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# Channing H. Tobias: An Educational Change Agent in Race Relations

O Joyce Smith
*Loyola University Chicago*

# CHANNING H. TOBIAS

# AN EDUCATIONAL CHANGE AGENT IN RACE RELATIONS

# 1940-1960

by

O. JOYCE SMITH

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# INTRODUCTION

The story of Channing Heggie Tobias is one that should not be lost in basements, attics or archives. It is one that reflects the human struggles of a race and their determination to survive, in spite of handicaps, to become full citizens in the United States.

Tobias' story is one of challenge, perseverance, encouragement and hope to a people who were emerging from the oppression of slavery -- only to face the debasement of segregation. It also reflects the strong influence which the colonial and revolutionary traditions of his birthplace had on his early life, as well as the impact of desegregation and integration in later years.

While Tobias alone did not change history, his contributions and influence were significant enough to become threads used to make the fabric that became a part of our United States. Unfortunately, along with many others, his story faded after his death in 1961. Inadequate financial resources impeded the publication of the record of accomplishments.

In 1960, the History and Library Committee of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) proposed to take the initiative to prepare materials to make it possible for someone to write a biography of Dr. Channing Tobias. Mr. Dalton F. McClelland, Executive Secretary of the National Council of the YMCA, was

appointed chairman of the project, and was authorized to acquire letters and other documents from close friends and associates, as well as church, business and political leaders. The letters were to include personal and business reminiscences and other significant impressions of Dr. Tobias. This project, called the Tobias Project, was undertaken by the committee with enthusiasm. However, problems emerged when various foundations, most of whom Dr. Tobias was a member, failed to support this initiative. Several of them, while interested in the biography itself, feared that their financial support would establish an unwarranted precedent.[1]

Another significant concern was the selection of a skilled biographer who understood the racial climate of the time period, and had the ability to recreate Dr. Tobias' character in narrative form. After months of deliberation, Ms. Lillian Smith, a noted author of the 1960s era, was selected. In addition to meeting the committee's criteria for the task, Ms. Smith knew Dr. Tobias well.

Unfortunately, during 1960, the same year that the plans were in place, Dr. Tobias suffered a disabling stroke that seriously altered Ms. Smith's initial plan for the work. Therefore, a scaled down version was considered.

Although many were sympathetic to the cause, there was not enough financial support to continue the project after Dr. Tobias' death in 1961.

As I reviewed documents for this research, I discovered letters written in 1963 and 1964 expressing the disappointment and regret that the Tobias Project could not be completed at that time. The hope was that, "some way may be found

for getting this story told of one of the truly great Americans and Christian world citizens of our times."[2] A letter from the YMCA Historical Library indicated that, "Dr. Tobias was a great man both within the YMCA and in American history so that the biography will be written without a doubt, even though it may have to wait until everyone is able to have more perspective on the lasting values among Americans of Negro origin."[3]

After reading those letters, I believed that the time had come to review the past. In early Greek history, Thucydides (471-396 B.C.) recognized that knowledge of the past was needed to interpret the present. Others since then have stated in various ways that knowledge of the past is vital to keep us from repeating the same mistakes in our future. The only way that we can interpret knowledge in the future or avoid mistakes of the past is to have history available to us. We can then examine the whole in relation to each piece, and finally determine the significance as it relates to the whole.

This dissertation will evaluate Dr. Tobias' contributions towards the improvement of race relations in the United States. A primary concern will be to determine how he used education as a conduit to influence change in the world during the time he lived. An attempt will be made to understand his contributions in the context of African American and white relations in the United States through an examination of his efforts and accomplishments.

An overview of his early life will allow us to see the significant people and experiences that became the foundation for Tobias' development. As he moved

through the early adult and his most productive years, we see how his strong religious faith and insights allowed him to focus clearly on his desire to improve the education of young men and women, and to promote positive race relations at home and abroad.

Throughout his life, Dr. Tobias seemed to approach all problems of human relationships from a profound religious faith and spiritual wisdom. His goal was to contribute to the achievement of true democracy in the United States and in the world community. He strongly believed that the problems faced by Americans and peoples of the world could be solved democratically. He dedicated his life to bringing men and women of all colors, races, and religions to that solution for segregation and other forms of racial discrimination, which he strongly believed to be rooted in man's spiritual development. Tobias expressed this belief clearly in his autobiography when he stated, "In this atomic era the only alternative to destruction is cooperation, and cooperation is not something that can be worked out in science laboratories. It is definitely spiritual."[4] He stressed an interfaith religious approach to the present day problems of human relationships; but he also recognized that men would continue to "approach truth from different angles."[5] It is on this foundation that Tobias' story was built.

This dissertation will focus on Dr. Tobias' role in African American society. To get a better understanding of his impact as a leader in race relations, an examination of his years as YMCA Student and Senior Secretary; his participation as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Association for the

Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and his work in educational, civic and government organizations will be evaluated. This investigation will also determine his influence as a leader of the emerging civil rights movement.

The materials to be investigated will be examined according to the historical method. An examination of documentary resources will be used to determine Tobias' ability to mobilize white support; to identify other leaders of the period and the extent to which Tobias competed or cooperated with them. Another item requiring attention will be to determine his organizational base.

The primary sources consulted are the Tobias Collection and records relating the YMCA work with African Americans, located at the YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Minnesota. Other sources include government documents and material obtained from the Vivian Harsh Collection located at Woodson Library, Chicago, Illinois, and materials located at Loyola and Chicago State Universities in Chicago, Illinois.

## Notes

1. Maxwell Hahn to Dr. Clifford M. Carey, November 20, 1961, Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn.

2. Eugene E. Barnett to D.F. McClelland, May 29, 1963, Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn.

3. YMCA Historical Library to D.F. McClelland, May 11, 1964, Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn.

4. Louis Finklestein ed., Thirteen Americans: Their Spiritual Autobiographies, Institute for Religion and Social Studies (New York: Kennikat, 1953), 196.

5. Ibid.

# CHAPTER I

## CHANNING TOBIAS: EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Channing Heggie Tobias was born in the deep South, in Augusta, Georgia, in 1882. Late nineteenth century Georgia was still struggling with the social defects caused by its inherited legacy of slavery. It was burdened with many problems in race relations, especially racial segregation.

The Civil War had left the state in shambles. The notion of white supremacy continued to prevail as the dominant white attitude for relating to the newly freed slaves in Georgia. Racial segregation, for the most part, had not yet fully settled into the patterns and lives of many Georgians, but that would change swiftly in the decades to come.

Post-war reconstruction saw a short-lived period of political progress for African Americans. However, the business and political gains vanished quickly, ending that significant but brief progress. The movement and freedom Americans had during the 1870s and 1880s in Georgia would not be realized again for almost ninety years, until the 1960s.[1]

Although there was some racial cooperation, it was within the framework of segregation, which was distasteful to the African American population. The periods that followed reflected a time of great struggle for these men and women

in their attempt to develop and improve their social, economic, educational, and political conditions. It is against this backdrop that we become acquainted with Channing Heggie Tobias.

The founding of the city of Augusta dates back to pre-Revolutionary days and was "thoroughly steeped in Colonial and Revolutionary traditions." It was described as an interesting city that significantly influenced young Channing's life. It was also considered a cultural center during the period immediately before and after the Civil War. This cultural awareness seemed to flow over into the African American community as well, and produced skilled writers and other artisans.[2]

During Reconstruction, the behavior of white Southerners towards the education of freemen was determined not only by the traditional attitudes towards the status of the African American, but also by the outlook and interests of the various groups that emerged with the collapse of the traditional class and economic structure. Three divisions emerged in white Southern society which influenced its attitudes toward racial relations. Conservatives attempted (through the Black Codes) to reinstate, as much as possible, the servile status of African Americans. The moderates, who realized that slavery was dead, believed that the new status of the African American should be recognized in creating a new society in the South. This moderate group consisted mostly of large plantation owners who were willing to secure a reliable labor supply. The radicals, consisting mostly of whites with no property and small farmers, had had no real

interest in the slave system. This group cooperated with the African Americans during the early years of Reconstruction, thus earning the names "renegades and scalawags." Education for African Americans was generally neglected by all three groups because of the power struggles among them, which also created a negative climate for education.[3]

Historically, the South had generally been opposed to the education of children at public expense. With the exception of North Carolina, there was little progress in establishing public schools in the South before the Civil War. Slavery and its concomitant historical, cultural, social, and economic value systems opposed the doctrine that supported education at public expense. For the most part, this feeling was carried over to the education of African Americans in the post-Civil War era.[4]

The primary outcome of educational progress during the Reconstruction period was the establishment in the South of public school systems. Tax supported education for the masses as a democratic right to which citizens were entitled was a principle which was followed by many legislatures in the Reconstruction period.

Public school systems were soon established after the Civil War in the Southern states. Public schooling, of course, followed the double standard that then existed between African American and white students. Schools for African American students were often inferior, and supplies were difficult to obtain; while those schools attended by white students were better equipped to serve their

educational needs. But in spite of the disparities of revenues and facilities, the best trained African American teachers were hired by the public officials.[5] In 1890, the primary training center for African Americans for the entire state of Georgia was Atlanta University. It was founded by Northern philanthropists immediately following the Civil War.

During the Reconstruction years, education for African Americans in Georgia did not go beyond the elementary grades. However, a high school curriculum was eventually established after a sufficient number of students had completed the elementary grades.

A representative portion of Georgia's African American population lived in its largest cities. Savannah was the oldest; and along with Augusta and later Atlanta, they produced many outstanding African American leaders.[6]

It was in the context of the Reconstruction that Channing Tobias' family lived and worked. Fair J. Tobias and his young wife, Clara Belle Robinson Tobias, were well respected citizens of Augusta. While Fair had attended Atlanta University and received excellent training, there was a set pattern of employment for the African American population. The men were permitted to become industrial artisans, often working as skilled laborers, bricklayers, carpenters or shoemakers. The women often became live-in domestic servants.

Unable to obtain a higher occupation, the elder Tobias became a coachman -- the predecessor of the modern chauffeur. He was skilled in handling horses and was employed by private families and public commercial groups.[7] Clara Belle,

also recognized for her reputation, was fairly well trained. She secured a job as a domestic servant. However, this required her to be away from home for several days at a time, which caused her to rely on extended family and friends for the care of her own children.

The African American Church is said to be the only social institution of blacks which began in the African forest and survived slavery.[8] Next to the family, the church was probably the most important institution of African American life. It was a religious and social center in that parishioners learned the price of cotton or the date of the arrival of the next circus. Weddings, funerals, summer revivals, church suppers and bazaars provided much of the community social life; youth groups, women's missionary societies, and meetings of deacons and elders gave African Americans the opportunity for self-government denied them in the greater society.[9]

For the Tobias family, the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was a formative force. The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1870 with some assistance from the Methodist Episcopal (South) Church, its parent body. Together, they cooperated to jointly establish Paine College, which Channing Tobias later attended.

Both of Channing Tobias' parents were loyal members of the Colored Methodist Church, and their abilities and characters were recognized by those in the community. Even when he was not living with his parents, young Channing attended Sunday school and church services regularly. It was in one of those

services that he would later be challenged to a commitment that would direct him into his future life's work.

Channing was the youngest of the two Tobias children. His sister was three years older than he, but neither of them had the privilege of being raised by their parents. This was largely due to the fact that both parents worked away from home for several weeks at a time, and were not able to give the children their personal care.[10] This was a common occurrence in the lives of African Americans during the early 1900s because the extended family was an important component in child-rearing.

Channing's sister was raised by her paternal grandmother, who was described by him as a woman of unusual intelligence, beauty and personal charm. She was well provided for economically through inheritance, so there was no concern of financial need. He, on the other hand, was raised by a widowed friend of his mother. He stated that, "she was illiterate but highly intelligent."[11] He attributed his regular church attendance to his foster mother, who saw to it that he rarely missed Sunday school.

Overall, Tobias' childhood was much like that of other Southern African American youths. High moral standards were instilled in him, and education was a high priority for promising youths of his time. Tobias received his early education at Haines Institute, a private elementary and secondary school founded by Miss Lucy Craft Laney. It was probably the best school for African Americans operating in Georgia in the 1890s. Miss Laney was a dedicated teacher and a no-

nonsense administrator who would not allow students to engage in inappropriate behavior. Discipline and obedience were required of all of her students. She believed in corporal punishment and enforced rules without hesitation. A former student summed up Miss Laney's administrative philosophy when he said: "If you went to her school it was to get an education, and if you stayed there she saw that you got some education."[12]

Miss Laney was born in Macon, Georgia, in 1854, of parents who had once been slaves. She was a member of Atlanta University's first graduating class in 1873. For the next ten years, she taught in the public schools before she established Haines Institute, which began as a one-room facility with a few students. However, by 1915 it had emerged into a city-block campus that served approximately 860 students and staffed 28 faculty members.[13] At Haines, the elementary program focused primarily on reading, writing and arithmetic. There was some history and geography as well. The secondary program was similar to current secondary educational requirements. Four years of English and mathematics and three years of history constituted the core of required subjects. Elective courses were offered in chemistry, physics, psychology and sociology. The foreign languages offered included French and German.

The students at Haines were required to wear uniforms, and drill was a part of the routine. Corporal punishment was allowed and used if necessary. The campus was considered both an educational facility and a sanctuary for its residents. An incident recalled by her niece, Ms. Louise Laney, reflects Lucy Craft

Laney's total dedication for the students. When she and other students in the first grade were lined up to receive smallpox vaccinations, the two white physicians were ordered off of the campus because of the frightening manner in which they worked. Miss Laney told them that the children's own doctors would give the shots. For this, she and another teacher were taken to court, charged with violating the city vaccination ordinance and resisting arrest.[14]

Miss Laney was a committed teacher who provided sound academic training for three generations of students. She infused the value of learning, along with personal dignity, and discipline to her students. Her courage, wisdom and dedication inspired thousands of boys and girls growing up in African American communities in Georgia to stand tall and aspire to reach their highest goals. "I am as good as anybody else," she once said. "God had no different dirt to make me out of than that used in making the first lady of the land."[15] Miss Laney and those who followed her represented the strength and hope of the African American communities in Augusta, Georgia.

