunday observance at Robert’s Park Methodist Episcopal Church]
Rev. Robert L. (Fighting Bob) Bradby (2/18/28) “Attitudes”
[Pastor, Second Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan]
Rabbi Morris M. Fuerlicht (2/25/28) “Some Human Aspects of Religion”
[Rabbi, Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation; fifteenth year on program]
Freeman B. Ransom (3/10/28) “The Y.M.C.A. and the Church”
[Attorney and manager of the Madam C. J. Walker Company; tenth year on the program; chair of Committee on Management of YMCA]
“My Solution to the Race Problem” (3/17/28) Two perspectives:
A. H. Maloney (black) “If I Were a White Man”
Howard E. Jensen (white) “If I Were a Black Man”
[Maloney was a graduate student in pharmacology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.]
Dr. T. F. Reavis (11/10/28) “Danger Signals Ahead”
[Successor to Jensen as professor of sociology, Butler University]
Walter White (11/24/28) “The Color Question As a World Problem”
[Assistant secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; had investigated forty-one lynchings and eight race riots]
Alain L. Locke (12/1/28) “What about the Future?”
Howard Thurman (12/8/28)
[Professor of Biblical history, Morehouse College; protégé of Mordecai W. Johnson]
George W. Cable (12/15/28) “John Brown”
[Fourth appearance]
Bishop Garfield T. Haywood (1/6/29) “Out of Egypt”
[Bishop of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World and pastor of Christ Temple Church of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Indianapolis]
Robert L. Bradby (1/13/29)
L. Ert Slack (1/19/29) “Public Opinion”
Akintunde Dipeolu (1/26/29) “Creative Forces in the New Africa”
[Nigerian graduate student at the University of Chicago Theological Seminary]
Rev. Murray S. Kenworthy (2/2/29) “Racial Contributions to Civilization”
[Regional Secretary, American Friends Service]
Freeman B. Ransom (2/16/29) “Watchman, What of the Night?”
[Testimonial dinner for Ransom]
William Pickens (3/2/29) “Economic Interpretations of the Race Problems”
[Field secretary, NAACP, national office]

Harry G. Leslie (3/16/29) “The Responsibilities of Citizenship”
[Governor of Indiana]

[Bishop of the Fourth Episcopal District of Chicago and member of the Civil Service Commission of Chicago]

Dr. Channing H. Tobias (3/30/29) “Give the Boys a Chance”
[Senior secretary of the Colored Men’s Department of the National Council of the YMCA; Thomas E. Taylor Memorial Sunday. Taylor was the third executive secretary of the Senate Avenue YMCA.]

Judge William H. Harrison (11/9/29) “Building a Man”
[Member of the Pardon and Parole Board of Illinois and former assistant attorney general of Illinois]

[Editor, Indianapolis Times]

Alain L. Locke (11/30/29) “Which Way Out: Economic, Political, or Cultural?”

Dr. Harry O. Pritchard (12/7/29) “Education and Democracy”
[Secretary of the Board of Education of the Church of Christ]

[Owner and publisher of the Chicago Defender]

Roscoe Gilmore Stott (1/11/30) “Dying on Third”
[Writer, lecturer, impersonator]

Akintunde Dipeolu (1/18/30) “Black and White in South Africa”

George S. Schuyler (1/25/30) “What’s to Become of the Negro?”
[Chief editorial writer for the Pittsburgh Courier and columnist for Views and Race]

Rabbi Morris M. Feurlicht (2/1/30) “Bending Backwards”

Dr. W. A. C. Hughes (2/15/30) “A Man’s Measure”
[National director of Negro work for the Methodist Episcopal church]

Ray D. Everson (2/22/30) “Donny’s Prayer”
[Managing editor, Indianapolis News; open meeting]

Freeman B. Ransom (3/1/30) “Unemployment and How to Solve It”

[Bishop of the Indianapolis-area Methodist Episcopal church]

[African Methodist Episcopal Zion church, Rochester, New York]

