



Reverend Theodore Judson Jemison: The Man Who Revolutionized the Civil Rights Movement

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Reverend Theodore Judson Jemison: The Man Who Revolutionized the Civil Rights Movement

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Abstract

The Civil Rights Movement is arguably one of America's most defining periods. It was the true start of the establishment not just of legal equality, but moral equality between the African American and Caucasian communities. Many scholars start their works with famous civil rights activists such as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., or Malcolm X. However, few realize that before any of them took their first steps toward fighting inequality in 1955, two years earlier a man who later inspired many activists was getting to work. Reverend Theodore Jemison led the first ever bus boycott in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1953. The goal of this study is to demonstrate that examining this lesser-known activist opens up new avenues of inquiry into religious legacies, economics, education, and social capital. Doing so will shine light on the central influences of all civil rights leaders during the 1950s and into the 1960s.

Note that quotations from individuals' oral and written testimonies from during the bus boycott or statements made after have not been altered from their original wording. This means there are terminological and grammatical issues within someone of the statements. However, I felt as scholar it would be unethical to polish their language into more formal English. Their word choices and language are representative of their era and location.

Frontispiece



The man on the right—perhaps a bus driver or police officer—appears to be recording the license plates of cars offering free rides to participants in the 1953 bus boycott. Archival photo provided by [Ernest Ritchie](#). (McClure)

Author's Biographical Sketch

Terri Roberts is a graduate of Emory and Henry College's Public Policy and Community Service Bachelor's degree program, with a minor in religion, and has focused on the relationship between religion and cultural studies. During her time at Emory and Henry, her pedagogy was focused on Appalachia studies, service learning, place-based education, and research. Additionally, her work has included a strong focus on the relationship between religion and the Civil Rights Movement. During her time at Emory and Henry College she presented her work titled "Food Security for Low and Moderate-Income Individuals and Families in Washington County, Virginia" at the Appalachian Regional Commission Annual Conference in Washington D.C. on December 3rd, 2010. Further, she assisted in the education of communities in the Appalachian area on sustainable community development and spent four years implementing place-based education programs for lower-income families. In her senior year of college, she earned a journalism award for her work on physical and emotional abuse in early adulthood.

Throughout Ms. Roberts' education and life, she has loved exploring religion. She is passionate about understanding the connections between society, religion, and politics, and how each of these affects the others over time. She challenges herself to live by the motto: *Macte virtute*.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to those who inspired me to never give up. My Godfather Eddie Newsome was my midnight sounding board, extinguisher of comma splices, and most importantly, the guiding light to staying focused on my journey through Harvard University's Extension School. My beloved Grandmother Hellen Morrison not only shared her own wisdom on the topics of equality and justice but, more importantly, offered words of endless love and encouragement. To my wonderful parents, who reminded me that a person's life is not determined by the moments but rather the journey. Most importantly, my wonderful husband Charles Thomas Willis, who had to carry what felt to him like the entire Widener Library every other Saturday. I honestly could not have done any of this without you. To all of you, thank you, I love you all.

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Chapter I: Introduction

History is more than dates and events; it is ideas, discoveries, and evolutions that help shape future generations. America's history is full of revolutions, change, and hope. However, to ignore the peculiar means ignoring America's most defining moments. These moments are what cultivated America's future, whether taking a stand against tyranny, fighting for women's equality, or breaking the chains of slavery. The defining moment in history that this thesis focuses on is the Civil Rights Movement of the late 1940s and early 1950s. A person's civil rights are their legal rights to protection from discrimination based on race, gender, or age. They also comprise constitutional guarantees such as freedoms of speech, religion, or press. One of the most fundamental civil rights gained by the African American community came in the form of the 13th Amendment, passed on January 31, 1865, which formally abolished slavery in the United States. However, the end of slavery did not result in immediate equality, particularly in respect to the treatment of African Americans. It would not be until 99 years later, in 1964, that segregation would legally end with the signing of the Civil Rights Act by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

The Civil Rights Movement fought to end segregation, prohibit discrimination based on race, and emphasize legal and political rights. However, it was more than just a legal fight. African Americans and their allies fought so that black people would not be burned on crosses, raped while trying to ride public transportation, shot because their skin was any shade but white. Most importantly, the Civil Rights Movement represented a fight to prove that every life in the United States of America was equally important,

regardless of race, education, or class. Understanding what formed and cultivated the Civil Rights Movement not only shows how civil rights leaders were successful but also highlights the strong moral bond between all civil rights leaders of that time. When scholars try to limit the depth of the Civil Rights Movement to perspectives or frameworks of just politics or religion, the significant roles that culture, morality, education, and economics played in the development of the movement itself are diminished. The hypothesis presented in this thesis is that understanding a civil rights leader's religious legacy, economic status, education, and social capital will not only demonstrate the magnitude of their success but allow for deeper insight into how they were successful.

Scholars—in addition to often narrowing their focus to more familiar touchstones of the Civil Rights Movement such as Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Rosa Parks—often prefer to analyze events through either a purely political or a religious viewpoint. Limiting their focus to more prominent individuals or events does not allow for new discoveries or understandings of the influences on these leaders. There is more to the story of why Parks did not move from her seat, why a group of African American men did not move from a lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, and how King developed his dream. In this thesis, when the term religious civil rights leader is used, it refers only to clergymen who participated in civil rights activism during the 1950s and 1960s. The term “religious legacies” should be considered as the African American history and cultural ideas passed down through the leaders of the church, as well as the line of lineage of these leaders that represent how they are connected to each other.

Using the parameter of religious legacy allows for insight into how traditions and cultures were passed down through the generations. These traditions, ideologies, and community cultures are what formed these leaders' viewpoints. A person's economic status is more than just their monetary worth; it also directly connects to the benefits or disadvantages they encounter in life. In the African American community, it perpetuates an already broken system into a cycle that determines a child's future before they are even born. Additionally, a person's economic status greatly defines the role of education in their lives. An African American child born into a lower-income family is more likely to follow a career path of servitude, whereas a child born into the middle African American class has a higher chance of becoming a religious leader, lawyer, doctor, or private business owner due to their family's economic status. The lower status also equates to less time spent in the classroom because the child is needed to help financially support the family, which they must do, rather than receive a full education.