As previously noted, Tobias was raised in an environment that was strongly influenced by religion. When he was ten years old, he met the man who would greatly influence his future. Tobias states in his autobiography, "He was a white man from South Carolina who had come to Augusta to establish a private church school for the training of Negro youth." While he did not remember the sermon itself, Tobias described the man with clarity. He remembered "his alert, soldierly bearing, his sparkling blue eyes, his well trimmed Van Dyke beard, and the kindly

tone of his voice as he placed his hand on my head after the service when he was greeting the departing congregation at the door. 'My little man,' said Dr. Walker, 'you were very attentive today. One of these days when you have finished public school, I want you to come to my school.'"[16]

Rev. George William Walker came to Paine College in 1883 as a teacher in the new school. He was born in Augusta and died there, but he was usually thought of as a South Carolinian. He was a member of the South Carolina Conference, was a graduate of Wofford College, Spartanburg, South Carolina, and had served as pastor there prior to coming to Paine College. He had also taught at Patrick Military Academy. A year after his arrival at Paine, Dr. Walker was appointed President in 1884, upon the resignation of the first president, Rev. Morgan Calloway. This quiet, determined man spent the rest of his life at Paine. He was characterized as "peculiarly fitted for this delicate work" to which he gave himself untiringly. Dr. Walker was described as a quiet plodder who kept working at his difficult and often discouraging task. He is remembered by many as being responsible more than any one person for getting the school on a firm foundation and keeping it as a viable institution. The struggles and excitement of those early years at Paine eventually subsided under the firm and steady leadership of President Walker. The school prospered, developed an orderly routine and survived, finally becoming a college. Dr. Walker remained in that position until his death in 1911, and was considered by many of those working closely with him as one of the founders.[17]

When he finished grade school, Tobias had a choice of attending one of three high schools, including Paine Institute, as it was known then. It was probably the poorest equipped of three schools, but Tobias insisted on going to that school.[18] He reflected in later years, "it may sound strange to some people that my earliest inspiration for religious work and the finest lessons of self-respect that I have learned came not from a northern person but from the president of this little college, George Williams Walker, of South Carolina, who set up this institution for Negro youth . . . ." He went further to say, "the influence of this man was strong with me, and I stayed on . . . ."[19]

Channing's mother died when he was twelve years old. This did not keep him from attending school. He entered Paine the next year and remained there seven years, earning an A.B. Degree in 1902.

Paine College was founded in Augusta, Georgia, in 1882, as Paine Institute by the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. it was considered to be a unique institution because it was jointly owned and controlled by Southern African Americans and whites. Founded exactly nine months after Channing Tobias was born, the college received its first state charter in 1883 as Paine Institute and was re-chartered as Paine College in 1903. Paine provided secondary as well as college education for its students. Even though established during a period in Southern history where the emphasis was on vocational training, Paine maintained a strong emphasis on the classical elements in its curriculum and developed into a liberal arts college.[20]

There is no information available about the curriculum at Paine before 1887, when the first catalogue was published. The primary courses of study were organized in the Normal and Theology Departments. Careful planning had gone into the preparation of classes that would provide a systematic and practical approach to achieve the stated goal that the school would "educate preachers and teachers for the Negro race." The curricula for both departments emphasized the knowledge of subject matter, but the Theology Department stressed practical application as well. Required courses for both departments included four years of reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, history and rhetoric.[21] Electives included logic, algebra, geometry, Latin, physiology, and chemistry. Hebrew and Greek were also required of theology students. Although Paine began in rented rooms seating about seventy students, the enrollment grew from a low of 141 students in the 1884-1885 term to a high of 308 in 1898.

Like most other students, Tobias worked his way through college. He remembers working one summer as an office boy; another found him in the cotton exchange. By the time Tobias was fifteen years old, he usually traveled north to work in hotels. The only available jobs were usually menial, such as a bell-hop or waiter.[22] Through all of the handicaps and prejudices he encountered during these times, Tobias refused to give up or buckle under the pressure of racism. He was filled with a determination of what he could become. The hope that was implanted during those early years was firmly rooted within him. Tobias was imbued with the spirit reflected in the Paine College ideal:

> To love truth and seek it above material things; to enoble and to be enobled by common fellowship; to keep the energies of life at full tide; to cultivate an appreciation of the beautiful; to work well and to play with zest; to have an open, unprejudiced mind; to live simply, practicing a reasonable economy; to find joy in work well done; to be an earnest disciple in the school of Him who brings the abundant life; to work diligently for a better understanding of the white and colored races; such is the spirit and ideal of Paine College.[23]

Channing Tobias completed his work at Paine and then attended Drew Theological Seminary.[24] It, too, was associated with the United Methodist Church and was initially established as a seminary in 1867. Located in Madison, New Jersey, it provided Tobias with his first opportunity to continue his studies in a Northern institution. This time, however, his main interest was to enhance his knowledge through a study of Theology. The curriculum at Drew included studies in exegetical, systematic, practical and historical theology. These courses presented a well rounded, balanced, and effective plan for training Christian Ministers. When Tobias entered Drew in 1902, Dr. Henry Anson Buttz, a distinguished Greek scholar, was the president. In his autobiography Tobias reflected, "he made a deep impression upon me, not so much on account of his scholarship as because of the kindly spirit that he mainfested in personal interviews with entering students."[25] Tobias was a long way from home and the adjustment to this new environment was difficult. Dr. Buttz allowed Tobias an opportunity to express the personal problems and the manner of his response was remembered by Tobias for many years to come. He graduated in 1905, with a Bachelor of Divinity degree. After spending a summer at the University of

Pennsylvania to complete a special study, perhaps, for advanced study, Tobias returned to Paine College, where he began the first six years of his working career.

Tobias' early life seemed to reflect the morals, values and expectations of African American youth in his day. The family, being the primary unit, provided strength, stamina and support needed to move through the daily tasks as well as providing dreams and goals for the future. The church as an institution provided religious training and sound doctrine for its members. However, it was also the clearing house for social events and current community news. If there were political or civic issues to be discussed, the church, again, was the arena in which these activities occurred.

Perhaps, the single most important influence on the lives of African American youngsters living in Georgia at that time was education. It seemed to be a general feeling that education was the key to success. Even in the midst of poor equipment and lack of funds, one's ability to read and write was considered to provide a carte blanche passport to a broader world and a better life. This attitude was deeply infused in Tobias by his parents and teachers.

The racial climate, although not as strained as it would later become, did not encourage African American awareness on any issues that would disturb the status quo. However, change was in the winds. For while the activity in Georgia seemed relatively calm, another organization was about to enter the scene. The activities of this organization would ultimately change the manner in which services were provided in its communities.

The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) began in Europe in 1884. It was not until 1853 that Anthony Bowen established the first "Colored" association in Washington, D.C., that the YMCA even began to work with African Americans. It took another thirty-seven years, however, for the YMCA to establish the Colored Work Department under the leadership of William A. Hunton, the first African American employed by the YMCA in 1890.[26]

In the years to come, Hunton worked to prove that improvement of African American men was vital to the overall progress of the country. His task, as the first Secretary of a Negro Work Department, as it was then called, was to travel across the country to discover and interpret the needs of these young men, to seek out and train leaders and finally to create the conditions of local support so that the programs could succeed.

But this task required more than one man, so William Hunton was searching for additional assistant secretaries as well. In the biography of Mr. Hunton, Addie W. Hunton, his wife, told of the meeting of her husband and Channing Tobias. She wrote, "Mr. Hunton remarked that he had met at a dinner party a young man who he felt possessed one of the finest and most engaging personalities he had ever seen." For the next few years he corresponded with Tobias and finally began to make definite efforts to secure him as a member of the international staff of the YMCA.[27]

Tobias, by then, saw new and challenging opportunities opening for him. The story is told that Tobias and Mr. Hunton had a frank discussion about this

new job. The two of them sat up all night and after much persuasion by Mr. Hunton, Tobias' reply was, "I can't leave Dr. Walker!" In the late spring of 1911, Dr. Walker died and, in August, Mr. Hunton announced that he had a new Secretary for Colored Work in the International Committee of the YMCA.[28]

The formative years of Channing Tobias were positively influenced by his parents and teachers. His parents struggled to provide a nurturing family environment that would form the basis for Tobias' life of dedicated service to others. The training he received in school and church reinforced the high moral and religious standards that were instilled by his parents.

Although he lived during the years of segregation, he did not become embittered by its harsh disparities. Instead, he allowed the early influence of Dr. Walker to instill within him, a desire to achieve racial harmony. This influence helped him to develop the fine character that is reflected in his work with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and other organizations.

Channing Tobias did not believe that equality, human dignity and freedom were the rights of a select group of people. It was his conviction that these human rights were for everyone. Moreover, he held that it was necessary for the principles and teachings of Jesus Christ to operate in the lives of men to effect change in the world. Therefore, his work with the YMCA would be the testing ground for racial harmony and cooperation.

## CHAPTER I NOTES

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4. Ibid.

5. Finklestein, Thirteen Americans, 178.

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28. Ibid.

## CHAPTER II

## THE YMCA YEARS: 1911-1946

The YMCA represents a broad spectrum in Dr. Tobias' life. The chapter begins with a brief look at his personal life, followed by an unfolding of the years of his greatest activity. It will also focus on his work as a Student and International YMCA Secretary and his attempts to stimulate new thought within the YMCA. A description of his travels will reflect on Dr. Tobias' exposure to an international perspective of human relations. As Dr. Tobias established himself as a spokesman for racial equality, his intolerance for racism and discrimination became more apparent. He feverishly attacked the attitude of gradualism within the YMCA. Dr. Tobias continued to reinforce his religious conviction that it would take the spirit of God to effect change in the world. However, he was never shaken by the delays or circumstances that interfered with the process of social justice and racial harmony.

At age twenty-six, Tobias experienced one of the joys of his life when he married Mary Pritchard of Milledgeville, Georgia, November 10, 1908. Three years later, Tobias left Paine Institute where he had taught Biblical Literature. He was ending the first chapter of his work career and those years were described by him as six of the happiest years of his life.[1] Many changes had occurred at Paine

and the two races were working together side by side. Dr. John Wesley Gilbert, Paine's first student and first graduate, had also become the first African American faculty member in 1888. It caused one white teacher to resign, but he was replaced with a new faculty member, Rev. R.L. Campbell, a Conferderate veteran, who was ready to teach beside an African American faculty member. This was the beginning of progress that would also eliminate any differences in salary in future years.[2]

The Paine College idea was now working. The notion that, since white and African Americans in the South must live and work side by side, it was imperative that they understood each others' problems and viewpoints and cooperate for their common good.[3] While the situation at Paine was not perfect, the faculty had matured and the level of instruction was officially recognized for its excellence by the Association of Southern Colleges.[4]

But it was time for Channing Tobias to move on to new challenges and the extensive opportunities that were about to open for him. It had been difficult for him to even consider another position that would take him from Paine College. However, after Dr. Walker's death in 1911, Tobias realized a pressing need to help other young men who could benefit from the strong, supportive guidance of one who had already traveled the road to self-improvement. The YMCA would be the vehicle used by Tobias to reach the thousands of young men and women seeking to enrich their lives through whatever positive means that were available to them.

YMCA was started June 6, 1844, as an outgrowth of prayer meetings that had been organized to allow single young men an opportunity to develop good moral character through spiritual enrichment. George Williams (1821-1905) was a primary initiator of the group. His life had been influenced by the evangelical revivals taking place throughout Europe.[5] The YMCA was also one of the products of these successive waves of revivals that rolled over the continent from 1840 to 1900, and of which Charles G. Finney, was the promoter.

The overall plan of the YMCA was to become a non-denominational association for Christian men to develop moral character and "to improve the spiritual condition of young men engaged in the drapery and other trades by the introduction of religious services among them."[6] The purpose of this initial group was to influence young men to "spread the Redeemer's Kingdom amongst those by whom they were surrounded." As the group grew, the purpose was expanded to include "mental culture", and series of public addresses were initiated that became famous as the "Exeter Hall Lectures".[7]

The idea of a work for the moral, mental and physical salvation of young men was the great ideal behind the YMCA movement. The inspiration soon reached the United States and Canada, where YMCAs began to emerge in the early 1850s.[8]

The YMCA, as we know it, is an organization that provides religious, social, physical, educational and recreational programs to all Americans, regardless of their race, color, creed, religious affiliation or national origin. However, this has

not always been the case, and these programs were not always available for all members of American society, minorities in particular. African Americans were not included or accommodated in the initial YMCA program established in the United States. During the first century of its existence, they were excluded from membership in white branches. In keeping with the attitude manifested in Plessy v Ferguson, the YMCA allowed African Americans to establish association on a "separate but equal" basis.[9] However, the racial policies and the practices within the YMCA motivated African American men working within those confines, to develop a strong character building program that served as a stepping stone to racial advancement. This led to the creation of separate African American branches which were distinct, but operated within the larger associations.[10] In December 1890, William A. Hunton (1863-1916), a Canadian, became the first salaried employed officer of any race of a "Colored" YMCA Association.[11] Prior to Hunton's employment, the leadership for developing programs for Southern African Americans had been under the direction of George D. Johnston, followed by Henry Edwards Brown, both white, and a Southerner and a Northerner, respectively. This indicated a gradual shift from white to African American supervision in YMCA work.

Trying to build a network of African American YMCA's was a disheartening and difficult prospect at best. When Hunton began his career as International Secretary in 1891, racial relations in the United States had deteriorated. "Jim Crow" laws established the legal separation of nearly all aspects of life for African

Americans, and racial violence, in the form of lynching, reached "the most staggering proportions ever reached in the history of that crime." The YMCA had encouraged African Americans to organize their own branches, but the deterioration of race relations in general had a serious impact on white and African American YMCA branches.[12] For the next nine years, William Hunton was the only African American International Secretary working to assist his race, and their only representative on the International Committee. Although it would continue to be a tedious task for many years to come, an additional African American secretary was hired in 1898.

Jesse E. Moorland (1863-1940) became Hunton's assistant. In an effort to give maximum support to the existing African American branches and establish college and university branches, the work was divided. Mr. Hunton visited the African American colleges and universities to stimulate student interest and recruit young members. Mr. Moorland took over the city YMCA branches and helped them with fund raising and membership drives. Race relations did not improve, but that did not interfere with Hunton's vigorous leadership. By 1898, seventeen city and forty-eight student branches were active in the United States.[13]

The pattern of growth within the African American YMCA branches would continue throughout following decades. This steady growth trend led to a greater need for trained professional African American YMCA secretaries. Regional conventions had been initiated by Moorland to provide a forum for information

sharing and skill development. The success of these conventions led to the first National Conference, held in Atlanta, Georgia in 1903.