[Pastor of the Carrollton Avenue Reformed Church; open meeting]
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Bruce “Shorty” Morrison (3/29/30) “Playing the Game”
[Director of physical activities, George Washington High School, Indianapolis]
Roscoe Gilmore Stott (11/8/30) “A Man-Sized Job”
[United States senator from Indiana; opposed Judge John J. Parker’s Supreme Court nomination. Parker’s open opposition to Negro participation in the political process caused his nomination by President Herbert Hoover to be rejected by the United States Senate.]
[Pastor, Simpson AME Church, Indianapolis]
Louis Gregory (12/6/30) “How to Remove Prejudice”
[The only Negro lecturer for the Bahai movement]
A. H. Maloney (1/3/31) “Science in Religion”
[Pastor, Simpson AME Church, Indianapolis]
Louis Gregory (12/6/30) “How to Remove Prejudice”
[The only Negro lecturer for the Bahai movement]
A. H. Maloney (1/3/31) “Science in Religion”
Leila A. Rothenburger (1/10/31) “America’s Most Courageous Women”
[Possibly the first woman speaker; wife of the Reverend William F. Rothenburger, pastor of the Third Christian Church, Indianapolis]
Dr. Frederick D. Kershner (1/17/31) “God, Prayer, and Immortality”
[Dean of the College of Religion, Butler University]
Merle Sidner (1/31/31) “What Are You Building”
[President of Sidner, Van Riper, & Keeling Advertisers; former editor, Indianapolis Star; school board member]
William Pickens (2/14/31) “Frederick Douglass: The Spirit of Freedom”
“Prohibition: Shall Indiana Stay Dry?” (2/21/31) Debate
Rev. C. H. Winders: Yes
Boyd Gurley: No
[Winders was former secretary of the Anti-Saloon League.]
Akintunde Dipeolu (2/28/31) “Liberia, Slave or Free”
[Chair, Sociology Department, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee]
Paul C. Stetson (3/14/31) “Character Education”
[Superintendent of the Indianapolis Public Schools]
Honorees: Jack Mann Muncie Central High School Muncie, Indiana
Dave DeJernette Washington High School Washington, Indiana
Dr. Rufus E. Clement (11/15/31) “Finding the Way Out”
[Dean of Municipal College, Louisville. For the first time in ten years the series was not opened by Mordecai W. Johnson.]

James M. Ogden (11/21/31) “Vice and Crime: Its Cause and Cure”
[Indiana attorney general who had named black lawyer Robert L. Bailey as assistant attorney general in October, 1931]

John W. Davis (11/28/31) “Unemployment Problems”
[President, West Virginia State College, Institute, West Virginia]

A. H. Worsham (12/5/31) “First-Hand Picture of What Is Happening in Russia”
[Engineer who helped build an automobile plant and city for 25,000 people in Russia]

Dr. Lee Sadler (12/12/31) “Unconquered Frontiers”
[Pastor, University Park Christian Church, Indianapolis]

Elder Karl F. Smith (12/19/31) “The Measure of Man”
[Secretary of the Pentecostal Assemblies; speech was a memorial to Bishop Garfield T. Haywood.]

Theodore Ward (1/2/32) Dramatic reading
[Student at the University of Wisconsin, Madison]

Rabbi Morris M. Feurlicht (1/9/32) “Economic and Spiritual Depression”

Bert Essex (1/16/32) “Palestine, Cradle of Christianity”
[Author]

“The Way Out” (1/23/32) Forum
John C. N. Bankett [Editor, Indianapolis World]
James Hodge [President, Business Men’s League]
Pearl Hamilton [President, Citizen’s Employment League; campaigned to get white businesses to hire “colored” where patronage was largely “colored”]

Paul V. McNutt (1/30/32) “Americanism”
[Dean of Indiana University Law School; former commander of the American Legion]

Dr. George Washington Carver (2/6/32) “Great Creator, What Is a Peanut, Why Did You Make It?”
[Director of agricultural research and professor of chemistry, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, Alabama]

Dr. James A. Crain (2/20/32) “George Washington’s Message to Americans”
[Secretary of the Board of Temperance and Social Welfare of the Disciples of Christ]

[Personnel director of the Columbia Conserve Company]

Dr. T. F. Reavis (3/5/32) “Racial Solidarity”
A. H. Godard (3/26/32) “Facing the Future”
[General secretary of the Indianapolis YMCA]
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Alva A. Taylor (4/2/32) "The Responsibility of Youth As It Faces a New World"
[Dean of Fisk University]

Elder Robert F. Tobin (12/11/32) "A Brighter Day Ahead"
[Pastor of Christ Temple Church of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World]