The parameters of social capital not only demonstrate the qualities, traits, and skills a person brings to the community, but also demonstrate why these leaders tasked certain groups or individuals with particular objectives. For example, whether it was using the women in the community to run the phone lines because they had already built community-based connections through churches and afterschool activities or asking business owners to help organize and maintain financial records because they were already skilled in finance. Using the parameter of social capital shows a deeper connection between the leaders and their communities. Social capital demonstrates that religious leaders understood their communities, their congregations, and most importantly, how to use everyone to the best of their abilities.

By applying these parameters in this thesis to African American Reverend Theodore Judson Jemison and his work during the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott, it was found that Jemison was a vital element of the Civil Rights Movement in 1949 and the early 1950s. His actions and philosophy created a road map for future civil rights leaders such as King. The latter acknowledged this himself in a conversation with Jemison about his civil rights efforts in Baton Rouge in the early 1950s.

Jemison was born on August 1st, 1918, in Selma, Alabama. Jemison's father, David Jemison, was a reverend and former National Baptist Convention President. In 1940, Jemison received a Bachelor of Science degree from Alabama State College and, in 1945, received his Master's in divinity from Virginia Union University. In 1945 he married Celestine Catlett and took the first steps on his journey toward becoming a civil rights leader. In the same year, Jemison was instrumental in the founding of the first local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Stoughton, Virginia. His work with the Stoughton Chapter led him to transfer from serving the Mount Zion Baptist Church in Stoughton to becoming the reverend at Mount Zion Baptist Church of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1949.

The start of my own discovery of Jemison and his vital role in the Civil Rights Movement was from the documentary *Signpost to Freedom: The 1953 Baton Rouge Bus Boycott*. The documentary was created to bring to light the untold story of the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott. It does so by recounting the circumstances and events that led to the boycott and "then examines its impact on the evolution of grassroots civil rights activism across the country during the early years of America's Civil Rights Movement" (PBS). The documentary uses a team of scholars whose works are focused on the history of the

Civil Rights Movement, in addition to key testimonies of many figures involved personally such as Jemison and White. In this, Jemison discussed a pivotal moment in the bus boycott that occurred a few months earlier. In a meeting around mid-February, the bus company requested a “fair” bus increase for its passengers, and the city agreed. However, prior to the meeting’s conclusion Jemison stated that he stood up and “asked them in brotherly terms that I thought that since Negroes were paying the fare the same fare our white friends and white residences are paying that we should have the right to sit down”. After, he took his seat until the end of the meeting (Signpost 10:00–10:49). Jemison would not utter another word during the meeting or to the bus company directly. Notably, he introduced himself as a reverend of the community, speaking in “brotherly terms” and, most importantly, not overstating his demands. Jemison’s word choice and actions are of the type encouraged by earlier African American civil and religious leaders, including his own father Reverend Jemison Sr., when dealing with white men of power. Two weeks after the meeting, the bus company and the city agreed to Ordinance 222. The Ordinances state that African American riders could fill the seats up from the back of the bus forward and white riders could fill up the seats from front to back on a first-come, first-served basis. This meant that African American passengers could occupy any seat on the bus if they did not share a seat with a white rider. However, the bus drivers subsequently refused to follow the ordinance in the three months that followed.

In the summer of 1953 in Baton Rouge, Jemison witnessed numerous indecent or immoral acts toward the African American community, including police brutality, attempted rape, assault, damage of property, and drive-by shootings. Thus, one hot summer day while standing on the steps of his church, Jemison reached his breaking

point. After watching bus after bus packed full of African Americans standing at the back because they were not allowed in the white section, while the seats went empty, Jemison became angry that drivers were not following Ordinance 222. The final straw was when he saw Martha White, a woman from his congregation who had waited on a white family all day long, took a seat in the “white section” of the bus, the front seat. White told the driver that she would move if any white passenger boarded the bus, but she was tired and could not stand any longer. White said the driver became angry with her and an elderly lady named Pearl seated next to White told the driver, “we ain’t movin’”, followed by the instruction for everyone to lock arms (Signpost 11:46–12:00). These actions instigated the first ever bus sit-in, as all the black passengers locked arms and refused to disembark.

The driver called the police, stating that the passengers were being disorderly and needed to be removed. Once the officers arrived, the passengers declared: “arrest one of us, you arrest all of us.” The officers asked everyone to leave the bus to be arrested (Signpost 12:11–12:29). As White exited the bus, Jemison approached the officers, bus driver, and a member of the bus company’s upper management, Mr. Coffin, to ask what was going on. They informed him that these “negros were under arrest”. White recalled that Jemison, without raising his voice, looked the arresting officer’s dead in the eye and said, “Officer you know you can’t do that, and you know it” (Signpost 12:29–12:41). White and Jemison both regarded this as the moment when they knew change had to happen. Jemison was able to deescalate the issue without anyone from the African American community being illegally arrested thanks to his role as a religious leader and spokesperson for the African American community.

Seeking a compromise with Jemison and the African American community, the bus company suspended the driver for not following the company's policies. The fallout from that action was that all drivers went on strike for four days. The company and city came to an agreement with the support of a local judge on June 18th, who deemed Ordinance 222 illegal and against segregation laws. Thus, he deemed the bus driver to have done nothing wrong, and Ordinance 222 was stricken from the rule book. After hearing the news, Jemison called a meeting of all members of the African American community at the local Zion Church. During the meeting, the community voted Jemison the President of the United Defense League, whose mission was to overturn the newly reinstated rules of the bus company. Jemison pointed out to the community that 73% of the bus company's patrons were African American, which sparked the idea of the bus boycott. If the African American community boycotted the buses, the company would soon feel the financial burden of a drop in riders and revenue. Jemison later stated that the excitement of that meeting led to the actions of June 19th, 1953. On this day, Jemison and the Secretary of the United Defense League gave voice to this injustice and entered the local radio station, WLCS, to call upon their community to help fight for their collective equality, live on air (Signpost 14:58–15:30).