Local YMCA branches consulted Hunton and Moorland for assistance finding qualified men who were willing to work as secretaries. Since the YMCA secretary as a profession was in its infancy, no guidelines or job descriptions had been developed. Hunton, however, was determined to find men who possessed qualities that both he and Moorland felt were necessary to successfully maintain a local branch. They agreed that the men should be a combination of Christian social worker and business manager. Selected men should possess the ability to wear many hats. They would need to be willing to work as janitors, librarians, teachers, preachers, accountants, counselors, fund raisers, athletic instructors, and song leaders, and assist men in finding employment and housing.[14] In addition, secretaries had to be willing to work for little money, due to the lack of financial resources within each local African American branch. This certainly complicated an already difficult, seemingly impossible, task. Another essential quality for consideration was a candidate's ability to work with a diverse group of people. Both Hunton and Moorland recognized the fact that problems would emerge requiring diplomacy to effectively resolve volatile situations.

Secretaries who were recruited by Hunton and Moorland became important role models and leaders in the African American community. They would become leaders in local branches and, therefore, had to manifest the ability to handle many tasks simultaneously and efficiently. In addition to providing "well-

trained expert leadership" in local branches, Mr. Moorland was concerned with the need to secure competent, talented men for the International Committee, which provided the overall administrative structure for the YMCA.

Again, Mr. Moorland's expectations were well defined and he was highly selective of those men chosen for consideration to the post of International Secretary. He described the ideal candidate as having "all the marks of a gentleman." The candidate's educational background was a primary consideration as well as his personal conduct and appearance. Physical fitness was also stressed due to the frequent need for International Secretaries to travel.[15]

As previously indicated, racial attitudes had deteriorated significantly, so the candidate was expected to be able to tolerate and deal effectively with racism. Moorland emphasized "the importance of keeping in as good humor as possible under the discriminations we meet." He expected African American International Secretaries to "skillfully display wrong with right rather than to wink at wrong and oppression." Although Moorland's philosophy represented an attitude of accommodation rather than confrontation on racial issues, he expected potential secretaries to be able to handle tense situations with diplomacy while keeping their dignity.[16]

Training sessions were vital, in order to provide for the growing needs of African American leadership within the YMCA. Hunton and Moorland began to discuss the establishment of a training school for African American secretaries and college students who would eventually become candidates for leadership within

the YMCA. There were few YMCA facilities available for African Americans to participate freely in established training programs, so it was necessary to create a support system for them. Initially, Hunton conducted regional conferences to allow secretaries to come together to explore new ideas and share progress within their branches. The discussions became a reality which resulted in a YMCA training school for African American secretaries, college students and new recruits. They met annually for summer training sessions, which eventually replaced the annual regional conferences. For the next three years, the Eagle Street Branch in Asheville, North Carolina, was the site of these sessions. Eventually the site was moved to Storer College in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, because of the Jim Crow practices of the Southern railroads.[17]

Although it had not been an easy decision for him, Channing Tobias recognized the need to pursue new challenges. While teaching at Paine, he was quite effective in expounding Biblical teachings and directed many young men into the Christian life. Paine offered Tobias a wonderful opportunity to instill Christian principles as he introduced Biblical Literature to a select group of students. However, a broader impact was needed to influence a larger population. Mr. Hunton had convinced Tobias of the opportunities that YMCA work could provide him to work with minorities. The offer inspired Tobias to accept the challenge to make a difference in the lives of those he could reach. Mrs. Hunton, in support of her husband's choice, would later write:

> from the time I met Mr. Tobias until the present I have felt him more nearly the counterpart of Mr. Hunton than anyone else I

> have ever known. He, too, has a fine and engaging personality, utter consecration to his work, with a tireless energy in the pursuance of it; graciousness and adaptability, save when the relinquishment of righteous principles is involved; and, finally, a deeply spiritual nature, devoid of dogmatism or any assumption of superiority. It has been a real joy to me to see him for so long a period as a successor of Mr. Hunton at the helm in the Association movement among colored men.[18]

Indeed Mr. Tobias' personality, along with his other attributes, would stimulate new thought within the YMCA. The time for change was fast approaching. Mr. Hunton was getting older and he recognized the need to develop additional talent for future advancement of YMCA projects. Mr. Moorland, too, carried a heavy assignment load that would not allow him to take on additional responsibilities. Other men were being selected to take on the duties with the branches, but there was still a vital need for someone with a special initiative to effect change within the YMCA movement.

Channing Tobias manifested all of the characteristics identified by Hunton and Moorland to become an International Secretary. He was offered the position by Mr. Hunton and joined the YMCA as an International Secretary in 1911. He entered the YMCA as a young man of "high ideals, energetic intelligence and great courage."[19] He was assigned to work as a student secretary and his primary task would be carried out among college students and young men and women in the South. Tobias was an impressive young man and appeared to be full of determination, hope and perseverance. It was noted that "without posing, he always carried the appearance of dignity and strength, and his square-set jaws

gave one the impression of firmness."[20] Tobias seemed especially suited for his position and was described as "specially adapted for this with his own broad intellectual foundation and his unusual and winning personality."[21]

African American secretaries were equally respected by many white and African Americans who regarded them as "the religious leaders of American Negroes".[22] They assumed a position of "equal" importance to that of the public or high school teachers and their letters of recommendations were held in high esteem by those seeking employment.[23]

The next twelve years, from 1911 to 1923, would be filled with challenge for Channing Tobias. He would meet many young men seeking to improve their quality of life. In his travels to many of the Southern states, Tobias would see poverty and the dismal existence facing African American youths. The lack of adequate food, clothing and housing was representative of the meager existence youth faced. Crime was an outlet for many young men due to the lack of constructive activities available to them. African American youth had no playgrounds, gymnasiums, clubs, libraries, swimming pools or lecture halls. Tobias found himself fully involved in work to solve the many problems facing his people. When he traveled to various Southern states, he repeatedly saw poverty and poor living conditions. African American youth were forced to spend idle time hanging out in the streets. There were no organized activities available to them. In towns where YMCA facilities were available, they were not usually accessible to minority youths. Often under-educated, with few, if any,

opportunities to develop useful skills, these young people seemed to possess little enthusiasm or motivation for change, and had no vision for their future. Dismal, yes, but Tobias now had an opportunity to make an impact on these young people. It was as if his fullest powers were waiting for an opportunity to be unleashed and this was just the arena he needed to start an avalanche of progress and change.

As a YMCA student secretary, Tobias challenged young minds through his motivational speeches. He stressed the vital necessity for African Americans to get a good education. On some occasions he used the life experiences and careers of prominent young men to inspire and stimulate intellectual growth among the students attending the colleges he visited.[24] Tobias believed that race pride and self help were essential for those who expected to survive the turbulent times they faced. Character development was promoted in formal and informal educational settings. Tobias' engaging personality helped him to make inroads to those students, but it was his strong Christian principles that became the pivotal factor in his thrust towards justice, equality and equity. Although he did not agree with them in principle, he used the same concepts that promoted the social gospel and scientific racial inferiority at the turn of the century as a conduit for change as he attacked segregation and the notion of separate but equal. His approach was persuasive, yet not aggressive. His years of work with Dr. Walker had instilled within him the notion of cooperative understanding and working for the common good of all. Tobias' approach to change was initially directed to those students on

college campuses, because of his assignment as a student secretary. His primary tasks were to recruit potential leaders for future YMCA work and to provide training during summer sessions.

The YMCA remained segregated throughout World War I. African American soldiers remained hopeful, even though they were fighting in a conflict being fought to save the world for a democracy, of which they had so little. They kept looking forward to a better day and their faith was firm in the high ideals for which the YMCA was founded. However, that "better day" was not in the foreseeable future and racial division escalated in the post-war period rather than subsided. Interracial dialogue was encouraged to ease racial tensions as African American soldiers returned from war to the same injustices they fought to eliminate on foreign soil. Many Southern whites were now afraid of the potential danger present because African American soldiers were no longer willing to accept second class citizenship. Mass immigration, industrialization and urbanization were other factors that caused the YMCA to begin to recognize its responsibility to work for: "Justice, opportunity and equal rights for all; mutual good will, and cooperation among racial, economic, and religious groups."[25] Integrating these ideals into practice would require years of attitude adjustments by members of both races.

By 1918, the YMCA had established a Commission on Interracial Cooperation to help with attempts of racial bridging. One of their immediate concerns would be to determine an acceptable way to handle problems related to

separate training schools for white and minority secretaries. When the leaders of the training school for white YMCA secretaries drafted initial plans to include African American secretaries in their training programs, they refused the invitation because the provisions failed to eliminate segregated classes, separate sleeping facilities and isolated eating facilities. Dining behind "a petition . . . to separate the races," was definitely unacceptable by those African American men who firmly believed that the time for racial acceptance was long overdue. The result of these early attempts failed miserably, causing separate training facilities to continue. In the years that followed, interracial cooperation was limited to official business meetings.[26]

African Americans encouraged opportunities for integration and dialogue with white YMCA Association members; however, "Jim Crow" practices continued within the YMCA which caused African American leaders to insist on maintaining separate branches. This separation continued as long as white Associations failed to put an end to racial discrimination and segregation within their ranks. By the mid-1920s African Americans became even more frustrated and impatient with the YMCA's racial policy.

In 1923, Mr. Hunton retired after 33 years of hard but successful work in the YMCA. Channing Tobias became a senior secretary of the International YMCA. His initial approach to change had been through recruitment and training of potential leaders for future YMCA work. Now, as a senior secretary, one of his first tasks would be to challenge the Association's narrow-minded and sometimes

hostile attitudes towards those seeking equal treatment of African Americans. Failure to end racial segregation caused many African American branch leaders to continue to insist on separate YMCA services. While many whites expressed interest in improving race relations, the YMCA's "Jim Crow" policy was seldom challenged. Attitudes and practices previously manifested in the YMCA at large continued. When African American secretaries were invited to attend YMCA conferences, little was done to provide equal or adequate hotel facilities.[27] This became a major issue for minority insistence for change.

An Employed Officers Conference of the YMCA reflected Tobias' intolerance of injustice and discrimination toward minority members. The YMCA secretaries were meeting at King's Mountain in 1924, at Blue Ridge, North Carolina. The organizers of the conference had arranged for all the African American secretaries to eat in a room separated from the main dining room by an alcove. When he learned of this, Tobias instructed the African American participants to remain in Asheville, which was nearby. When the group was assembled, Tobias assessed the situation and instructed the African American secretaries to boycott the conference. They remained in Asheville the entire week. When the conference closed, Dr. Mott, then head of the YMCA, and a committee composed of the leading general secretaries, came to Asheville to meet with the African American secretaries. After a lengthy discussion, a resolution was adopted to never meet again in a city where discrimination was blatant. Other

national organizations began to adopt similar resolutions as a result of that encounter.[28]

Tobias, "unalterably opposed to segregation," definitely rejected the notion of accommodation to the "Jim Crow" practices that his predecessors, Hunton and Moorland, accepted. He believed that segregation reduced the value of human personality which led to crime against the group affected by it. Describing segregation as un-American in spirit and practice, he believed that all American citizens should enjoy freely all public privileges without discrimination.[29] Tobias' most important objection to racial segregation was based on religious grounds. He declared that segregation was an "insult to the Creator." Further, he indicated that the individual or group who segregates is put in the ridiculous light of questioning God in creating people physically different from themselves.[30] Tobias strongly argued that racial segregation was indefensible on religious grounds because it was based on something that the individual is powerless to remove. He stated,

> If a man is discriminated against because he is unclean, he can bathe and overcome the handicap. If the discrimination is because of ignorance, he can study and learn and meet the conditions. But if he is discriminated against because he is black, brown, or white, the discrimination is based on something that he cannot remove, and would not if he could, and is therefore a sin, not just against the man himself, but against God who made him as he is.[31]

The YMCA's Motto, "That they may all be one", was an excellent ideal but it was certainly not being put into practice in the local branches. In 1926, at the

World's Conference of YMCAs in Helsingfors, Finland, Tobias challenged the American YMCA to live up to its Christian principles. While he recognized the limited progress being made by the YMCA in race relations, he encouraged YMCA leaders to support legislation to ban lynching. In his address, during the Conference, Tobias tried to help YMCA leaders understand the frustration that African Americans experienced as they were trying to understand Christian leadership, "that for more than fifty years without serious protest witnessed flagrant violations of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution . . . . " Tobias further indicated that African Americans were "clearly bewildered of the failure of so many Christians to live up to the brotherhood ideals of Christ."[32]

Although there was no indication of the response of white leaders and delegates from the United States to these concerns, Tobias' criticisms of the YMCA's failure to condemn racism within their ranks was certainly an embarrassment to them. During the 1930s, the YMCA began to consider the issues raised by Tobias at the Helsingfors Conference. Statements condemning racial violence, especially lynchings, began to appear in YMCA reports. Tobias reinforced some of the endorsements made during a conference of the YMCA in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1931. Again, he highlighted Christian principles of a common Father to defy the notion of superiority or inferiority of any race.[33]

As a result of the conference in Ohio, a resolution was passed unanimously by the seven hundred and sixty-five official delegates attending the World

Conference of the YMCA. It contained the basic principles which would be used to guide the Association's overall policy in regard to race relations. Included were guidelines that would promote racial and cultural differences as an enrichment and source of racial interaction rather than inferiority and disharmony among the races. The YMCA finally recognized its responsibility to facilitate cultural enrichment within their communities. Human dignity, the supreme value of personality, as set forth in the teachings of Jesus and the unique contributions of Christianity to human relationships, were included among those basic principles that were incorporated in the resolution.[34]

While the delegates of the Cleveland conference recognized that society as a whole was very slowly moving towards racial acceptance and integration, this gradualism slowed down the progress of the YMCA to be a leading force in the process. However, this did not change the fact that the YMCA acknowledged its obligation to serve all men and boys of any community which it served. YMCA Associations were reminded of their conviction that, "in conformity with the principles of Christ, Associations should not forget or neglect any group of young men or boys living in their communities, nor exclude them from membership merely on the basis of race."[35]

One of the results of the conference was that educational programs which focused on racial understanding would be developed. This was an important step because much of the current information available on or about minorities was inaccurate or filled with ignorance and deep-seated prejudice. Local Associations

were encouraged to provide a platform on which different races could speak through their respective leaders, in order that each group could gain a realistic and more representative perspective of minority groups at their best.[36]

Tobias believed this resolution to be significant not only for African Americans, but to the Association at large. He was impressed that Southern white officials were beginning to recognize the need for racial harmony and acceptance. The YMCA as a movement was finally turning away from racial discrimination, at least in principle. However, the reality and application of those Christian principles to life would be more difficult to accomplish. The question of separate YMCA buildings for differing racial groups had been the rule rather than the exception. Now the time for change was upon the Association. The educational process would be the means the YMCA would use to work towards their ideal of brotherhood across racial lines. The task would continue long after these ideals were accepted as the official guidelines for YMCA Associations in the United States.