Alva A. Taylor (2/11/33) "The Negro and the Economic Outlook"
[Chair, Sociology Department, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee; this was interracial Sunday at North Methodist Episcopal Church, Indianapolis]

Rev. Marshall A. Talley (1/13/34) "Is Christianity Christian?"
[Pastor, Mount Zion Baptist Church, Indianapolis, and member of the Negro Advisory Commission of the United States Department of Commerce]

Rev. J. L. Jones (1/20/34) "Can Christianity Solve Our Economic Problems?"
[Pastor, Jones Tabernacle, Indianapolis; open meeting]

W. E. B. Du Bois (3/17/34) "Segregation"
[Professor, Shaw University, Raleigh, North Carolina. Speech was very critical of the NAACP, calling its theories unsound and ineffective. Du Bois was one of the founders of the NAACP. He had taught at Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio; the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; and Atlanta University.]

George S. Schuyler (3/2/35) "New Frontiers for Negro Youth"

Henry J. Richardson (3/17/35) "The New Negro and New Politics"
[Indianapolis attorney and YMCA member]

Percy L. Julian (1/11/36) "The Negro Scholarship and the Present Crisis"
[Chemist and director of research of the Glidden Company]

Dean H. H. Smith (1/18/36)
[Dean of the School of Religion, Bishop College, Dallas, Texas; meeting was held at Mount Zion Church]

Lester B. Granger (2/8/36)
[Representative of the National Urban League]

Merze Tate (3/28/36) "International Relations"
[Former Crispus Attucks teacher; first Negro woman at Oxford; Fulbright scholar; former member of Fortnight Literary Club of Indianapolis; member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority]

Dr. Thurman B. Rice (3/13/37) "Sex As Is: A Frank Discussion"
[Professor of bacteriology and public health, Indiana University School of Medicine, and chief of hygiene for the Indiana Division of Public Health; open meeting]

Dr. Charles S. Johnson (12/12/37) "A Sociological Philosophy for Action"

Dr. Joseph C. Carroll (1/15/38) "Religion and Education"
[History teacher, Crispus Attucks High School]
Mordecai W. Johnson (11/19/38) “Anti-Semitism and the Negro Ministry”

Mordecai W. Johnson (11/24/39) “Our Work, Our Wages, Our Soul”

Percy L. Julian (11/25/39)

Dr. Herman B Wells (12/2/39) “Education in a Democracy”

[President, Indiana University]

Lorenzo J. Greene (2/11/40) “The Negro Sharecropper of Southeast Missouri”

[Chair, History and Government Department, Lincoln University, Jefferson City, Missouri]

“Socialized Medicine” (2/18/40) Debate

Roland Allen: Yes

Dr. Carl Glenn Roberts: No

[Allen was manager of L. S. Ayres Department Store in Indianapolis; Roberts was an Indianapolis physician and surgeon.]

Graham Martin and Archie Harris (3/23/40) Thomas E. Taylor Memorial Service

[Students at Indiana University. Martin was a graduate of Crispus Attucks High School and became one of the first black commissioned officers in the United States Navy in 1945.]

Dr. Max Yergan (12/15/40) “Democracy: A Goal to Defend”

[Executive director of the Council on African Affairs]

Earl B. Dickerson (1/5/41) “Democracy for the Negro through Political Action”

[Alderman, 2nd Ward, Chicago]


Hale Woodruff (3/30/41) “The Place of Culture in the New World Order”

[Artist; former YMCA employee]

Mordecai W. Johnson (11/9/41) “Civilization’s Civil War”

Walter White (11/30/41)

Dr. Channing H. Tobias (1/17/42) “The Church and the World Crisis”

Dr. Lorenzo J. Greene (2/7/42) “The Negro in National Defense”

Dr. Julian H. Lewis (3/15/42) “The Negro’s Blood, Sweat, and Tears”

[Associate professor of pathology, Medical School, University of Chicago]

Honoring solons (1/24/43)

Current: Freeman B. Ransom, Wilbur Grant, Robert L. Brokenburr, Dr. L. B. Meriwether, James Hunter, Jesse Dickinson