When reviewing the testimonies of Jemison and those who were present, a pattern started to emerge of who the leaders during times of struggle in the African American community were, common influences within generations and the power of knowledge held by those who had gained a higher education. The incident with Ms. White demonstrated to Jemison that peaceful discussion and requests only went so far, and if the African American community was going to win a fight against the bus drivers, they had

to fight back in the way that would have the most impact. Jemison knew that a part of his success was due to the growing economic power of the black community in Baton Rouge. That is, part of the reason they were able to get Ordinance 222 passed was because the black community funded the bus company. They paid the salaries, for the uniforms, healthcare for employees, and to service the buses. The contribution of the white community barely covered fuel expenses, which was a reason why Jemison formulated the idea for a bus company boycott.

Jemison also used economics to push a moral obligation upon the black community. He called on members of the black middle-class community to lend their vehicles and framed doing so as their duty. An example of someone who took up this call was the only black gas station owner in Baton Rouge, Horatio Thompson, who only sold gas to members of the black community during the boycott. He went further by selling it at cost, thus not making any profit from those sales. Thompson felt that Jemison had called upon him to help in any way he could, and that it was his moral obligation to do so (Signpost 16:50–17:00).

According to scholars and historians such as Juan Williams and Dean Sinclair, the boycott was extremely effective. It brought the Baton Rouge Bus Company to the brink of bankruptcy within six days. The bus company and city council agreed to make changes, which resulted in the passing of Ordinance 251. This stated that the last two rows were dedicated for use by African Americans, while the first two rows were for whites, and the rows in between were to be used on a first-come, first-served basis (Sinclair 445). It was not a complete win; many felt that if they had continued the bus boycott, they could have won full rights. Historian and Parks' biographer, Douglas

Brinkley, stated that protestors like Parks, the Freedom Riders, and King would not have done what they did without Jemison, because he “gave them hope” (Signpost 22:04–22:14). Parks stated that after *Brown v. Board of Education*, Baton Rouge was on everyone’s mind, including her own. For the first time, it demonstrated to the black community that the federal government was finally on their side and was listening.

Jemison would never stop fighting for his community, even though he stepped away from the spotlight in the decades that followed. After the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott, Jemison focused on assisting local African American organizations. In 1982 he became President of the National Baptist Convention, where he oversaw the building of the Baptist World Center in Nashville, Tennessee.

The life stories of leaders like Jemison are instrumental in uncovering new testimonies, ideologies, and practices during the Civil Rights Movement. Their histories and legacies help broaden our understanding of not just what happened during the movement, but how and why it was successful. The movement’s success came from more than just politics or religion; it came from a shared and ingrained cultural belief in the ideal of community unity. It came from years of dedication by its religious leaders, who felt a moral obligation to protect their people, and it came from a core understanding of the importance of maintaining ones’ humanity. Without reviewing the legacy of civil rights leaders like Jemison through multiple lenses, it is impossible to grasp how they were more than just religious leaders. These leaders were at the center of their communities, which permitted them to reach across lines of race, gender, and economics to fight for equality.

In general, the scholarship on the Civil Rights Movement holds a narrow historiographical focus. The current scholarship views the actions, beliefs, characteristics, and motives of African American religions during the Civil Rights Movement through the perspectives of either politics or religion. Often, scholars seek to keep the two as separate as possible. An example of the historiographical research method can be found in “Civil Rights Religion: Rethinking the 1950s and 1960s Political Activism for African American Religious History” by Vaughn Booker (2014). The historiographical approach analyzes “the writing of history based on the critical examination of sources, the selection of particulars from the authentic materials, and the synthesis of particulars into a narrative that will stand the test of critical methods” (Merriam Webster,¹) Booker uses this approach by exploring the intersection of African American religious history and American political history from the viewpoint of the modern Civil Rights Movement. Using an historiographical approach, Booker first examined previous scholars’ narratives and definitions of African American religious women and men. Booker argues that these definitions of African American religiosity “produce a historiographic portrait of religion as activism that refracts religious beliefs and practices through the lenses of social and political activism, thereby limit[ing] the scholarly landscape of African American religious thought and expression in this period” (Booker 211). Therefore, for there to be a deeper understanding of the role of African American religion in the Civil Rights Movement, scholars need to view first how politics and religion interacted with each other. How did these two lenses influence the other and further, what were the cultural influences of the time on them. To view the topic of the Civil Rights Movement from one area or another will not allow for a full picture; however, to simply view them without

also observing outside influences will not allow for a broader picture either. Booker limits his sources to pieces written in the 1950s and 1960s. Through his approach, the reader can attain a broad understanding of different arguments presented on the Civil Rights Movement and understand the scholarly debate within the realms of religion and civil rights. However, rather than analyzing the Civil Rights Movement itself, Booker focuses on what others in the field have stated, including how these scholars described or selected different activists during the period, and where they were absent in their research or writings.

An example of Booker identifying a scholar who places too much focus on the more notable civil rights leaders is in his description of Barbara Savage and her book *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us* (2008). Booker states that Savage primarily focuses on the “elite African American intellectual women and men who created and mobilized academic institutions, churches, and social organizations in efforts for racial progress from the late nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century” (216). Savage narrowed her focus to highlight only those who modeled their practices after “political and religious leadership” (216). The flaw with her approach, according to Booker, is that it does not “define any specific religious tradition’s tenets or practices, and it situates inherited religious beliefs and institutions as contested theologies and spaces, respectively, in the lives of engaged civil rights participants” (218). In other words, Savage ignores the cultural and historical aspect of religious traditions within the African American community. She disregards how information was passed from generation to generation, why it is essential to the community for their cultural traditions to live on, and what roles these traditions played in the Civil Rights Movement.

An example of why it is important to observe the works, ideologies, and actions of lesser-known activists can be seen in Dennis Dickerson's article "African American Religious Intellectuals and the Theological Foundations of the Civil Rights Movement, 1930–1955" (2005). Dickerson analyzes the words of activists such as King to uncover who the main influencers on them were. Dickerson shows where 1950s leaders' religious and political ideologies drew knowledge and inspiration from. Without observing the educators, pastors, and community leaders of the late 1920s through the 1950s, it is impossible to fully understand the minds of activists such as King. How did men like him come to have dreams? How did they come to orchestrate massive bus boycotts and protests? To answer these questions, scholars need to look to the individuals often overlooked in the history books.