The mission of the YMCA was summarized by Tobias in 1936, when he stated that, "the distinctive character of the YMCA is not to be found in its program, but in its Christian motivation without which it would sink to the level of any social or athletic club." He further declared that, "the dominance of the Christian ideal in our administration of the Association's work would result in the solution of all difficult problems of human relationships and would make our organization an open door for the under-privileged as well as the privileged of all

cultural and racial groups, because a door that is big enough to let God in will be big enough to let all of His children in."[37]

The 1930s was also a period of adventure because Channing Tobias spent much of his time traveling as a delegate for the National Council of the YMCA of the United States to conferences around the world. He was known to many prominent government and business leaders both in and outside of the United States. As a frequent traveler to foreign countries, Tobias visited YMCA Centers in Egypt, Palestine, India, Ceylon, China, Japan and Hawaii. Some of his impressions were recorded in his Journal of Travel Notes from December 1936 to March 1937. Although she was not often mentioned, Mrs. Tobias accompanied her husband on this four-month tour abroad, possibly to soothe the pain of the loss of their oldest daughter, Belle, who died in October 1936.

His warm personality and friendliness were apparent wherever Tobias traveled. It seemed natural for him to meet and engage others in conversation because he was genuinely interested in gaining information about people and their cultures. Tobias was well informed of the political conditions in Europe and other places he toured, which made for interesting conversation. In addition, his strong spiritual influences were often reflected in his conversations and recorded in his notes. He writes of a conversation with a Scotchman who was working on the ship. They had been on the Mediterranean Sea for a few days, which allowed Tobias enough time to meet new acquaintances. During their meeting, the man naively said the following: "It was a blooming shame for Italy to treat Ethiopia as

she did. England should have seized the opportunity when she had it to make a colony of Ethiopia. For you know," he continued, "England rules according to the standards of the Bible." Tobias stated, "I felt like asking him, Which bible?"[38] He did not, of course; however, whether the subject was religion, politics or human relations, Tobias was adequately prepared to express the beliefs and the principles he lived by.

During his visit to Cairo, Egypt, in 1936, Tobias expressed his thrill at seeing the archaeological sites of Egypt with its abundant evidences of African participation in the great civilizations of the past. He was greatly impressed with the time he spent at the King Tut Exhibit in the Cairo Museum. He wrote, "I had seen the picture of this marvelous exhibit but was wholly unprepared for what I saw in the museum." He felt that it would be difficult, if not confusing, to even attempt to describe the jewelry and house furnishings. However, he indicated that the vases were pure alabaster, and beds were of gold, ebony and ivory.

Another memorable impression Tobias thought to be significant about Egypt was the social changes of the past few years. He saw women studying side by side with men in the University of Cairo, which was a radical change. Also of note was his reaction to seeing people of all colors, from "white to jet black", work without consciousness of color conducting the affairs of modern Egypt. This, he related, was a refreshing sight. Tobias wrote, "what a tonic it was to live for a few days in a land where color carried no opprobrium with it."[39]

One of the most touching moments of his trip through Bombay, India, occurred a few days before the World Conference of YMCAs began in 1937. Tobias tells how he met Mahatma Gandhi. That meeting was most meaningful for Tobias, as we find more about it written in his autobiography some years later. Gandhi was an advocate of the philosophy of non-violence, believing that if caste and religious lines were modified to the extent that political unity was realized, and if the masses were taught to develop simple home industries for sustenance, then political freedom could be won without bloodshed.[40]

Although Gandhi was not active in politics during 1937, he was still the idol of the masses of India. At the time of Tobias' visit, Gandhi was living in an ashram or hut in a village of outcastes in order to set the example for high caste Indians to abolish caste. The Maharaja of Travancore, one of the strongest of the Indian states, issued an order opening all of the temples of his state to the untouchables as well as high caste people. Gandhi made the journey from his home to take part in the opening of these temples. It was while he was on the way to Travancore that Tobias had the privilege of spending two and a half hours with him. The interview took place during the train ride, which also happened to be Gandhi's day of silence, which he broke later to talk with Tobias. Tobias recorded his interview with Gandhi. The questions were written by Tobias, with space left for Gandhi's replies. The following is part of the written conversation that took place between Gandhi and Tobias on January 11, 1937:

Tobias' question:

> Negroes in the United States (12,000,000 in number) are struggling to obtain such fundamental rights as freedom from mob violence, unrestricted use of the ballot, freedom from segregation in all forms and an opportunity to find employment in skilled as well as unskilled forms of labor. Have you out of your struggles in India a word of advice or encouragement? I ask this fully appreciating how differently situated the two peoples are.
>
> Gandhi's reply:
>
> I had to contend against some such thing, though on a smaller scale, in South Africa. The difficulties are by no means yet over. All I can say is that there is no other way than the way of non-violence -- not of the weak and the ignorant but of the strong and the wise.

This and other interview questions were shared with his colleagues and others when he returned to the United States later that year.[41]

The manner and spirit of Gandhi's replies made a lasting impression on Tobias. He reflected later in his autobiography, "Both through his word and actions, he [Gandhi] had convinced me that he was the greatest spiritual leader of our time." According to Tobias, Gandhi was the "living embodiment of what he taught."[42] The essence of this meeting suggests the importance for people of differing faiths to find common ground on which to stand as they seek the reality of truth.

A few days after that interview with Gandhi, The World Conference of the YMCAs began in Bombay, India. Of the twelve American delegates, Dr. Benjamin E. Mays of Howard University and Tobias were the two African American delegates. This conference focused on the social, economic and religious

questions of the world as they affected the young people of that time. Tobias had the privilege of serving as chairman of the Commission on Race Relations. According to him, "the most important resolution urged by this Commission was that national movements request their local associations to do away with racial exclusion policies in membership." He realized the monumental size of this task, especially in North American and South Africa, which were "practically the only countries in the world where racial exclusion is practiced in the Y.M.C.A.'s."[43]

In many of the countries Tobias visited he described the outstanding features of the country as well as his assessment of the political climates and economic and social structures. For instance, when he was in China, he was impressed that their hosts in Shanghai, Naking and Soochow were Southern white friends from America. He stated, "never have we been the recipients of finer hospitality than that shown us by these friends from Texas, Virginia and Mississippi." He could not help but to reflect how sad it was that racial prejudice back home so often operated to keep real friends from contacts that they would normally enjoy.

Besides YMCA and church speaking engagements, Tobias delivered addresses at various universities in China on interracial relationships. It seemed that peoples of the Orient were tremendously interested in the problems faced by African Americans and listened with eager concern to the information Tobias delivered to them.[44]

Japan and Honolulu were visited by Channing Tobias. He discovered that W.E.B. DuBois had preceded him in a visit to Japan and had made a profound impression upon Japanese intellectuals and educators. DuBois' presentations seemed to be well received widely in university circles in Japan which caused Tobias to recognize the wisdom of making it possible for more African Americans to visit the eastern countries "for the purpose of interpreting our history and life to the leaders and people."[45]

In Honolulu, Tobias stated, "I felt pride in my American citizenship as I mingled with the people of Honolulu, for at last I had found a spot under the American flag that seemed to be devoid of color consciousness." He saw native Hawaiians, Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, Americans -- white and black, all live and work together harmoniously. Here, Tobias felt that there was more of a sense of pride in the cosmopolitan character of the population rather than the spirit of mutual tolerance that generally existed between the races.[46]

During the years of his greatest activity, Tobias traveled extensively in Africa, Asia and Europe as a representative of the YMCA and other organizations to which he belonged. The principal focus of his position was to build an African American constituency for the YMCA. He expanded its scope by serving as a director of Paine College, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Council of Churches and many other groups. His contacts and the prestige of his position caused him to be in great demand as a speaker at commencements and other significant public events.

Throughout his life, he believed that "human needs are human needs wherever they were found," which resulted in his emphasis on action.[47] This was in opposition to the attitude of accommodation, which was reflected in a general trend in African American thought during the late nineteenth century. Many African Americans, disillusioned with disfranchisement and increasing legal segregation, retreated from challenging the political status quo and began to advocate racial solidarity and self-help. The hope was that through moral improvement and economic advancement, attained largely by their own efforts, African Americans would gain the respect of white men and thus be accorded their rights as citizens. While this notion was accepted by many, Tobias vigorously presented his viewpoint against injustice and discrimination. In fact, his intolerance of these actions caused him to stand -- sometimes alone -- for his beliefs. He did not succumb to hate. But he did believe that social change would not occur by waiting for it. "Tobias believed that it was necessary to take a stand for the right and make it come alive in the experience of men."[48]

The decade of the 1940s continued to present many opportunities for Tobias to continue his struggle for improved race relations. He continued his travels across the continents, where he attended and addressed various religious and secular conferences.

In an emotionally-charged address delivered at the opening of the International Convention of YMCAs in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1946, Tobias challenged the delegates with "The Religious Imperative . . . As They Face the

Post-War World." The essence of his address was that the bombing of Hiroshima, Japan, not only had a determining effect upon the war, but also on our thinking, which was suddenly changed from reconversion and reconstruction to a consideration of what we must do to prevent the complete annihilation of mankind on the earth.[49] The appeal was for global preservation across geographical, cultural and continental barriers. Tobias suggested that the problem of mistrust between men and nations could not alone be solved with cleverly devised treaties and instruments to assure international peace. He indicated that there must also be a re-awakening of faith in the sacredness of human personality as taught by Jesus of Nazareth before there can be mutual trust.[50] Without it, he believed any treaty objectives would fail. He agreed with a statement he had heard which suggested that the notion of one world is a great conception, but one family is an even greater one. The world needed to supplement the blueprints for international law and order with a cementing of international family ties, built on foundations of friendship so well laid by the original pioneers.[51] He ended his address with the call to action. "This is the hour," he declared, "to serve notice on the governments of the world that it is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the living God that peace will come upon the earth!"

During his career as a YMCA Secretary, Channing Tobias influenced the lives of many thousands of young people throughout the United States and in many countries of Africa and Asia. His Christian commitment and dedication

inspired him to work to bring about social justice for all people. As a Christian, statesman and educator, he led many young men to dedicate their lives to leadership in the church, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and other educational and religious fields.[52] He was a man of foresight, unshaken by the obstacles of racism. Tobias, determined to make a difference in his world, was moved by the situations of his time to influence future change. He was able to see from a panoramic view the reforms needed to improve the world as a whole as well as the immediate concerns of his people. Tobias was never afraid to speak out against the wrongs of discrimination and the injustices of minorities anywhere. Whether he was at home or on foreign soil, he took a positive stand for justice and liberty.

Tobias served on many committees for human justice. He served twelve years as Student Secretary of the International Committee of YMCAs until 1923; Senior Secretary for Colored Work of YMCAs of U.S.A., 1923-1946; Associate Director on the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, 1935-1942; and as a member of the Executive Committee of the National Conference on the Fundamental Problems in the Education of Negroes, Washington, D.C., 1934.

In 1946, at the age 64, and after thirty-five years of service, Channing Tobias resigned from the YMCA to become the first African American director of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, a foundation devoted to the improvement of educational opportunities for African Americans. This ended another chapter in his life, but his story is not complete. By this time, Channing Tobias had received many

awards and honors, including degrees from Gammon Theological Seminary, Atlanta; L.H.D. (honorary) Jewish Institute of Religion; LL.D. (honorary) Morehouse College, Atlanta; C.L.D. (honorary) New School of Social Research, New York; LL.D. (honorary) New York University.[53]

Dr. Tobias held several important governmental positions in addition to his professional responsibilities. He was a member of the National Advisory Committee on Selective Service and the Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation during World War II. He was also honored by President Truman with an appointment to the President's Committee on Civil Rights in 1946-1947. Their task was to make recommendations for ending segregation in the armed forces. As a member of the Committee, Tobias vigorously and successfully presented his viewpoint in which he advocated an immediate end to discrimination in the Army and Navy. The Committee's historic report, To Secure These Rights (1947), became the foundation for many of the subsequent advances in the area of civil rights in general. Also in 1948, Tobias received the Spingarn Medal for his work on the President's Committee and his leadership in defense of American liberties.

This chapter of history, or his story, closes sadly for Dr. Tobias. In 1949, after 41 years of marriage, his first wife, Mary Pritchard, died, leaving behind Dr. Tobias and their only remaining daughter, Mary. The oldest daughter, Belle, had died suddenly in October 1936, after being married only four months.[54]

Dr. Tobias was an advocate for change within the YMCA. He encouraged the YMCA leaders to eliminate discriminatory practices within local branches. Dr. Tobias felt that the YMCA should be an example of the ideals of democracy and brotherhood by upholding the Christian principles upon which it was founded. As he traveled around the world, he became known for his courage to support equality, while opposing discrimination and injustice. Dr. Tobias was a man of great foresight and understanding. Showing the wisdom of a statesman, and the courage of a soldier, he believed that it was better to stay with the battle for freedom and fight it out, instead of waiting for change to come. His approach was firm, yet not antagonistic. However, after thirty-five years of challenge and tedious work, Dr. Tobias retired from the YMCA to pursue his fight for justice on a broader scale.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) needed someone to organize and administrate its efforts to gain equal access to education. The task called for someone who could provide leadership in a firm and persistent manner, without alienating white or black support already committed to its causes. Dr. Tobias, already a member of the organization, possessed the wisdom and skills to assist the NAACP in the development and implementation of its strategies for achieving integration within the public schools in the United States. The next chapter describes the approaches he used to address issues, and his ability to mobilize both white and black support in the struggle to achieve integration within the public school systems.

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## CHAPTER III

## HIS WORK WITH THE NAACP: 1946-1960

The late 1940s and 1950s reflected a mature, vigorous Channing Tobias. He enriched the lives of many people known and unknown to him. His broad experiences led Dr. Tobias to civic, social, educational, political and religious arenas, at local, national and international levels. His message remained focused on human rights, justice and equality for all. Much of his time and effort had been spent in attempts to enhance the quality of life for African Americans in particular, and the peoples of the world in general. Dr. Tobias traveled the world with his message for leaders to stand for moral justice, human dignity and civil rights for all. For the most part, his speeches encompassed the concerns of minorities -- better housing, equal employment opportunities, the right to serve and fight in the armed services and the basic freedoms the United States provided in its constitution.

The challenge was difficult, but not impossible. Dr. Tobias was not a man of defeat, but tenacious in his pursuit for change. He understood the concerns that both Southern and Northern whites had in their position as a majority population in this country. But he also knew, all too well, the injustices inflicted on African Americans because of their minority status. The harsh reality was that racism,

American style, was based on something that no human could change -- the color of a man's skin, which had often been addressed by Tobias.