Past: Henry J. Richardson, J. Chester Allen, Rev. Marshall A. Talley, Dr. Theodore Cable
A. Philip Randolph (2/7/43) “A Program for Negro People Today”  
   [President, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; open meeting]  
Mordecai W. Johnson (11/6/43) “Freedom’s Challenge”  
Dr. Eustace Hayden (1/22/44) “Religion and Democracy”  
   [Chair, Comparative Religion Department, University of Chicago]  
A. Philip Randolph (2/5/44) “The Negro in War and Peace”  
William H. Hastie (2/20/44) “The Fight against Discrimination in the Armed Forces” [paraphrased]  
   [Former aide to Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson]
"Industry, Employment, and the Negro" (2/27/44) Panel
William Book [Executive director, Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce]
Ewing Sinclair [Personnel manager, P. R. Mallory Co.]
Andrew E. Ramsey [Teacher, Crispus Attucks High School]
Charles V. Turner [Agent, Cement Finishers, American Federation of Labor]
Walter Frisbie [Congress of Industrial Organizations]
Lionel Artis [Manager, Lockefield Gardens Housing Project, Indianapolis]
Moderator: Cleo Blackburn [Superintendent of Flanner House, Indianapolis]
Resource persons: W. Chester Hibbitt
Starling James
Ernest Dix
Colonel H. D. McQueen (3/19/44) "Footprints on the Sands of Time"
[Commander of all-black 366th Infantry Regiment; protégé of Colonel Charles Young]
Freida Neugabaur (12/3/44) "The Colonies in the Post-War World"
[From Capetown, South Africa]
Henry F. Schricker (12/17/44) "Looking Ahead"
[Governor of Indiana]
Mordecai W. Johnson (11/11/45) "Implications of the Atomic Bomb"
Percy L. Julian (11/18/45) "A Challenge to American Negro Statesmanship"
John Eubanks (2/16/46) "The Negro in the Post-War Period"
[Philosopher; substitute for Rayford W. Logan whose brother had died. Logan was dean of the Howard University Graduate School]
Mordecai W. Johnson (11/10/46) "Civilization's Civil War: Part II"
Joseph C. Chapman (1/12/47) "Democracy in Gary Schools"
[Executive secretary of Gary, Indiana, Urban League]
A. Philip Randolph (1/19/47) "The World Struggle for Democracy"
Rayford W. Logan (2/9/47) "Education for World Citizenship"
Bishop William J. Walls (11/15/47) "Human Dynamite, or Europe Today"
[Bishop of the Indiana Conference of the AME Zion church]
Percy L. Julian (11/23/47) "Modern Science and Our American Faith"
Channing H. Tobias (12/14/47) "This Is the Hour"
[Member of President Harry S Truman's Commission on Civil Rights]
Eugene Pulliam, Sr. (12/21/47) "The New Terror in Europe"
[Publisher, Indianapolis Star; memorial service for the sixth anniversary of Pearl Harbor]
Walter White (2/22/48) "Issues of the Day" [title paraphrased]
The Monster Meetings