This thesis will examine the life of a man who, outside certain circles, is barely known. It will demonstrate the importance of understanding the Civil Rights Movement from new parameters. Jemison demonstrates the importance of understanding the Civil Rights Movement through the history, minds, and actions of those behind the spotlight. First, applying new parameters to the Civil Rights Movement offers a greater insight into the internal mechanisms of the movement and its leaders, including the leaders' mindset, their influences, how and where they developed their plans, and, most importantly, how they succeeded. Second, this approach shows the necessity of investigating the Civil Rights Movement from the perspectives of the people within the community, not just the legendary heroes of history.

Chapter II: Literature Review

In the context of any writing, the author must narrow their focus to fit within the scope of their work. However, it is equally important not to limit oneself to texts, thus risking misrepresenting or the altering of historical events, beliefs, or perspectives. The parameters or perspectives of scholars tend to lean either toward a religious or a political perspective when discussing the Civil Rights Movement. Further, some scholars disregard the power of cultural and educational influences when reviewing black religious civil rights leaders. An example can be found in *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* by David Chappell (2004). Chappell adds to the conversation and literature on the Civil Rights Movement, but he does not credit the inspiration provided to religious leaders such as Jemison from within the African American community. Randal Maurice Jelks highlights this lack of inclusivity in his book review, “Religious Dimensions of the American Civil Rights Movement,” in which he argues that Chappell makes it seem “as though African Americans themselves had no intellectual ideas coming specifically derivative of their own religious communities” (Jelks 832). By making broad statements and not crediting notable influences such as Benjamin Mays, Dean of the School of Religions at Howard University, or Mordecai Johnson, Clergy President of Howard University, Chappell overlooks two key parameters of this thesis.

First, Chappell’s study does not demonstrate the importance of understanding “Afro-Baptist religious inheritance”, known in this thesis as religious legacies. Jelks points out in his review that a substantial part of education in the middle-class home was civil rights. It was the ideas of local religious leaders that were being fed into the minds

of young activists. The words, knowledge, and ideas of the past were being passed down to the next generation years before the future activist of the Civil Rights Movement attended college or held any notions of standing up for human rights. Religious legacy is more than knowledge shared by a person of the cloth; it is a connection to the past and a road to the future. To understand where these leaders' ideas started, it is important to understand their pasts. Who raised them? What was the culture of their communities and homes during their childhoods? Chappell, by crediting white male religious leaders as the primary influence, overlooks vital connections between many notable black religious leaders. Benjamin Mays, Dean of the School of Religions at Howard University, made a significant contribution by teaching the new path to justice in his classrooms. Mays altered the message and showed his students why the messages within sermons needed to change from being passive to calling for action. He used significant figures like Mahatma Gandhi as examples of how to call for change while continuing to engage peacefully.

Additionally, Jelks points out that scholars like Chappell altering the role of black religious leaders, "only [having] white religious models to help mold [their] thinking," creates a savior-like narrative of white religious leaders during the Civil Rights Movement (832). By doing so Chappell dismissed the importance of black religious civil rights leaders, and the relationship between religious activists and their economic status, their education, and their influences from growing up in the Afro-Baptist (religious) community.

In contrast, Clarence Taylor, in *Black Religious Intellectuals: The Fight for Inequality from Jim Crow to the Twenty-first Century*, argues that scholars and historians should not focus on the more well-known civil rights members but should look at lesser-

known actors. Second, to understand the relationship between religion and politics during the Civil Rights Movement, scholars must observe and record the traditions and practices of the people rather than the activities of those popularized by the media, scholarly works, or politics. Clarence Taylor makes a strong argument for exploring the history of local activists more deeply, to gain a fuller picture of the motives and actions of the Civil Rights Movement. Local activists made massive accomplishments in their times and places, with a prime example being the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott. Members of the Baton Rouge African American community felt that the boycott was a failure at that time, but later realized it was the first glimpse of the types of action required to gain equality. It was the first demonstration of the power the black community was capable of wielding once they realized the government was ready to listen. It provided necessary inspiration and motivation for change.

An issue within Taylor's work, as pointed out in Jelks' review, is "that Taylor's critique has laid a building block to explore more fully the black religious thinking in undermining Jim Crow and the religious renewal of black communities" (833). However, a lack of supporting evidence for why these viewpoints and parameters makes Taylor's work "too shallow as intellectual history" (Jelks 833). Ironically, Jelks himself does not provide a framework or direction for scholarship on the Civil Rights Movement. Instead, he combines a persuasive writing style with a critique of Taylor's work to identify where it lacked depth. Jelks still refrains from moving further into Chappell and Clarence Taylor's argument to correct where others have failed.

When reviewing history, events, people, cultures, or religions it is important to be mindful of the lens or correlations used to make a point. Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore's

book *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919–1950* (2008), argues that to understand the Civil Rights Movement in its entirety, scholars must review the relationship between the Civil Rights Movement and the American left, also known as communists. The foundations for any scholarly work of quality are a comprehensible research methodology, supporting evidence, and clear arguments. However, where Gilmore’s book is a notable starting point for someone trying to grasp the “role of the southern Left in the early years of the civil rights struggle”, it has three major downfalls (Gregory Taylor 4). Gilmore not only skews the historical facts and relationship between the two groups but also dishonors the true history between the two groups. Further, she lacks supporting evidence for her claims.