Dr. Tobias was not one to dodge an issue or back away from a challenge. Instead, he would seek out whatever means he had available to him to positively affect change in his environment. He knew that the odds were against these efforts because he was not only attempting to see laws changed. The real change could not be legislated, for it had to occur in the attitudes of mankind.

Many long and hard struggles had been overcome while Tobias worked at the YMCA. Some changes were so minute they were not recognized; others were more significant. However, African Americans were still faced with economic, social and political difficulties, which impacted their lives daily.

Immediately following Dr. Tobias' retirement from the YMCA in 1946, he became the Director of the Phelps-Stokes Fund. Since he was an ardent promoter of education, this was a fitting role. As director, his major responsibility was to dispense funds to schools in Africa and African American schools in the United States. The Fund had at its disposal more than 1.5 million dollars to improve African American education, and received regular financial grants from both the Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations.[1] This, too, was an important position for Dr. Tobias and he remained there for seven years before retiring in 1953.

Dr. Tobias' name had become synonymous with the causes for justice and equality. He was often invited to speak for religious or civic groups, and he consulted with at least three United States presidents on civil rights issues.

Having gained the respect of world leaders for his broad perspective on human rights, it was not surprising that Dr. Tobias received many commendations and awards for his efforts.

The Spingarn Medal was one such award which was presented annually to an African American for high achievement. This award was instituted in 1914 by Joel E. Spingarn (then chairman of the board of directors of the NAACP), who gave annually, until his death in 1939, a medal for "the highest or noblest achievement by an American Negro during the preceding year or years." A fund sufficient to continue the award was set up by his will "to perpetuate the life long interest . . . in the achievement of the American Negro."[2]

The purpose of the medal is twofold. First, it directed the attention of the American people to the existence of distinguished merit and achievement among African Americans; and secondly, it served as a reward for such achievement to the recipient, as well as a stimulus to motivate African American youth to strive for their ambitions. On June 27, 1948, at the Thirty-ninth Annual Convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Dr. Tobias was honored with this medal, "in recognition of his consistent role as a defender of fundamental American liberties . . . . He brought to the President's Committee on Civil Rights intellectual vitality, courage and the richness of his long experience in the field of race relations. Largely due to his persistence and clear insight, the committee produced a report of historic significance in man's unending struggle for justice."[3] This was an appropriate award for a man who

had, by then, given more than thirty-five years of his life for equality and justice for African Americans and minorities living in the United States of America.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was established in 1909. Many of its founders were descendants of the nineteenth century abolitionists. Mary White Ovington, Oswald Garrison Villard and Rev. E.C. Stowe were just a few identified with abolitionism. William Lloyd Garrison is often regarded as the spiritual progenitor of this movement.

According to Dr. Tobias, the philosophy of the NAACP was deeply rooted in Americanism and particularly in the humane and equalizing principles of the abolition movement. "It was conceived in response to a challenge by William English Walling for revival of 'the spirit of the abolitionists, of Lincoln and of Lovejoy.' It was also an answer to the prayers of ten million American citizens, generally rejected by their fellow Americans and apparently doomed to a status of second-class citizenship."[4] Overall, the NAACP defined itself as "an organization seeking to end racial discrimination and segregation in all public aspects of America.[5]

The founders of the NAACP were idealistic but dedicated men and women. They saw racism as a significant threat to the entire country. Oppression had been the motivation for Englishmen to seek freedom from British domination, and now it would fuel the joint efforts of this interracial organization to rid the United States of racial discrimination.

The principal objectives of the NAACP, according to its national constitution, are:

> to insure the political, educational, social and economic equality of minority-group citizens; to achieve equality of rights and eliminate race prejudice among the citizens of the United States; to remove all barriers of racial discrimination through the democratic process; to seek enactment and enforcement of federal, state municipal laws securing civil rights; to inform the public of the adverse effects of racial discrimination and to seek its elimination; to educate persons as to their constitutional rights and to take all lawful action in furtherance of these objectives consistent with the Articles of Incorporation.[6]

Apathy in the United States was widespread and negative attitudes were rampant towards the poor conditions of African Americans living in the United States during the 1950s. The racial climate intensified as many well meaning Americans perceived their demands as radical. Although the NAACP was trying to secure justice, it was often accused of being a revolutionary movement that wanted drastic reforms. However, in reality, its demands were, "that the constitution be strictly enforced and the civil rights guaranteed under the Fourteenth Amendment be secured impartially to all." Another important concern was that the right to vote be given to African Americans on the same terms as other citizens in every part of the United States.[7]

Throughout its history, the NAACP has incurred the wrath of those who would cling to the old ways, who refused to recognize the trend of the times and who would turn the clock back to 1860.[8] Often, it had to contend with threats, open hostility and angry denunciations in the media, especially in Southern

communities. However, its activities survived many hate-inspired attacks and continues to this day to be a thriving force in the African American communities.

Dr. Tobias was not new to the NAACP when he was elected to its chairmanship in 1953. He was initially elected to the Board of Trustees ten years earlier, in 1943, and had also served as the assistant treasurer. The role of chair was perhaps the most powerful and influential position in the NAACP. The responsibilities included the general supervision of the activities of the organization and its employees. In addition, the chairman appointed all committees that were not elected by the board. Dr. Tobias succeeded the late Dr. Louis T. Wright, noted surgeon, in the position as chairman, and his tenure began just one year prior to the historic Supreme Court decision to desegregate public schools.[9]

Tobias' first goal as chairman was to accelerate the fund raising efforts of the NAACP so that its financial obligations could be met. There were both pending and upcoming court cases to be researched and prepared for court challenges, as well as other expenses associated with its struggle to eliminate segregation. In 1953, Dr. Tobias proposed the creation of a fighting fund for freedom. The proceeds were to be used to finance this project. Responding to the call, the Board approved this proposal. Walter White, Executive Director, along with other NAACP leaders, organized this initiative and launched its campaign, "Fight for Freedom", adopting as the slogan, "Free by '63."[10] The hope was that by January

1, 1963, the Centennial of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, segregation and other forms of racial discrimination would be eliminated in America.[11]

Dr. Tobias, along with other NAACP leaders, organized a freedom fulfillment conference in Washington, D.C., on March 10, 1954. The ten-year Fight for Freedom Campaign was formally launched, with President Dwight Eisenhower expressing his well wishes for a successful campaign.[12] Eisenhower indicated that just as President Lincoln stated in his Proclamation, and the writers of the Declaration of Independence wrote, he, too, believed that his nation was dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal, with certain rights endowed by their Creator. Eisenhower further expressed his belief that the vast majority of Americans wanted to make those concepts a living reality in their lives.[13]

Elimination of all forms of segregation in education, employment, housing, travel and voter registration were among fundamental goals of the the Fight for Freedom Campaign. The NAACP believed that individual worth and merit should be the determining basis for job selection, and that every adult American citizen should have the opportunity to vote freely in all elections on the same terms as other citizens in every part of the country. Also, they wanted it to be possible for any American family to live unmolested in any community of their choice and within their economic means. "Jim Crow" travel was to be eliminated and all remnants of segregation in the armed services were to be exposed and eliminated.

On May 17, 1954, the Untied States Supreme Court handed down its historic decision in Brown v The Board of Education of Topeka that outlawed public school segregation.[14] This was one of the most far reaching steps toward fulfillment of the NAACP goals of racial equality. That decision marked the beginning of a new era in America's national history. It also signaled the end of the discriminatory and immoral "Jim Crow" school system.

Five days after that momentous occasion, the NAACP held a regional conference in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Tobias was unable to attend, but he sent a message to the conference which encompassed his second goal as chairman of the board of directors. He stated, "It is important that calm reasonableness prevail, that the difficulties of adjustment be realized, and that without any sacrifice of basic principles, the spirit of give and take characterize the discussions." He continued, "Let it not be said, that we took advantage of a sweeping victory to drive hard bargains or impose unnecessary hardships upon those responsible for working out the details of adjustment."[15]

This ingenious blend of diplomacy, persuasion and intelligent pressure at the right places and times was a major contributing factor to Tobias' immensely successful impact as a leader of his day. It was one of the most effective tools used by Dr. Tobias to solve problems and make inroads into seemingly unrelenting situations.

Two months before the Supreme Court issued its implementation decree, the NAACP mourned the passing of its director, Walter White, on March 21, 1955.

Dr. Tobias delivered the eulogy three days later stating that, "the true story of his services is to be found written in the hearts of those whom he helped to liberate from the bondage of second-class citizenship."[16] Walter White was succeeded by Roy Wilkins, described as an able successor to carry on the fight for justice.

During the late 1950s, following the Supreme Court decision, the NAACP faced yet another dimension of attacks. This time, however, they were not from individual citizens or groups. In 1956, for the first time, the NAACP was under attack by the legislative and judicial systems of the Southern states.

Since the majority of Southern African Americans could not possibly afford to bring legal action against local school boards, and because no governmental agency would take the initiative in ordering integration, the NAACP took on the responsibility.

Several schemes were used by the white power structure in Southern states to avoid the implementation of the Brown decision. One indirect method employed was to disallow the NAACP to operate in the South. The first scheme involved court actions brought by state's attorney generals seeking to enjoin the NAACP from operating in the states. Louisiana was the first state to move against the NAACP when its attorney general instituted proceedings in March 1956, demanding that the NAACP register as an out-of-state corporation since its headquarters were located in New York City. Dr. Tobias and the board of directors took the position that the branches in the states were separate, unincorporated organizations and were not required to register as out of state

corporations. The board of directors further objected to the registration requirement out of concern that the release of the names and addresses of their members would subject them to economic pressures and other forms of harassment. While the legal staff of the NAACP sought relief in the district court, the state court issued a temporary injunction restraining the NAACP from holding meetings or otherwise operating in the state of Louisiana.[17]

In Alabama, Texas, Georgia and several other states, court action was invoked to ban NAACP activities in those states. They followed Louisiana's plan in securing injunctions which suspended the activities of the NAACP for failing to submit its membership lists. The penalty for withholding those lists was most severe in Alabama. The attorney general of Alabama demanded in a state court that all records of the NAACP in Alabama, including membership lists, be submitted to him for inspection. The NAACP filed with the court the majority of the records requested, omitting the lists of its members. The local judge imposed a $100,000 fine upon the organization for refusing to allow the attorney general to inspect its membership lists. They were also forced to suspend all activity in the state while the appeal was made to the Supreme Court of Alabama and finally to the United States Supreme Court.[18] Florida authorized $50,000 for a legislative committee to investigate the activities of the group while Georgia resorted to administrative action in an effort to penalize the NAACP.

The intent of all these actions was to harass, cripple and run the NAACP out of business throughout the South in the hope of eliminating the momentum of

desegregation. These actions were in contrast to the activities of private citizens or lynch mobs that harassed the NAACP in preceding years.[19]

By 1957, the NAACP was involved in twenty-five lawsuits involving its right to operate in the South. In addition to these lawsuits, which were designed to undermine the effectiveness of the NAACP, teachers and municipal and state employees were barred from membership in the organization. Special taxes were levied against NAACP branches, which were not required from other organizations. Legislation was passed that prohibited any challenge of racial discrimination or segregation in the courts by the NAACP or by any lawyer retained by the organization.[20]

These schemes, all of which were designed to prevent the NAACP from operating in the South, were paramount in the minds of the delegates and speakers at the annual NAACP convention in Detroit on June 25-30, 1957. In his assessment of these and other actions, Dr. Tobias surmised in his keynote address, "the answer is simple. It began with the historic decision of the United States Supreme Court, handed down . . . in response to suits filed by NAACP lawyers." He continued, "that decision outlawed racial segregation in public education. These states became alarmed by the success of our program and the almost universal approbation of the court's ruling. To give vent to their hatred and defiance they launched an all-out attack upon the NAACP which they held responsible for the decision."[21]

In his firm but eloquent manner, Dr. Tobias made it clear to the audience that the attack was not only intended against the NAACP. He believed that it was an affront not only to the constitutional government, but to federal authority as well. He stated, "when all the camouflage and pretensions were removed, the revolt against the Supreme Court decision was a declaration of secession not only from the United States of America but in reality from the human race." In essence, Dr. Tobias felt that the extremists of all sections of the country, the supporters and advocates of the anachronism of white supremacy, considered themselves a unique breed of mankind. "In seceding from the human race they turned their backs upon the great tenets of our religious faith and upon the democratic ideal for men who had sacrificed their lives from the American Revolution until the Hungarian revolt against Soviet totalitarianism."

These people would, according to Dr. Tobias, "deny the principles of liberty upon which this government was founded and the teachings of love expounded by the lowly Nazarene. And substitute instead, the crass and inhumane ideology of Hitler and Malan."[22]

By the time the convention ended, the delegates had adopted a resolution calling upon President Eisenhower to speak out and continually use his influence to safeguard the activities of the NAACP as an organization "to operate in order to bring about first-class citizenship for all Americans by any and all legal means at his disposal." The resolution promised to "fight with every resource such unlawful and unconstitutional action."[23]

In addition to the legal actions to evade the Brown decision, acts of physical violence were perpetrated upon Southern African Americans to deter them from exercising their constitutional rights. Opposition groups such as the White Citizen's Councils were organized in Mississippi and spread rapidly throughout the South. The Ku Klux Klan also increased its membership. These two organizations began terrorizing African Americans as well as white citizens who supported and worked to comply with desegregation decrees.

When the NAACP initiated voter registration drives and school desegregation plans in the South, a revival of lynchings began to emerge, especially in the state of Mississippi. Dr. Tobias, along with the NAACP board of directors, appealed to the Department of Justice to investigate these incidents of racial horrors and prosecute those found guilty of committing these crimes.

The board of directors also appealed to President Eisenhower, who had remained uncommitted, to utilize his presidential power to stop the lawlessness which was permeating the nation. The lack of endorsement by the president, even when synagogues, churches, schools and even residential homes were bombed, attributed to the general disregard of the mandate of Brown v Board of Education. A similar attitude was reflected in the U.S. Congress when they issued a "Declaration of Constitutional Principles", also called the "Southern Manifesto." It depicts the Brown decision as "unwarranted" and "a clear abuse of judicial power" as well as "an encroachment on rights reserved to the states." President Eisenhower did not honor the NAACP board's request to oppose the "Southern

Manifesto" nor did he reprimand the congressmen for defying the laws of the United States government.[24]

His reluctance to intervene in the crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas, drew severe criticism from both Dr. Tobias and Roy Wilkins, Executive Director of the NAACP. The first indication of this crisis emerged when Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas announced on the eve of the opening day of school, that he had ordered the Arkansas National Guard to surround Central High School because of "overwhelming evidence of impending disorder which could lead to violence and even bloodshed." The United States District Court accepted the Governor's action as a "preservator of the peace" and directed the school board to proceed in transferring African American students to Central High School. Nine students were selected from fifty applicants. However, the national guard, acting on direct orders from Governor Faubus, refused to allow the nine students entrance to the high school.