Dr. Charles Drew (3/21/48) “The Present Status of Negro Health and Medical Care”
[Authority on plasma and blood banks]
Charles F. Fleming (1/23/49) “Civil Rights Legislation in the General Assembly”
[Indiana secretary of state]
Dr. Charles Wesley (3/6/49) “The Crisis and the Challenge”
[President, Wilberforce University]
Percy L. Julian (11/20/49) “Science and the World Order”
Rev. Morris Golder (12/18/49) “Christmas Message”
[Pastor, Christ Temple Church]
Mordecai W. Johnson (11/12/50) “Ghandi and the Liberation of India”
[800+ in attendance]
Dr. Merrill B. McFall (11/19/50) “One God—One World—One People”
[Pastor, First Methodist Church, Bloomington, Indiana; given Emblem Club Award for Racial Amity]
Henry F. Schricker (12/10/50)
[Open meeting]
Rev. Morris Golder (12/17/50) “Christmas or Christ”
Dr. Herman L. Shibler (1/6/51) “Public Education in These Times”
[Superintendent, Indianapolis Public Schools]
Dr. John Eubanks (1/21/51) “The Hopes of 1951”
[Superintendent, Jarvis Christian College, Hawkins, Texas; former YMCA employee]
Dr. Charles Wesley (1/13/51)
[President, Central State University, Wilberforce, Ohio]
Walter White (2/3/51) “Integrated Society or a Segregated Society”
[Executive secretary, NAACP]
A. Philip Randolph (2/18/51)
Rev. Howard Baumgartel (2/25/51) Tribute to Faburn E. DeFrantz who had reached the mandatory retirement age of sixty-five
[Baumgartel, local head of the Federation of Churches, was a substitute for Percy L. Julian.] Ezzard Charles (3/18/51) Thomas E. Taylor Memorial Service
Honorees: Branch McCracken [Indiana University head basketball coach]
William Garrett [Indiana University All-American basketball player and first black player in the Big Ten Conference]
Crispus Attucks High School basketball team which came within two games of winning the state championship
[Charles was a heavyweight boxing champion]
Philip Willkie (11/18/51) “The American Struggle”
[Indiana state legislator]
Dr. Nilkanth Chavre (12/18/51) “The Future of World Peace”
[International scholar]
Rev. Morris Golder (12/23/51) “The Christmas That We Need”
[Civil engineer; voted most distinguished graduate, University of Iowa, Iowa City]
Merze Tate (2/3/52) “Education and International Good Will”
[Indiana state legislator]
Dr. Forrest O. Wiggins (3/9/52)
[Professor of philosophy, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; grew up in Senate Avenue YMCA. Wiggins was the only Negro faculty member at Minnesota and was fired before his tenure year.]
Jesse Owens (3/29/52)
[Track star; Olympic gold medalist]
Channing H. Tobias (1/11/53)
[Phelps-Stokes Fund of New York, which specializes in the promotion of greater educational opportunities for Negroes]
Judge Herbert E. Millen (1/24/53) “A Time for Leadership”
[First Negro judge in Pennsylvania Municipal Court]
Dean George Goodman (2/22/53) “Religion As a Basis of World Brotherhood”
[Director of personnel, Fisk University; advocate of Bahai faith]
Marjorie Penny (2/28/53)
[Director of Fellowship House in Philadelphia; open meeting]
Walter H. Aiken (3/8/53) “Building a State Economy”
[Building contractor, Atlanta, Georgia]
Jesse Owens (3/29/53) Thomas E. Taylor Memorial Day
Mordecai W. Johnson (11/8/53) “Our Historic Opportunity”
Dr. Max Yergan (11/15/53) “Things That Men Live By”
Eleanor Roosevelt (12/13/53) “International Human Rights” [title paraphrased]
[Held at the 2,000-seat Murat Temple]
Bishop M. W. Clair, Jr. (12/20/53) “Christmas Message”
[Former pastor at Simpson AME Church; selected by Council of Bishops to appraise Methodist work in Africa]
Bertram E. Gardner (3/28/54) Memorial and recognition service
[Education secretary, Senate Avenue YMCA]
George S. Schuyler (1/10/54)
Bishop William J. Walls (1/10/55) “Rolling Simes [sic] versus Standing Minds”
[AME Zion clergy]
Irene M. Gaines (1/30/55) “Human Relations on Your Street”
[President, National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs; open meeting]
Dr. Lawrence Hosie (2/12/55) “Workable Brotherhood”
[Executive director, Indianapolis Church Federation]
ELEANOR ROOSEVELT AT THE SENATE AVENUE YMCA MONSTER MEETING IN INDIANAPOLIS, DECEMBER 13, 1953

Percy L. Julian (2/26/55)
Rev. Archibald Carey (3/19/55)
Mordecai W. Johnson (11/13/55) “A Troubled World in the Middle East”
A. Philip Randolph (11/20/55) “The Civil Rights Crisis and American Democracy”
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forge a declaration of neutrality in the cold war, and to end colonialism.