Taylor argues that Gilmore’s work “equate[s] action with impact,” rather than building on solid evidence of correlations and connections that impact one another (Gregory Taylor 4). Gilmore draws her correlations without substantial facts and connects events to the Communist Party USA that occurred prior to or during World War II, to prove that the Communist Party was necessary during the Civil Rights Movement. Gilmore credits the Communist Party with pushing the southern liberals into action and changing the narrative of the south on the need to end white supremacy (Gregory Taylor 3). Nevertheless, Gilmore fails to emphasize how this was done, the correlations between the two groups, or to provide a direct example of when the Communist Party’s actions benefited the Civil Rights Movement. For example, she describes two events involving Lovett Fort-Whiteman as her supporting evidence for her assertion that Communist Party assistance was important in the fight for civil rights. The first such event was that after his trip to the Soviet Union, Fort-Whiteman “explained to his American comrades the

Soviet belief that interracial solidarity was a precursor to economic reform” (Gregory Taylor 2). Based on this statement, the reader is to assume that the idea of equality through economic reform came to the Civil Rights Movement as a result of Fort-Whiteman’s trip to the Soviet Union. Following his return, Fort-Whiteman and a few of his comrades led a failed strike against the Loray Mill in Gastonia, North Carolina, in 1929. In her analysis, Gilmore does not draw a clear correlation between the strike and the Civil Rights Movement. The reader is left with many questions, such as how the strike was intended to help in the fight. What is clear is that Fort-Whiteman strongly believed that economic reform would help civil rights, but the reader is never informed why it would do so. Another question that arises is how the strike ties back into the Civil Rights Movement. For Fort-Whiteman and his comrades, the strike was intended to force the need for economic reform in order to gain leverage for equality. Yet, the question about the benefits to be gained from the strike remains.

Without examining the influences behind these moments of action or the connections therein to the Civil Rights Movement, it is nearly impossible to see how these collections of moments created an impact of success during the Civil Rights Movement. How did a strike in 1929 link to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s? An issue with works such as Gilmore’s is a lack of evidence to support the arguments. Gilmore fails to build connections and correlations between actions that may or may not have created a significant impact during the Civil Rights Movement. The issue is that her work alters the narratives of the relationships between the Communist Party and the civil rights leaders. Accurate data must support statements and is necessary

for building an accurate account of the historical event, person, culture, or religion being discussed.

Taylor concludes his disagreement with Gilmore's work by stating that the best and worst part of her book is the same: the time spent on "extensive biographies, as well as the lengthy forays into singular events such as the Gastonia strike, and the March on Washington movement", which "detract from her larger agenda" (Gregory Taylor 3). Gilmore offers great insight into active Communist Party members and their background information. However, she adds nothing to the scholarly conversation. She does not analyze why their background information is important, nor does she offer insight into why this information is important to her overall argument. Gilmore—instead of supporting her claims with citations, footnotes, or a solid research methodology—simply reiterates the roles and events of the southern Leftist movement during the earlier years of the Civil Rights Movement. Gilmore's book is an excellent example of the level of respect that should be shown when discussing topics such as civil rights. It reminds scholars of the foundations necessary in any quality scholarship: a clear factual argument, evidence supporting the argument, and just enough background for the reader to understand the stakes without the overall message becoming lost in a barrage of facts.

When examining the Civil Rights Movement, research methods like historical and hermeneutic methodology will not work alone. It is also necessary to understand how quantitative and qualitative data affect findings. An example of this effect can be seen in Lincoln Quillian's article, "New Approaches to Understanding Racial Prejudice and Discrimination" (2006). This is an insightful example of how scholars have blended quantitative and qualitative research to understand historical events, emotions, or

movements like civil rights. Quillian reviews the different quantitative research methods used by the science community and the government to understand racial prejudice and discrimination solely between the white, black, and Hispanic communities. To narrow his focus, Quillian compares research data collected during the Civil Rights Movement to the present day. He elaborates on why particular methods were used, and the complications that arose from just using that method. For example, he states that a “major problem with the statistical analysis of observational data is that it relies upon measuring racial discrimination as a residual: Discrimination is the remaining racial difference after statistically accounting for all other race-related influences on the outcome” (Quillian 303). Relying solely on statistical analysis of observational data to understand cultural issues such as racial discrimination will not work because it does not have a quantitative solution for overcoming the problem that people will not honestly report their own acts of racial discrimination. The most considerable reason for this is that such discrimination is illegal in the United States.

As Quillian points out, without sociological studies to consider the “processes by which group stereotypes are formed, and their origin in the media, in the social structure, and social relations,” more in-depth understandings of human emotions or actions like racial discrimination cannot be fully understood (324). Therefore, it is important to have a full and well-rounded understanding of not just the person but the environment that surrounds them, an environment wherein discrimination is inherent. Therefore, this thesis does not limit its scope to reviewing Jemison from either a political or a religious perspective. Rather, it reflects on the deeper social and cultural connections in his life, such as the physiological and behavioral influences of growing up in an African

American religious community, or the benefits of his education. While it is possible to view his role solely within the constraints of being a pastor, this was not the sole key to his success. Rather, what happened in his life made him a successful pastor for his community and an inspiration for leaders like King. To reach these understandings, research by scholars such as Quillian is necessary, however flawed their attempts to understand the mindset of the period are. Regarding future studies, it would be interesting to see additional work on how to understand concepts of racial discrimination that take into consideration how society has evolved or devolved due to outside influences.

Gerald Sider, in *Race Becomes Tomorrow* (2015), uses a blended methodology to review the Civil Rights Movement. He uses both ethnographic and anthropological memoir approaches to show the correlations between race, class, social justice, and civil rights. Sider, unlike many scholars, also uses several examples of racism in North Carolina and New York. He refrains from strongly focusing on the major cities or events during and after the Civil Rights Movement. The book is divided into four sections: Stories, Culturing World, Beyond, and Living Contradictions. Charles Pierce reviews Sider's work as an "analysis of the interrelations among race, class, justice, locality, rights, and exportation [which] played a role during the Civil Rights Movement" (1). These classifications not only affected the relationships between white and black communities but within black communities themselves.

Sider touches on one of this thesis's supporting arguments: that for the African American community to gain headway, their leader must be "untouchable" to the white community. Sider describes an untouchable in the African American community as a person's whose finances, credit or family would not be penalized for speaking out against

the injustices towards the African American community. (Sider 42) Scholars often suggest the reason black religious men served as leaders during the Civil Rights Movement was because their livelihood was dictated by African American religious life, rather than by the white community. This thesis will discuss their economic security as more than just a financial safeguard; it was considered their moral obligation. Civil rights leaders such as Jemison considered it a moral responsibility for the middle and upper classes to financially support the movement, in addition to their physical assistance. Jemison tied this obligation to financially support the movement into his sermons and messages to his congregation. He felt that God had blessed middle and upper-class households so that they could, in turn, bless those less fortunate within their communities.