A special investigation was launched by the attorney general of the United States, which led the Governor to complain to President Eisenhower of "unwarranted interference." In his response to the Governor's complaint, the President informed him that the United States Constitution would be upheld by every legal means available to him. In the meanwhile, the district court summoned Governor Faubus to appear before the court for refusing to comply with its orders and enjoined him from further interference with the process of integration at the high school.

In his criticism, Dr. Tobias chided President Eisenhower -- "the former courageous commander of allied troops in Europe" -- for tolerating rebellion and insults from a state Governor. In telegraphed messages to the President, Dr. Tobias and Roy Wilkins requested him to take over "direct command of the Arkansas National Guard and to demand an end of the rioting in order to assure peaceful integration."[25] That same evening, September 23, 1957, President Eisenhower issued a proclamation warning the Arkansas mob to attempt no further interference with the integration of the school. He called the Little Rock events "disgraceful" and ordered all persons engaged in the obstruction of justice "to cease and desist therefrom and to disperse forthwith." The next day, the Arkansas National Guard was federalized by President Eisenhower, to insure enforcement of the court's order at Central High School. The students were then allowed to enter the school.

The Supreme Court issued its ruling in the Little Rock Case of Cooper v Aaron[26] on September 29, 1958. The court found that the school officials had acted in "entire good faith," but concluded that "no state legislator or executive can war against the Constitution without violating his undertaking to support it." The decree informed those opposed to integration that the court would not back down from its position in 1954 that racial segregation violated the United States Constitution and reaffirmed that decision in even stronger language: "The Constitutional right of children not to be discriminated against in school

admission on grounds of race or color . . . can neither be nullified openly and directly by state legislators or state executive or judicial officers . . . ."[27]

The NAACP was pleased that the court had made everyone aware that public school integration would not be hampered by threats of public violence, hostile community actions, school closings, or by other underhanded plots designed to maintain racial segregation. The national office proudly issued a proclamation that the evasive schemes being undertaken in Virginia, Arkansas, South Carolina, Georgia, Texas and other parts of the South were destined to failure. The organization was confident of this because just three months before Cooper v Aaron, the court ruled on a case of vital importance to the NAACP.

The pronouncements in the NAACP v Alabama[28] delineated specific terms for continual operation of the NAACP as an effective organization. The Supreme Court struck down the $100,000 fine imposed against the organization in Alabama for refusal to disclose membership lists. The court held that members of the NAACP had a constitutional right to pursue their legitimate activities privately and to associate with others in the organization entirely free from State interference. That decision set a precedent in protecting the organization from one of its gravest threats to its existence in the South.[29]

In the years after the Brown decision and its aftermath, Dr. Tobias and other NAACP leaders encouraged their branches in states where desegregation had begun to continue their efforts to negotiate with local school boards to secure desegregation within a reasonable time. They were instructed "to proceed with

such negotiations as long as the local board is acting in good faith." In those states, legal action in the courts would only be considered as a last resort. There were eight states, however, where constructive negotiations were seemingly impossible. Those situations were immediately referred to the national legal staff to process. They were instructed to give the necessary legal assistance to all parents in those states who had appealed to the NAACP for legal assistance to end racial segregation in their local community.

The NAACP worked through the courts, political action and by mobilization of public opinion to get rid of racial inequities. They succeeded in leveling one barrier after another in spite of dire predictions of disaster. From the very founding of the NAACP, the organization had worked to gain civil and political rights for African Americans in the United States, especially through court decisions and congressional legislations. From the beginning of the Supreme Court decision to desegregate public schools, the NAACP recognized the administrative difficulties involved in making the transition from segregation to integration. Dr. Tobias did not believe that any of the difficulties were insurmountable and the NAACP should only use court action as a last resort. Although it did not go into communities to demand that public schools desegregate overnight, it was insistent that a beginning be made to initiate the process. NAACP officials attempted to be reasonable in recognizing the need to work out details to achieve desegregation in a timely manner that would be compatible to the operation of an orderly public school system. However, they

immediately rejected any proposals of gradualism, which meant never. The time had come for all children to be educated appropriately without being denied their constitutional right to an equal and unsegregated public education.

Public school desegregation was a crisis for the nation. Although major changes were initiated for the African American population, the impact affected everyone. The United States, during President Abraham Lincoln's term in office, recognized that it could not remain a nation that was half slave and half free. The NAACP recognized that the time had come for the nation to realize that it also could not survive being half integrated and half segregated. Since the United States Constitution governed all of its citizens, the nation's choices had to deal with the problem of unequal education. Were we to be a democratic, law abiding nation allowing equal opportunity and equal rights for all its citizens, or would we become a nation with classes of citizenship based on race and color?

Dr. Tobias stressed that democracy is inclusive -- never exclusive. "Our constitution is one of equality, not inequality. As important as is the role of the NAACP in this crisis and the role of Negroes generally, it is a decision which we cannot make by ourselves. Nor is it up to the South alone. It is a decision which the nation as a whole must make."[30]

Although Dr. Tobias was an eloquent orator, he knew that achievement of equal rights would not occur by speeches or resolutions alone. Anger, bitterness and frustration also would not present an appropriate atmosphere for societal change. What was needed, he thought, was logic, the ability to bargain and

influence others at all levels. Dr. Tobias knew that, "words and resolutions achieve significance only as they are translated into deeds."

The task ahead, according to Dr. Tobias, was clear. To achieve the goals set by the NAACP, voter registrations, especially in the South, were necessary to build political strength. Dr. Tobias directed the NAACP to work within the framework of its non-partisan policy. He felt that it was important to be able to vote for candidates, irrespective of party, who were committed to the democratic principles of equal rights and equal opportunity.

In his efforts to provide effective leadership, Dr. Tobias recognized that the basic legal groundwork had been laid, but that many battles ahead would be in the domain of public opinion. The next phase of impact for the NAACP as a group would be to change the minds of uncommitted Americans, to intensify the support friends to the cause, and to negate the sinister influence of organizations like the White Citizen's Councils and the Ku Klux Klan. This, he realized, would be a massive task that required "social engineering" on a massive scale. Dr. Tobias also recognized that these tasks would require leaders acting as change agents, especially in the area of education. Broad change, which was an objective of the NAACP, was needed to impact society. Knowledge of the facts was necessary to understand why certain people were so resistant to change and why such an exaggerated value was placed on something as superficial as skin color. If change would occur at all, an understanding of factors such as motivation was needed to plan a reasonable approach to it.

Obviously, segregation could not continue without destroying the nation, but the changes needed would require cooperation, persistence and perseverance to educate the vast majority of American citizens. It would be an expensive struggle for the NAACP to continue, and the stakes were high, but the goal was visible for those who believed in American democracy.

However, at age seventy-seven, Dr. Tobias stated that, "the time has come for the election of a younger and more vigorous chairman." He encouraged the NAACP to continue with efforts to secure enactment of civil rights legislation implementing the constitutional guarantees of basic American freedoms. Having met his goals, Dr. Tobias retired as NAACP Board Chairman on January 7, 1960.

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# CHAPTER IV

## TOBIAS' APPROACH TO RACE RELATIONS

Chapter IV describes Channing Tobias' service on the international scene while he served as chairman of the board of directors of the NAACP. It begins with a brief commentary on his personal life and then goes on to examine his work as a delegate to the United Nations' General Assembly. It also comments on his involvement with the National Council of Churches.

What we get from our parents, nature makes it easy for us to pass on to our children; but what we build and acquire for ourselves, our individual lives, those things mostly stop with us, unless we put them into our children by training, education and their overall environment.[1] The Tobias children were examples of the values and virtues that Channing and Mary Tobias instilled within them from the earliest years of their existence.

Mary Pritchard, his college sweetheart, became Channing's wife in 1908. Their forty-one years of marriage ended with her death in 1949. She had accompanied him during his many travels abroad, but she often remained in the background. They had two daughters, Belle and Mary, who were raised and educated in Augusta, Georgia, during their early school years.[2]

Belle spent one year at Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C., and the remaining three years at Wadleigh High in New York City. She entered Barnard College for women at Columbia University in 1927, and graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1931. A year later, she received an M.A. degree from Wellesley College and taught biology for four years. Mary was educated at New York University and Columbia Graduate School. She began her life's career as a buyer at Macy's Department Store. After five years, she left to run the gift shop at the United Nations Building in New York.

The year of 1936 was a year of both joy and sorrow for the Tobias family. In June of that year, Belle married Austin Curtis, a chemist at the George Washington Carver Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. She became ill while on her honeymoon trip to Tuskegee and died October 7, 1936. This was quite a blow to the family, but somehow they were able to work through their grief. One month later, on Thanksgiving Day, Dr. Tobias' only remaining daughter, Mary, became the wife of William H. Dean, Jr. They had two children, Channing and Joyce, who became the joy of their grandfather's life.

In the years to come, Dr. Tobias would say that his family was "a constant source of encouragement and inspiration to me." By the time his grandchildren reached their teen years, Tobias described them as "the only hobbies I have."[3] On March 31, 1951, Channing Tobias married Eva Gassett Arnold, the widow of James Arnold, a YMCA secretary. They remained together ten years until separated by his death in 1961.

Traveling had become a way of life for Channing Tobias. In November 1951 through February 1952, he was an alternate U.S. delegate to the Sixth General Assembly of the United Nations in Paris, with the special assignment on the Committee on Trust and Non-self Governing Territories.[4]

He was one of nine persons approved by the Senate as an alternate delegate. Many people, however, had not expected Dr. Tobias to be approved because of accusations by news reporters and others that he had allowed himself to become associated with communists or communist front organizations. Since the country was already living in a climate of suspicion, with state legislatures requiring various personnel to sign loyalty oaths, these attacks were not totally unexpected.[5]

In his testimony before a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee, Dr. Tobias denied that he had ever been a Communist, a Red sympathizer, or a fellow traveler. "So far as Communism is concerned, it has always been repugnant to me for the very obvious reason it is godless and I am a Christian," he declared. Dr. Tobias had been called for testimony after the House Committee on Un-American Activities had supplied the Senate subcommittee with files showing him to be linked to nine organizations listed by them as Communist fronts. Dr. Tobias indicated that he remembered active affiliation with several of these groups but that the others were merely names. In regard to the Council on African Affairs, for example, Dr. Tobias said, when the group refused to act on his motion for disavowing any communist, fascist or subversive line, he resigned. He further

indicated that he joined the Southern Conference on Human Welfare and allowed them to use his name as an advisor to the magazine, the Protestant, because he believed they were worthwhile at the time. He gave the same reason for his association with the American League for Peace and Democracy. In essence, he had no recollection of any participation in other groups. In concluding his testimony, Dr. Tobias said:

> It is not too important whether I serve as a delegate. What is important is whether or not 15,000,000 Negro Americans may get the impression its leadership is being crucified because of innuendoes, allegations and associations. The answer to that question is more important than anything I could say at Paris.[6]

Walter White, Executive Director of the NAACP, in defense of Dr. Tobias, labeled the attacks as slander, and stated: "This appointment vindicates Dr. Tobias' long record of fighting for the extension of human rights to all peoples regardless of race, creed or color. The action of the Senate eloquently refutes the charges brought against Dr. Tobias . . . .[7]

When Dr. Tobias left to serve as an alternate delegate for the United States for the three months, he stated, "I have been around the world and I can tell you that there is no other land quite like our own democratic America. She has her faults and weaknesses but we have the freedom and power to work and correct them."[8]

Mrs. Tobias sailed for Paris with Dr. Tobias in November 1951. The trip was to be a sort of delayed honeymoon for the couple who were married the preceding spring.

Sometime after Dr. Tobias delivered a speech to the committee he was to represent, he was chided by the Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei Y. Vishinsky, for his support of American policy even though racial discrimination existed in the country. Vishinsky's remarks had been stimulated by a report of a shooting of two African Americans in the South two days prior to this meeting. The story, it seems, had been reported over international news services.

In his reply to Vishinsky, Dr. Tobias stated that African Americans were making substantial progress toward full equality in the United States despite lynchings, discrimination and segregation. "We prefer to take our chances in a democracy," Dr. Tobias told a press conference. He pointed out that the United States had made no attempt to cover up its legacy of racism. While he admitted that the incidents of racism were serious, he said, "such incidents occur in defiance of the law and not by order of the law." He also told the committee, "if there had been such an incident in Mr. Vishinsky's country, there would have been no free news channel through which the incident could be made public." Tobias continued his eloquent response by saying, "we prefer not to be reminded of such offenses by a country such as Mr. Vishinsky's, which practices slave labor, deportations and political executions." These comments reflected the powerful oratory of a man who had no trouble communicating his thoughts, without a moment's hesitation, whenever he was called upon to do so.[9]

Many years later, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, also a delegate to the United Nations Assembly, would write of Dr. Tobias' response, "I have always admired

Dr. Tobias. His power to preserve calm objectivity was remarkable . . . . His speech was so moving and convincing and no white person could have been so effective."[10]

During the trip of 1951-1952 to Europe, Dr. and Mrs. Tobias took a brief holiday to visit Italy and the Vatican City. While in Rome, he was granted a private audience with Pope Pius XII. He was greatly impressed by the "cordiality and democratic spirit" of the Pope and expressed his personal appreciation for the "forward step" the Catholic Church in the United States was taking to combat racial discrimination. He agreed with Pope Pius that, "spiritual factors are of prime importance in providing a basis for peace."[11]

It was also during this trip to the Paris Assembly that he received more disheartening news. On January 8, 1952, William Dean, the husband of Channing's daughter, Mary, died suddenly. Saddened by this, and a long way from home, Tobias was comforted by his wife and delegates from many of the member countries represented. Sometime later, Mary married Sherwood A. Messner, national program director of the United Cerebral Palsy Association. Personally adverse to publicity, Dr. Tobias seemed to have a passion for avoiding attention in the press. He was equally determined to keep his family's lives private, so little was found in his papers about them.