Bishop William J. Walls (1/29/56) “Is It Daybreak or Midnight?”
Rev. Archibald Carey (2/12/56) “Obligation of the New Order”
Ella P. Stewart (2/26/56) “A String of Pearls along the Equator”
“The Situation in the South” (3/18/56) Panel
   Rev. Clinton Marsh
   Starling James, president, Federation of Associated Clubs, Indianapolis
   Rev. J. Inman Dixon, pastor, Simpson AME Church
   T. C. Johnson, teacher, Crispus Attucks High School and columnist for Indianapolis Recorder
   Willard B. Ransom, attorney, Madam C. J. Walker Company
Richard Horne (3/25/56)
   [Cottage supervisor at the Indiana Boys’ School, Plainfield]
Mordecai W. Johnson (11/11/56)
A. Philip Randolph (11/?/56) “The Civil Rights Resolution in America”
Dr. T. M. R. Howard (11/25/56)
   [Chicago physician]
Dr. Charles S. Johnson (12/9/56)
   [President, Fisk University]
Rev. A. P. Morris (1/13/57)
   [Pastor, AME Zion church, Charlotte, North Carolina]
Dr. Charles Wesley (2/3/57)
Rev. Archibald Carey (2/17/57)
Roy Wilkins (3/3/57)
   [Executive secretary, NAACP; succeeded Walter White]
Judge Wendell E. Green (3/17/57)
Mordecai W. Johnson (11/10/57)
John Wesley Dobbs (11/24/57)
   [Grand Master of Georgia Masons]
Dr. E. C. Smith (12/8/57)
   [Evangelist from Washington, D.C.]
Jackie Robinson (1/28/58)
   [Brooklyn Dodgers; broke the color barrier in major league baseball]
   [Served as counsel for NAACP Legal and Education Fund; played key role in 1954 school desegregation case; had role in desegregation cases, Sweat v. Painter, Smith v. Allright; served as circuit judge; served as solicitor general of the United States; Supreme Court justice. Introduced by Willard B. Ransom]
Martin Luther King, Jr. (12/12/58) “Remaining Awake through a Revolution”
   [Held in Cadle Tabernacle; 1,100 in attendance; $500 honorarium]
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., MONSTER MEETING SPEAKER, WITH INDIANAPOLIS MINISTERS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS IN 1959

Standing, from left: Third, Dr. Andrew J. Brown; Fourth, Dr. Lucian Merriweather; Fifth, The Reverend F. Benjamin Davis; Seventh, John James, Executive Director, Fall Creek YMCA.

Arrington High (1/11/59) “The Role of the Negro Press in an Integrated Society or a Segregated Society”
[Former Mississippi journalist; shipped out of Mississippi in a coffin; declared insane and placed in an asylum; known as the “Eagle Eye”]
Roy Wilkins (3/1/59)
Martin Luther King, Jr. (12/11/59) “Remaining Awake through a Revolution”
[Room for 1,000 in the new Fall Creek YMCA]
Mordecai W. Johnson (1/10/60)
Lester Granger (2/7/60) “A Time for Greatness”
[Executive director, National Urban League; $175 honorarium]
Joel A. Rogers (2/21/60)
[Reporter, Pittsburgh Courier]
Dr. Samuel D. Proctor (3/6/60)
[President, Virginia Union University, Richmond]
Bishop Joseph W. Gomez (3/20/60)
[AME church]
Joel A. Rogers (2/5/61) “Africa’s Gift to America”
Dr. Samuel D. Proctor (2/7/61) “A Creative Minority”
  [President, North Carolina A&T College, Greensboro]
Judge William G. Hastie (3/5/61)
  [First Negro federal judge in the United States; former gover-
  nor of the Virgin Islands; winner of the NAACP Spingarn
  Medal]
Mordecai W. Johnson (11/12/61)
Adam Clayton Powell (12/8/61) “The Negro: America’s Only Revo-
  lutionary”
E. Franklin Frazier (1/14/62)
  [Sociologist; author of controversial book, Black Bourgeoisie]
Alex M. Clark (1/20/62)
  [Mayor of Indianapolis]
Benjamin E. Mays (2/4/62) “A Dilemma or Challenge”
  [President, Morehouse College]
Bishop Joseph W. Gomez (2/18/62) “Retrospect and Prospect”
  Which We Live”
  [International president of United Packinghouse, Food and
  Allied Workers of America (AFL-CIO)]
A. Philip Randolph (3/18/62)
Sarah Harris Taylor (3/25/62) Thomas E. Taylor Memorial Service
  [Widow of Thomas E. Taylor]
Dr. Rufus Clement (12/2/62)
  [President, Atlanta University]
Adam Clayton Powell (12/8/62)
Dr. James Nabritt (3/24/63)
  [President, Howard University]
Additional speakers; dates and other information not located:
  J. Ernest Wilkins [physicist]; Paul Robeson [actor, singer]; Roland
  Hayes [singer]; Langston Hughes [poet, novelist]; Lillian Evanti
  [coloratura soprano]; Jersey Joe Walcott [heavyweight boxing
  champion]; Lillian Smith [author]; Frederick Hovde [president,
  Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana]; Ralph F. Gates [gov-
  ernor of Indiana]