Charles Pierce argues that Sider's book brings to light problems that are often overshadowed when discussing the Civil Rights Movement. However, it also illuminates what happens when scholars take an anthropological memoir perspective. Instead of using authentic stories based on the recounting of events, Sider drafts imagined stories that are embellishments on oral accounts recorded years after the movement was over. Pierce states that more scholars should bring the experience and trauma of deep-seated emotions into their work on topics like the Civil Rights Movement. Yet, when done in place of specific historical examples, this approach can lessen the serious scholarly impact of the work. Sider's book could expand knowledge on civil rights, but Pierce views it as a "vivid ethnographic account of what race does in the United States" while lacking the full spectrum of supporting evidence (Price 5).

Thomas Sugrue, in *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (2008), offers "a mountain of evidence on the varied battles, and

myriad figures of the northern Civil Rights Movement along with extensive documentation of racial injustice” (Theohairs 1). Sugrue adds to the scholarship on the Civil Rights Movement by forcing his readers to move past the simple morality of the social change and focus on the problem of America’s overall racism, which is not contained to just the south. He offers insight into the closed-door racism of the north that is not as often discussed as that of the south. Additionally, he addresses how the racism of the north differed systemically from that of the south. For example, the racism in the south was visible in signs stating, “For coloreds only.” But just because these signs were not posted in the north did not mean that the races could mix. In his chapter “No Place for Coloreds,” Sugrue writes about the time King was denied service in a restaurant in New Jersey.

Sugrue moves the scholarly conversation forward into deeper and broader thinking. As Clarence Taylor points out in *Civil Rights in New York City: From World War II to the Giuliani Era* (2011), Sugrue does not just focus on the larger-scale events or people but broadens his examples to include lesser-known movements and activists. By doing so, he shines a light on smaller towns and cities across the nation that were facing the same problems and difficulties, revealing that the issues of racism were not isolated to the south but a nationwide problem. Sugrue argues that at least the south was open and honest about not wanting to remove segregation laws, and businesses and stores displayed signs informing African Americans they were not welcome. In the north, “local, state, and federal officials ‘mixed the gravel of racism into the mortar of public policy’ in regard to schools, housing, jobs, and public services” (Theohairs 3). Northern cities hid behind laws and policies to keep the African American community from truly

prospering and becoming equal, whether through urban housing development, school zone coding, or workforce requirements.

Despite the strengths of Sugrue's book, the first problem is that he does not take this opportunity to refresh history by shedding new light on the stories, people, or events that the scholarly world already knows. An example of this, as pointed out by Theohairs, is that Sugrue missed the opportunity to point out that "we avoid reckoning with *how* Congress passed the 1964 Civil Rights Act only after its northern sponsors deliberately exempted northern schools by stipulating that 'desegregation' shall not mean the assignment of students to public schools in order to overcome racial imbalance" (4). One of the main contributions of this thesis is its explanation of *how* civil rights leaders were so successful, done by examining the components necessary to make civil protests such as the bus boycott transpire. It follows a similar methodology to Sugrue of blending hermeneutical and socio-cultural approaches to examine the inspiration behind the actions of civil rights leaders.

Sugrue's second issue, according to Theohairs, is that his "book provides many details of the various battlegrounds of the northern struggle but does not always take enough time to step back and consider the wider canvas" (Theohairs 4). Sugrue glances over the northern political powers hiding behind the claim of "this is not the South," all the while preventing the ability for blacks to receive the same equality as whites in the north (Theohairs 4). Rather than outwardly blocking the African American community, the northern white community looked to block them politically. One could argue that blocking a group or individual through politics is a form of outward blocking, yet as mentioned, government officials used legal means to demote the African American

community. These included how zoning areas for school lines or voting districts were drafted, the categorization of housing values, and the implementation of welfare programs to keep people of lower wealth in an unbreakable cycle. These were all political and legal tactics that were not reviewed in the court system until years after the fight for civil rights.

Additionally, northern white communities continually denied the requests of the African American community but claimed not to understand why they were met with “rising militancy and urban uprisings in mid-1960s—all while willfully forgetting decades of civil rights struggles in their own cities that had produced negligible change” (Theohairs 4). Even though Sugrue’s work intends to bring to light the racism in America as a whole and demonstrate this by showcasing the racist tactics used in the north, he brushes over *how* racism in the north was able to take hold so thoroughly. Further, he argues that “racial liberalism did bequeath to suburban whites a new language of color blindness that allowed them—despite the long history of deliberate racial exclusion in housing—to claim that they had overcome their racist past and to profess their innocence.” Despite this, he still does not explain how racial liberalism was able to happen and develop fully (Sugrue 248). Nevertheless, Sugrue’s work should still be respected for its helpful scope in exploring nationwide racism in the Civil Rights Movement.

This thesis adds to the scholarly conversation by blending different approaches to the Civil Rights Movement. For example, when reviewing the life of Jemison and his relationship with the Civil Rights Movement, the current research did not start at the beginning of the bus boycott but rather with Jemison’s family background. I first try to understand his family’s lineage, what roles in the community his family held, and what

ideas were being shared at home. Examining Jemison's family allows the ability to see a connection to religious legacies. Understanding his connection to religious legacies prompted new questions about why most civil rights leaders were men of the cloth, and why a higher percentage of black families deemed middle class had a connection to religious legacies than those from manually intensive jobs. These questions led the research to various discoveries in economics and education. Reviewing the testimonies of people like Jemison, Parks, White, and others from the mid-1950s to the 1960s and how they spoke about their community or church offered deeper insights into the factors that created strong bonds within communities. Further, the socio-cultural and hermeneutic approach uncovered the strong sense of social capital within the community. Religion was not just a tool for worship but for unifying the community. It allowed the men of the cloth to spread the word of equality, to have various outlets within the community from which to seek physical or financial support and allowed them a direct connection to the community. This connection was unmoored from white influence, allowed them to understand everyone's strengths, and how to use those strengths in the fight for equality. Religious legacies in the south were more than just a connection to God and were the branches of life into the community.