Throughout his life, Dr. Tobias approached problems of human relationships whether they were economic, political, social or international with the same profound religious faith and insight. It was his steadfast belief that the

peoples of the world, regardless of race or cultural background, and in spite of difficulties, could live together in peace and mutual helpfulness. His goal was to contribute to the achievement of true democracy in the United States and in the world community. He also believed that the ultimate solution to the United States' problems and of the world's problems must be a spiritual one, so he dedicated himself to bringing men and women of all colors, races and religions close to his spiritual solution. Of this spiritual task, he said, "leadership and direction can only be provided by an institution that is spiritually motivated." It was his hope for the Christian churches to provide some guidance for the advancement of goodwill and peace among the races of mankind."[12]

Tobias found that the Federal Council of Churches took a basic spiritual approach to these broad problems of racism and discrimination in which he agreed wholeheartedly. The following statement by the Dulles Commission gives a basic place to begin:

> The first and paramount task of the Christian churches remains that of bringing more persons to subject their lives to the will of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. For us he is the source of moral judgements on the issues of this war upon which the Federal Council of Churches has also spoken. Only if the Christian churches of this land build a spiritual foundation that is broad and deep will this nation pursue righteous policies. Only if spiritual revelation strike from our eyes the scales of hatred, hypocrisy, intolerance and greed will we be competent to cope with the immensely difficult problems that confront us.[13]

The principles to be considered were simple, but basic, and he felt that the church above all institutions should lead the way in working for solutions

towards peace. It was Dr. Tobias' conviction that peace had to start in the hearts of men before any effective means for world peace could be initiated. So what better place could it begin than in church?

Tobias' beliefs about the role of government and international organization rested on some clearly articulated convictions. While the government derived its power from those consenting to be governed, autonomy of the people must be realized. The right of all people to pursue jobs of their choice, to enjoy security without oppression and prejudice, so that the rights and liberties of racial and religious minorities everywhere would be recognized and protected, were basic principles. These freedoms could not be limited by race, color or creed. Of the various charters, declarations for peace and the conferences held in efforts to realize that hope, Dr. Tobias stated, "Blueprints alone, though backed and implemented by all the combined material resources of allied nations, cannot change deeply-rooted prejudices into mutual trust and goodwill." Any plan for the future peace of the world that did not include race relationships as a major consideration was not only lacking in realism, he felt, but was destined to failure from its inception.[14]

As an ardent speaker on race relations, Dr. Tobias often came under attack from those who did not agree with his approach to racial issues. Westbrook Pegler, considered by many as one of the nation's most anti-Black and reactionary journalists, was among those attacking him and others involved in race relations and civil rights.

In one article, for instance, Pegler specifically attacked the Phelps-Stokes Fund and Dr. Tobias in what he called a campaign against a "parasitic . . . foundation". Pegler not only hinted that Dr. Tobias might be a communist sympathizer, but stated, "Tobias is director of an old parasitic but legal foundation . . . established long ago by rich Episcopalians to teach Christianity among African Negroes. It provides a soft living, good pay, and an appearance of eminence and distinction to its functionaries." Other prominent leaders in the fight for civil rights were also singled out for attack. Among them were Walter White and Thurgood Marshall. They responded, however, by characterizing Pegler's tactics as red baiting, typical of fascist-minded individuals in the United States who did not wish to see true democracy operate. They called the attacks unfounded, describing them as "another infamous foul act in his campaign to injure Negro leadership in this nation." Pegler was further described by them as a columnist who too often abused the privilege of the free press as guaranteed by the Constitution. His writings often appeared biased and filled with hate against those working for the equality of all Americans.[15]

When Dr. Tobias retired from the NAACP Board in 1960, he had served on more interracial committees than any person in America. He had traveled extensively and attained the title of "deanship of professional race leaders." He was especially concerned with the problem of African American people and harmonious race relations. It was to groups devoted to those activities that he

belonged. Although an ordained minister of the Methodist Church, his Christian belief was independent and his religious ties were broad.

In 1928, Dr. Tobias was the recipient of the Harmon Award for religious services. His work on this front continued for years to come and the awards he received were equally as diverse as the groups he served. He belonged to several committees of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work, the Board of Managers of the American Bible Society and the Commission on the Church and Minority Peoples.[16] In 1943, Dr. Tobias was awarded the Schomburg Honor Roll of Race Relations. Another award that he cherished very much was a doctor of Hebrew literature, conferred upon him by the Rabbi Wise, of the Jewish Institute of Religion.

While Dr. Tobias acknowledged signs of progress in race relations, he could not help but notice the continuing "double standard of citizenship." In a discussion of his article, "The Negroes in Our Democracy," Dr. Tobias indicated that there had been faint efforts to make democracy work for African Americans. He admitted that much of the resolution of the difficulties on relations depended on the "slow education process." It was his belief that it was possible to move forward to effectively bring about change in racial equality and remove race and color barriers.

The education of African American youth was an important factor to consider because Dr. Tobias believed that knowledge was power. He believed that it could provide one of the missing links towards progress in the fight for

freedom and racial equality in America. He also realized that a genuine effort was needed to get young men and women prepared to meet the challenges they would face as they entered society. The rights that were being gained had to be protected by the next generation. However, in order to do so, young people needed preparation. They would need to understand their history in order to change their future. Also, it was important to understand the political, social, economic and educational factors that would influence their world. Knowledge of the facts and accurate information were needed so that informed and rational decisions could be made. Since formal education was not always equal or accurate for minorities, other informal means were used to teach young African Americans about their roots and their heritage. Vocational training and self-help skills were promoted in informal settings to help youth master their hidden talents and abilities. Dr. Tobias was the recipient of early training and he understood the importance of helping those who would follow after him. His dedication to the promotion of education for African American youth added to the prolific legacy he left in the struggle for freedom.

Whether home in the United States, or representing the American government in a foreign country, Dr. Tobias used the same approach to race relations. He challenged discriminatory practices and refused to support American policy which reflected its legacy of racism. It was his conviction that the Christian churches should provide spiritual guidance to help the country move towards peace and goodwill. Even when he came under attack by

journalists who disagreed with his approach, Dr. Tobias refused to back away from his position denouncing racial segregation.

Determined to influence the attitudes and behavior of African American youth, Dr. Tobias promoted education of the masses. The next chapter will give Dr. Tobias' perspective on the importance of vocational and professional education in both formal and informal settings.

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# CHAPTER V

## TOBIAS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE EDUCATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH

After World War II, Dr. Tobias was concerned about the increase in juvenile delinquency due to lack of available economic resources within African American communities. Little was being done to stimulate education among minority youth. In addition, there were few, if any, structured activities to keep young men and women involved in positive use of leisure time. Tobias, himself, had developed his mission as an educator from his early years as classroom teacher at Paine College through his YMCA student work. The preparation of dynamic leadership for the future was a growing concern to those like Tobias who had pioneered in efforts to provide direction for those who would follow them. Dr. Tobias recognized that the future of America would lie in the education of its people, especially its youth. With this focus in mind, he began what was to be a decade of work with college students.

Education was considered by many African American leaders to be the vehicle to a better lifestyle. For those who were willing to pursue it, the rewards far outweighed the struggles. The benefits of a good education provided more than economic gains or social status. Real education, according to the noted

historian, Carter G. Woodson, meant, "to inspire people to live more abundantly, to learn to begin with life as they find it and make it better."

Dr. Tobias agreed with Woodson's statement because he recognized how essential education was in the continued economic growth of the country. He recognized that individuals who experienced success could serve as models for youth and inspire them to succeed. He realized that the social and economic problems faced by the poorly educated would, if not resolved, eventually become the problems of society. Future economic growth would depend on human ability to successfully utilize human and natural resources.

Adequate training was needed in both professional and vocational fields. In his speech, "Let Negroes Work," Dr. Tobias seemed to agree with Booker T. Washington on the importance of vocational training. "Early in our history as free people we made the mistake of underestimating the importance of making ourselves efficient in the common jobs . . . for which we had little or no competition." It was an unfortunate mistake for blacks to focus so intensely on achievements of a "higher culture" and become antagonistic towards those training activities that allowed the average individual to live a useful, productive life. He stated, "we have finally come to see that while our professional classes are indispensable to our ultimate progress and success, they are absolutely helpless without the support of the laboring masses."[1]

Dr. Tobias believed in careful organization, so he promoted a systematic approach to instruction that was designed to focus first on moral and religious

problems in the schools and in student affairs. He then sought to strengthen students' Christian faith so that their vocational choices would be influenced by the power of Christ. The methods and principles of Christian work employed by the YMCA were used to increase students' understanding of the importance of "unseen spiritual forces that lead to moral balance in the lives of men."[2] His goals for work with this population were to bring students of various schools and colleges together to discuss their needs and establish points of contact between students and appropriate leaders to assist with problem solving. Other issues of concern included appropriate dissemination of information related to racial and cultural differences; cooperation within communities to bring about positive change; development of programs to decrease the number of racially motivated incidents; and, finally, the creation of materials for use in schools and other educational institutions to ease racial disharmony.

Besides his work in the YMCA, Dr. Tobias' interest in youth was further channeled through educational and community activities. He was a member of the board of trustees of Howard University, Paine College, Hampton Institute and Palmer Memorial Institute. Also, he served on the joint advisory council of the Harlem Educational Projects and belonged to the board of directors of Youth House, Forest House, and Wilwyck School for Boys.[3]

Prominent in civic affairs in New York City, Dr. Tobias belonged to the City-wide Citizens Committee on Harlem and was on the board of directors of the Citizens Housing Council. He was a veteran advisor of youth and delivered

numerous commencement addresses, including sermons at Morehouse College, Fisk University and Tuskegee Institute.

Teaching youth to think critically about facts and life experiences was a principal concern of Dr. Tobias. He believed that the capacity to think clearly and accurately could be stimulated by mental exercises such as those a student experienced in the classroom or other learning environments. Not only did Dr. Tobias encourage a critical thought process, he stressed the need for youth to approach any situation with balanced thinking. He stated that, "the balanced mind has great respect for facts." The search for facts, according to Dr. Tobias, should be accompanied with a search for truth. Truth, he thought, was the greatest liberating force in the world. Facts alone could be distorted. However, facts supported by truth would eliminate some of the careless and unsupported assumptions made by one race to justify human indignities perpetrated against another race.[4]

In Dr. Tobias' opinion, when a race of people were evaluated by those who balance their thinking, the assessment will be based on their total contributions, instead of a few superficial impressions. On the other hand, those who limit their thoughts to a few biased beliefs often perpetuated attitudes that led to racial prejudice. It was this type of limited thinking that Dr. Tobias believed caused the greatest evils of racial disharmony.

In an effort to present the concept of balanced thinking, Dr. Tobias identifies characteristics that he feels defines it. The ability to think clearly and logically was

a prerequisite to balance. Clear thoughts allowed facts to remain unbiased. On the other hand, logical thinking would allow facts to be sequenced appropriately to flow in an orderly manner. Flexibility was essential to allow one to develop an open mind. It is important to be able to move from polar viewpoints towards those that are centralized to broaden the scope of one's thoughts. Modesty was another characteristic of balanced thinking. It allowed one to remain focused on the issues, but distant enough to keep a low personal profile. This was one way to avoid becoming too self-assured or cocky. Dr. Tobias equated a "cock-sure" mind to superficial thinking. This shallow process could not produce the results needed for change. Depth was required to achieve positive compromise that would not deprive one of dignity.

Finally, the balanced thinker exhibits courage in resisting passing fads. Dr. Tobias believed that this was never more apparent than in the field of education. Change did not necessarily mean progress. While it was reasonable to try new theories, it was equally important to hold on to older ones that were tried and true. Methods about learning should never replace "learning for learning itself." One who could resist the temptation to change for just the sake of change was neither stagnant nor unaggressive. Instead, Dr. Tobias would praise him for being conservative and insistent on retaining the known rather than gambling on the unknown. The balanced thinker defends the rights of culture patterns based upon knowledge of the classics and basic sciences rather than an onslaught of unproven

theories whose primary distinction is their newness. In Dr. Tobias' opinion, "the balanced thinker would prove all things and hold fast to that which is good."[5]

Dr. Tobias believed that the knowledge of one's history would help persons to succeed in the future. Many of his public addresses included a review of historical events that he believed contributed to the fabric of American history by African Americans. He applauded the contributions made both directly and indirectly by blacks to American civilization. Dr. Tobias recounted how slave labor helped to lay the foundations of the original colonies by toiling the plantations of the South. He stated, "our ancestors came by special invitation to cooperate with the pioneering colonists. Their labors helped to build the first institutions of the new world and later their blood mingled with that of other lovers of independence in a successful struggle to establish a new nation."[6] He described the cultural richness and creativity of African Americans in literature and art of the South. "Uncle Remus" stories, he said, "had a larger circulation throughout the world than any other American folk stories." A look at Southern songs would give an overview of "Negro life." For instance, he stated, "if you take out of a southern song book, the songs in Negro dialect . . . there would be little left worth the mention."[7]

The scientific contributions of blacks, including George Washington Carver, helped to make possible larger quantities and varieties of food and useful products that enabled America to become healthy and strong. Even during wartime, America benefitted from the efforts of blacks as they made contributions

to the needs of its allies. Dr. Tobias recalled during the time of World War I, "that when war was declared and it became necessary to put a guard around the White House on the first night of the war, it was a Negro battalion that was called upon to render this service." The reason was evident, according to Dr. Tobias. "It could be done with absolute safety because there was no suspicion of the presence of traitors or fifth columnists."[8] He reminded students of the great injustices blacks experienced so that they would not be ignorant of the facts related to their forefathers' early history in America. "No greater insult has ever been suffered by any racial group in American history than that experienced by the Negro when the announcement was made that Negro blood would be accepted, but placed in segregated blood banks for use by blacks only." He continued, "It is absolutely impossible for Negroes not to be offended down to their very souls when they see Filipinos [sic], Mexicans, Chinese and even native-born Japanese integrated into practically all of the arms of the services without discrimination, and only the Negro completely segregated as if his presence were contaminating to other people."[9]

Although their accomplishments were many, Dr. Tobias told students of the struggles they would continue to face. While it was foolish to assume all of the complex problems growing out of racial differences could be resolved in a short period of time, there must be a renewed effort to educate the masses of minorities. Education was a slow process, but it would also provide a long-term method of changing racial attitudes effectively.

Dr. Tobias' influence appeared to be broad and caused many young men to seek him out to write letters of recommendation to further their career pursuits. Some of them sought positions in large organizations such as the YMCA, others were seeking assignments to government posts. Dr. Tobias carefully considered each applicant because each recommendation he gave was an indication of his high regards for the individual. Among his papers were letters of recommendation on behalf of young men, written to Brigadier General Frederick H. Osborn, Chief of Special Services, War Department; Benjamin Curley, United States Civil Service Commissioner; and Fiorello H. LaGuardia, Mayor of New York City.[10] Percy L. Julian requested Dr. Tobias' assistance in pursuing financial resources to attend DePauw University to pursue studies in science and chemistry. With Dr. Tobias' help, he received grants from several sources.[11]

Counsel was not limited to the young and inexperienced prodigy. Prominent leaders often sought the wisdom and direction of Dr. Tobias before planning major conferences, rallies or events requiring racial cooperation, community resources or financial assistance. Dr. Fred G. Holmes, a prominent physician in Arizona, wrote Dr. Tobias concerning state laws that created segregation in the previously integrated public school system.[12] Dr. Tobias gave the matter much consideration before giving him detailed information and suggestions for developing successful strategies. He encouraged Dr. Holmes to network with other organizations and work though details carefully to insure that all bases were considered and no questions were left unanswered.[13] Dr. Tobias

encouraged leaders to read any and all resources available, and approach all problems impartially and objectively. He placed a strong emphasis on research, networking and strategic planning.