Scholars like Vaughn Booker, who received his Ph.D. in Religion from Princeton, with a Certificate in African American Studies, and Reverend Dennis Dickerson, Professor of History at Vanderbilt University, argue that for a scholar's work not to be skewed by modern ideas, they must use sources that originated from a specific era. However, research undertaken outside the time of the bus boycott has allowed for a broader insight into the inspirations behind civil rights leaders like Jemison. The

discovery of race migrations into Atlanta in the 1970s led to discoveries about liberal racism in the north. Thus, data collected for this thesis was not limited to one era, but ranges from the 1920s to the 1970s. To prevent the data from becoming skewed, information was collected from different geographical locations, schools of thought, age groups, and both black and white community members present at the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott. Additionally, biographies, letters, and recordings from national and local activists in the Civil Rights Movement were used. By exploring the different social structures of African Americans in respect to the social structures of the white communities, this thesis hopes to demonstrate why someone from Jemison's background could do more in the civil rights arena due to financial security than a worker who relied on job security from a white-owned company. This thesis will also focus on Jemison's childhood, economic status from childhood into adulthood, the role religion played in his development, and even his choice of higher education degrees.

To overcome the obstacle of only focusing on notable figures, this study incorporates interviews about the Baton Rouge Boycott conducted during and after the civil rights era. The perspectives of civil rights activists who were never in the spotlight are included. Examining how they felt as everything unfolded fills gaps previously unobserved by scholars, on a topic often studied by looking just at dates and timelines. The objective of this thesis is to demonstrate how someone like Jemison was able to bridge the gap between the white and black communities and pave the road for future activists. He was able to do this not just from the benefits he gained from his religious role but also from those he gained from the people who came before him, from his economic background, and his higher education.

Chapter III: Methodologies

The first step toward gaining a broader understanding of this topic was to ask the right research questions. The questions presented in this thesis sought to understand what the predominant shared influences on Civil Rights Movement activists were. The central questions that emerged were:

- How did the ideas and notions advance from the great leaders from the 1920s and 1930s influence civil rights activists in the 1950s and 1960s?
- How were they able to unify the African American community, not just in one town but across a nation?

This thesis focuses on observing and researching shared connections, the testimonies of overlooked individuals, and the importance of ideologies from the 1920s and 1930s. It asks from where the leaders of the 1950s and 1960s got inspiration, what knowledge they gained through higher education, how their economic status helped or hurt the overall objectives of the movement, and most importantly, what central ideas or goals brought it all together. Exploring the life and history of Jemison through the lens of these central questions and applying those discoveries to his work in the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott led to the discovery that he revolutionized the Civil Rights Movement.

Religious Legacies

The first step in discovering where Jemison drew his inspiration from is to understand what influenced him in life. This thesis limits the qualities of what defines an individual to family, history, and culture. A person's family helps dictate their thoughts, beliefs, actions, and career. The research method used in this study blended life histories and

autobiographies with historical research to gather information on Jemison's family and the history of the African American community. The research began with the following questions:

- What was the role of Jemison's father, David V. Jemison, in the family and the community?
- What did his father do, if anything, to leave a mark within the community or on Jemison himself?

Research into Jemison's family history revealed that his father was also a Baptist Pastor and an earlier civil rights leader during the 1930s and 1940s. His father was the child of a former slave who earned his freedom and purchased what had once been a plantation on which to raise his family. The insight that his father had an intimate understanding of life during and post-slavery is key because it explains his deeply held convictions on the worth of human life.

Learning about the elder Jemison's career as a minister leads to a new set of questions about how his involvement with the community influenced the younger Jemison and what his father did for the community. Was his father simply a leader of the church, or was he involved in earlier attempts for equality in the African American community? To answer these questions, this study reviewed quotations, interviews, and journal passages left by those close to Jemison Sr., members of his community, and strangers who only knew of him through his public outreach. It was revealed that elder Jemison was involved in the earlier fight for equality. One event he is most remembered for was standing in front of a judge to demand equality for African Americans from the police in 1921. Jemison Sr. stated he understood that crime was bad, but the force used

by a white officer toward an African American did not match the crime. Jemison Sr.'s close relationship with slavery influenced his personal beliefs on the value of human life, equality for humankind, and the necessity of living a fair and just life. Some key influences can be examined in the actions and words of Jemison. For example, when asked about the bus boycott Jemison would always state at the time that they were simply looking for the same rights as the white community. At first glance one may assume he meant the end of segregation. However, he just meant for black and white people to have the same legal rights when riding the bus: that black and white passengers could still be seated separately, but that black passengers should at least have the right to sit down in an empty seat they were paying for.

By gaining a strong understanding of the influences Jemison gained from his father, we must also consider how historical events influenced young Jemison's life and his community. Aside from preaching, what role did a religious leader during Jemison Sr.'s time play in the African American community? How did this role evolve? The research within this thesis focuses on the period from the end of slavery in 1865 to the end of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1970s. Broadening the scope to review scholarship on these years allowed for a broader understanding of how the pastor's role evolved, and why. The end of the Civil Rights Movement is considered in this thesis to be the federal legal equality the African American community received by the 1970s. However, this time indicates the beginning of moral equality, as the community is still fighting for this today. Broadening the geographical circle not only highlighted racial differences in the north compared to the south but also broadened the understanding of the role of the religious leader. Additionally, to prevent bias, all quotations, testimonies,

interviews, and scholarly works were taken from different biographies, such as those of Theodore Jemison, David Jemison, King, Ella Baker, and Hiram Revels. It used information from different age groups, periods, economic statuses, trades, demographics, and locations. A key discovery was how histories of race relations between the African American and white communities differed based on whether they were written from a northern or southern viewpoint. Authors such as Professor Tracy K'Meyer (University of Louisville and Co-Director of the Oral History Center and Lang Clarence Susan Welch Dean of the College of the Liberal Arts and Professor of African American Studies at Penn State) bring to light what scholars often overlook: racial discrimination in the north and west, respectively.