Education was essential for African American youth who aspired to professional careers or expected to succeed in developing vocational skills. Although mistakes had been made along the way, Dr. Tobias had strong convictions that education was in the best interest of democracy and welfare of all Americans. As a motivator, speaker, educator, and counselor, he sought to promote educational growth in both formal and informal settings. He worked in several organizations to encourage students and staff to seek objective solutions to problems. Dr. Tobias' perspective on the education of black youth reflected the correlation between organization, moral instruction, and networking in establishing a well rounded educational foundation. He believed that these tools were essential for providing a solid educational framework in professional or vocational programs. When he addressed young men and women, Dr. Tobias offered encouragement, motivation, challenge and hope for their future success. Overall, he seemed to express a deep conviction that appropriate education was in the best interest of democracy and welfare for all Americans. However, his strong desire to improve race relations was his impetus to pursue educational needs of black youth with objectivity and courage. His commitment to his convictions caused a positive impact in the field of education as well as the lives of students who accepted the challenge to excel.

# CHAPTER V NOTES

1. Channing H. Tobias, "Let Negroes Work" [An address delivered at Hampton Institute Founder's Day], [Photostat], 1940, Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn.

2. Channing H. Tobias, "A Decade of Student YMCA Work" [Photostat], October 1922, Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn.

3. Current Biography, July 1945 ed., s.v. "Tobias, Channing H[eggie], Rev."

4. Channing H. Tobias, "Balanced Thinking" [An address delivered to the graduating class of Fisk University], [Photostat], 3 June 1936, Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn.

5. Ibid, 6.

6. Channing H. Tobias, "A Decade of Student YMCA Work" [Photostat], October 1922, Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn.

7. Channing H. Tobias, "The Negro in Our Democracy" [Address at Cooper Union Forum], [Photostat], 23 March 1943, Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn.

8. Ibid, 5.

9. Ibid, 4.

10. Channing Tobias to General Osborn, 29 October 1942, Channing Tobias to C. Benjamin Curley, 23 July 1945, Channing Tobias to Honorable Fiorello H. LaGuardia, 2 April 1945, Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn.

11. Percy L. Julian to Channing H. Tobias, 7 January 1934, Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn.

12. Fred G. Holmes, M.D. to Dr. Channing H. Tobias, 26 February 1944, Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn.

13. Channing H. Tobias to Dr. Fred G. Holmes, 1 April 1944, Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn.

# CHAPTER VI

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The formative years of Channing Tobias were greatly influenced by his parents, teachers and church leaders. His parents worked diligently to provide a nurturing family environment which formed the foundation for Tobias' life of dedicated service. The training he received in school and church reinforced the values, high moral standards and religious beliefs that had been instilled by his parents.

Although Channing Tobias lived during the years of segregation, he did not become embittered by its harsh disparities. He allowed the early influence of Dr. Walker and others to permeate his perspective, which caused him to become an agent of change instead of promoter of hate. The desire to achieve racial harmony in his world was reflected in Dr. Tobias' work with the YMCA and other organizations throughout his life. He did not believe that equality, human dignity and freedom were the rights of a select group of people. It was his conviction that these human rights were God given rights which were available to all mankind. Moreover, he held that it was necessary for the principles and teachings of Jesus Christ to operate in the lives of men if there was any hope for world peace. He often stated that peace must start within the hearts of men before it could be

spread across cultural and national barriers. The YMCA became the institutional site for principles of racial equality, democracy and freedom to be tested.

Dr. Tobias advocated change within the YMCA soon after he became an International Secretary. He met with its leaders to encourage them to eliminate discriminatory practices in the local YMCA branches. He challenged them to allow the YMCA to lead the way by becoming a model organization that promoted the ideals of democracy and brotherhood. This, he believed, was essential if the YMCA were to function according to the Christian principles upon which it was founded.

As Dr. Tobias traveled around the world, he became known for his courage to support equality, while opposing discrimination and injustice. He was a man of great foresight and understanding. Showing the wisdom of a statesman, and the courage of a soldier, he believed that it was better to stay with the battle for freedom and fight it out, instead of waiting for change to come without a struggle. His approach was firm, yet not antagonistic. Many battles were won for equal justice, but there was strong resistance to change within society. After thirty-five years of challenge and tedious work within the YMCA, Dr. Tobias retired to pursue his fight for justice from a broader platform.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) needed someone to organize and administer its efforts to gain equal access to education. The task called for someone who could provide leadership in a firm and persistent manner, without alienating white or black support already

committed to its causes. Dr. Tobias, already a member of the organization, possessed the wisdom and skills to assist the NAACP in the development and implementation of its strategies for achieving integration within the public schools in the United States.

Although Dr. Tobias spent only seven years as chairman of the board of directors of the NAACP, his impact was felt for many years to come. He served as administrator, facilitator, coordinator and mediator in the fight for equal rights. Dr. Tobias was able to organize, administer and launch successful campaigns to solicit financial support for NAACP efforts. His ability to work well with leaders of the NAACP and other organizations was a factor in gaining their support. In his role as facilitator, Dr. Tobias promoted race pride and self-help. While he recognized the importance of racial cooperation, the value of pride in one's own ability to develop skills served to strengthen and motivate African Americans to hone their skills. This would improve their marketability as well as help them to set and achieve realistic educational and vocational goals.

On many occasions, Dr. Tobias worked diligently in the background. He sought to keep media attention focused upon issues of racial equality and dignity. He was determined early in his career that personal publicity was not a goal and, therefore, never allowed attention to be directed towards himself. This, too, was indicative of his fine character and desire to serve humanity.

Along with other NAACP leaders, Dr. Tobias worked to provide effective leadership and direction to meet NAACP goals. They worked through the courts

to rid the nation of racial inequities, especially in education. His efforts to coordinate plans to raise funds and initiate racial cooperation were successful.

Overall, Dr. Tobias' approach to race relations is best described as a moderate one. It was his firm belief that more could be done through a cooperative effort of both races, than for either group to be alienated. By the 1950s, Dr. Tobias was a leader in the field of race relations. He was effective in his efforts to mobilize white support for positive change, as well as to challenge African Americans to work together to gain equality. His approach also reflected a significant change from a general attitude attributed to blacks by others. In the early 1900s, many black leaders supported Booker T. Washington's "accommodationist" style of getting along with whites, or they kept their opinions to themselves. Washington's influence was broad, which allowed him to influence the black media and also to determine financial support to African American organizations. Any ideas that did not reflect Washington's attitudes were considered radical. W.E.B. DuBois blatantly opposed the notion of accommodation and formed the Niagra Movement, which was a forerunner to the NAACP. While Dr. Tobias leaned more toward DuBois' ideals, his approach was more acceptable by blacks and whites working towards achievement of racial equality.

The next phase for development and change was in the education of the nation. There were many Americans who were neither committed nor opposed to equality. They were just uninformed of the overall impact that segregation and

racial conflicts were causing throughout the nation. In addition, there was general ignorance about African American contributions to the birth of the nation. Education was the key to unlock these doors of ignorance. Knowledge of the facts was necessary to understanding the ideals of democracy, and imparting factual information was the means to educate the masses.

The education of African American youth was an important factor to consider because Dr. Tobias believed that knowledge was power. In addition, a people ignorant of their history is like a tree without roots. In order to help young men and women reach their destiny, Dr. Tobias encouraged the discovery of some positive things about African American heritage and history. He believed that it could provide some of the missing links towards racial understanding and progress in the fight for freedom and equality in America.

Education was essential for African American youth who aspired to professional careers or expected to succeed in developing vocational skills. Dr. Tobias also realized that a genuine effort was needed to get young men and women prepared to meet the challenges they would face as they entered society. The rights that were being gained had to be protected by the next generation. It was important to understand the political, social, economic and educational factors that would influence their world. Since formal education was not always equal or accurate for minorities, other informal means were used to teach young African Americans about their roots and heritage. Vocational training and self-help skills were promoted in informal settings to help youth master their

undeveloped skills and hidden talents. As a motivator, speaker, educator and counselor, Dr. Tobias sought to promote educational growth in formal and informal settings. He encouraged students to seek objective solutions to problems. His perspective on the education of black youth reflected the correlation between organization, moral instruction and cooperation to establish a well balanced educational foundation.

Dr. Tobias was the recipient of early training and he understood the importance of helping those who would follow after him. Dr. Tobias had strong convictions that education was in the best interest of democracy and welfare of all Americans. His dedication to the promotion of education led to the prolific legacy he left to all of those who would continue the struggle for freedom. Dr. Tobias' commitment to his convictions caused a positive impact in the field of education as well as the lives of those who accepted the challenge to excel. A change-agent is defined as someone acting on behalf of another who has the power to obtain specific results that can alter or make a difference in the state or condition of a thing or person.

In 1960, many of Dr. Tobias' peers were asked to share the significance of his life as it impacted them. Channing H. Tobias was described by those who knew him best in the following quotations documented in his papers. Theodore W. Kheel, President of the Urban League, had frequent opportunities "to appreciate the character and the quality of leadership presented by Dr. Channing H. Tobias . . . ."[1] Lester B. Granger, Executive Director of that organization, stated, "I have

never known him [Tobias] to temporize or back down; neither have I known him to take unjust advantage of another person. His has been a clear voice sounding for justice, and his heart has been great enough to encompass the needs of all people of whatever race . . . ."[2] Another letter, signed by "Tracy," remarked, "nothing will take the place of his quiet, sympathetic, understanding, health-giving love, which he was able to share with many, many people of all nations and races."[3] It was difficult to select just a few of the accolades that Dr. Tobias' peers and colleagues had to share about him. The Reverend George B. Ford summarized the feelings of many of his religious peers in his reflections. He wrote, "what especially impressed me about Channing was the quality of his leadership -- motivated by the finest insights of religion and the consistent application of the principles of our democracy . . . ."[4]

The Eulogy of Dr. Tobias, written and presented at his funeral by his friend, Dr. Benjamin Mays, summarizes the life and essence of this great leader.

> How grateful we are to Almighty God that Channing Tobias lived and moved among us for seventy-nine years. The community is better because he lived in it and America is better because he blessed it with his soul and mind . . . . He was alert, logical . . . . God was generous to Mr. Tobias. He not only gave him a sound mind in a sound body, but God gave him eloquence in speech and persuasiveness in argument and debate . . . . When he spoke the people listened . . . . He had the genius to say the right things at the right time. God gave him integrity and honor . . . . He gave him a passion for social justice. He was sensitive to the wrongs and injustices endured by suffering humanity around the world . . . . He lived almost four score years. Though a long life, he was not idle. He allowed no sand to burn under his feet when duty called. He worked as if God sent him into the world to do his

> job . . . . This is an inadequate appraisal of the life of Channing Tobias, one of the truly great men of our times.[5]

This study describes the formative influences on Channing Tobias' life and his work with the YMCA, NAACP and other organizations working to eliminate racial inequities suffered by African Americans living in the United States. His contributions to non-formal education were beneficial in that he used education as a conduit to influence change in the attitudes and actions of young African Americans. Although Dr. Tobias' name faded quickly after he died, his work paved the way for others to become leaders in the civil rights movement that emerged during the 1960s. His moderate approach to improving race relations appears to be a factor in the disappearance of his name from history. W.E.B. DuBois, and others with a more radical approach, tended to overshadow the work and influence of moderate leaders, while the notion of accommodation, reflected in the work of Booker T. Washington, was often being rejected by younger African Americans.

It is not easy to develop an historical perspective of a person such as Channing Tobias. In many ways, he was an "organization man," a person who worked within formal structures rather than challenging these structures. He was an official in the YMCA, the NAACP, and an alternate delegate to the United Nations. From the "insider's" perspective, he sought to make these organizations into vehicles for change, especially bringing about greater equality and ending

racial discrimination. From the platform that these organizations provided, he could address a larger audience.

Because of the way in which he worked throughout his career, Tobias has become a neglected figure in African American, as well as American, history. He was not a dramatic and concerted opponent of the system as was W.E.B. DuBois. Nor was Tobias an accommodationist such as Booker T. Washington. Tobias, rather, seemed to take a moderate course. He did not compromise with racism and with segregation. He opposed them, but determined to do so through organization and education.

There are many areas of study for further research. The years immediately following Dr. Tobias' death were significantly impacted by the many social, economic and political changes which occurred. An investigation of other civil rights leaders may offer additional information to support the importance of Tobias' influence and the effects that continue to impact current race relations in the United States.

# CHAPTER VI NOTES

1. Theodore W. Kheel to Dr. Frank Graham, 4 April 1960, Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn.

2. Lester B. Granger to Dr. Frank Graham, 1 April 1960, Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn.

3. Tracy to Dalton F. McClelland, [1960], Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn. (Only the name Tracy appeared, no further identification of the author).

4. The Reverend George B. Ford to Dalton F. McClelland, 16 April 1960, Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn.

5. Eulogy of Channing H. Tobias, written by Benjamin E. Mays, November 8, 1961, Tobias Collection, YMCA Archives, St. Paul, Mn.

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# VITA

The Author, O. Joyce Smith, was born September 7, 1947, in Chicago, Illinois.

In September 1965, Mrs. Smith entered Wilson Junior College. In 1973, she continued her education at Chicago State University, receiving a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology in 1975. In June 1977, Mrs. Smith received a Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of Illinois, Chicago-Circle Campus. Her major concentration of study was the combined methods of case, group and community intervention.

Since 1979, Mrs. Smith has been employed as a School Social Worker for the Chicago Public Schools. She has consulted and presented workshops on Adolescent Issues to parent and teacher groups. She has also spoken to many classroom, community and agency groups on School Social Work in the Multi-Cultural Setting.

APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by O. Joyce Smith has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Gerald L. Gutek, Director
Professor, ELPS, Loyola

Dr. Joan K. Smith
Professor, ELPS, Loyola

Dr. Janis Fine
Visiting Professor, ELPS, Loyola

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

December 8, 1992
Date

Gerald L Gutek
Director's Signature