Due to racial prejudices, white pre-civil rights historians wrote the history of the African American community in a derogatory manner. An example of a biased history of the African American community can be seen in the works of historian Noah Webster. He is noted to have said that “wooly haired Africans” have “no history, & there can be none” to abolitionist leader Amos G. Beman (Yacovone 1). A lack of respect for the African American community was still present in textbooks as recently as the 1970s. The scholars of the National Museum of African American History and Culture maintain that there is still a lack of respect in the education and preservation of African American history (Solly 1). An example is the lack of time and attention placed on the Tulsa, Oklahoma killings on Black Wall Street, and the lack of emphasis placed on Juneteenth in the American schools' system. Further, prejudiced white authors viewed certain practices and beliefs of the African American community as devil worship or as the actions of a lesser species. With no understanding of where these practices came from or

the importance they held within larger African American culture, these earlier white authors automatically and incorrectly viewed African Americans in terms that best fit their prejudiced worldviews.

Religious leaders were often, during enslavement, the only individuals in communities who could read and write; they took it upon themselves to write out the evolved practices, beliefs, and cultures of their communities for future generations. They dictated their histories, pieces of themselves, which would be passed down to the next generation. Viewing their role in relation to non-religious contexts leads to a broader understanding of these leaders' position within communities and how they perceived their communities' history and culture. Their role as protectors of the community led to the creation of an internal brotherhood, whose original sole objective—beyond spreading the gospel—was to protect their heritage from being erased.

Jemison's role evolved and he became a shield of protection between the white and black communities. Using ethnographic and cultural studies methodologies allowed for an understanding of how African American culture itself influenced Jemison and the community. Ethnographic research allows the inclusion of further cultural and social viewpoints when analyzing people, events, or ways of life. In this study, the ethnographic research method allowed for discovery of the importance of tradition, history, and the understanding of a united African American community. Conversely, a cultural studies approach assumes "that economic or political dimensions of human experience cannot be accurately understood without understanding the religious and other ideological influences that shape the cultural context out of which particular political or economic actions and motivations arise" (Moore 5). Religion should be viewed as a "constant

ideological factor” in a person’s social or political life (Moore 5). Religion is more than just a spiritual connection to a deity but can be a strong influence in a person or a community. Whether a person chooses to believe in a religion or not, it can still control their daily lives. To assume that religion should be viewed just as a style of worship is incorrect.

That is why I focused on the influences of religious legacies in this thesis. By doing so, my findings demonstrated the historical roles of religious men within the African American community that were outside of preaching the word of God. These religious leaders played the role of community historians, lawyers, doctors, and spoke out against the white community when nobody else did. Religious leaders’ actions and ideologies shaped the minds of future generations. Yet, in using a cultural studies approach, it is important not to apply findings or interpretations to the broader population. Cultural studies consider the social or historical actions in the context of that community, region, or era. An example of how this approach can assist in understanding the role of religion in a community is when viewing the history of Islam. The role of Islam or the faith of Islam is not the same in every location, partly due to how the religion was brought to that region. The Islam of the Middle East should not be viewed as the same Islam of Africa or Asia. Nor should every Muslim or form of the Islamic faith in one country be considered the same. Religion is an evolving ideology that constantly changes based on the practices and beliefs of the community. These beliefs can be altered by rulers, weather, trade routes, or visits from a marabout.

In the context of the 1950s and 1960s it is impossible to make broad claims about the Christian faith in America. For example, a study by John Fenton and Kenneth Vines

on the relationship of black voter registration and Catholicism in the Bicentennial Series *The American Experience in Louisiana* discovered that the location of the town or city in Louisiana determined the mindset of the church regarding segregation and black civil rights. Additionally, the mindset of the church or the denomination of the church in these areas also affected voter registration and a town's behavior toward the African American community.

Fenton and Vines blended quantitative and cultural studies approaches. This methodology allowed for insight into how local ideologies and practices can affect not just race relations but legal or political rights, too. One of the discoveries was that the number of registered and active voters was based on the community's predominant religion. Fenton and Vines stated that one of the reasons for their findings was differences in the characteristics of the Catholic and Protestant churches, "emphasizing the fact that the Protestant churches are national in origin and tend to be exclusive in character, whereas the Catholic Church is more universal in both its background orientation," which resulted in a higher voter registration of blacks in predominantly Catholic communities in Louisiana (Vincent 225). This essentially states that due to black Catholics receiving a similar ethical treatment from the church to white Catholics, they were better suited to voting than their Protestant counterparts. A counterargument can be made to this. Fenton and Vines agree that if the area were controlled more by a plantation economy, it would overshadow the discovery that a town's predominant faith controls the number of registered black voters (257). Meaning, if the town was developed around a plantation economy, no matter the faith, there were automatically fewer registered voters

in the area, mainly due to higher levels of racism in the local government and police force, which would not allow black people the legal right to register or vote.

An examination of the effects of family, history, and culture answered the overarching question of this thesis, which was: In what ways did Jemison's actions inspire the later breakthroughs of the Civil Rights Movement, as spearheaded by King? As briefly discussed, religious legacies showed that religious leaders held a strong role in the evolution of the spiritual message to the community during the Civil Rights Movement. Often, the church is viewed as the center of the community. However, I argue that it is not the church but rather the leader of the church that is the center of community. Clarence Taylor describes the role of religious leaders as helping "instill cooperative values in nonclerical leaders, emphasizing democracy, equality and caring for others" (African American Religious Leadership 2). These leaders steered their communities into action rather than using a passive approach to equality. They used the tools and knowledge passed down from previous religious leaders to break barriers in their own communities, whether using the words of Mays to guide them on how to alter the message of equality from a religious right to a human right, or invoking Gandhi on how to call upon the community to stand together for peaceful protest, or building common ground on the idea of equality through unity. Religious legacies are more than just a line of religious leaders through history; they are a direct line into the past, into the community, and inspiration for the future.

Economics

The idea of using economics as a parameter was decided prior to the research. However, how this parameter would be used or its relationship to the Civil Rights Movement was

still unknown. The first questions asked to understand the relationship between the two regarded the role of economics, whether or not economics altered the outcomes, and whether economics' role evolved to become more than just a financial aspect. To answer these questions, we started with trying to understand who led the Civil Rights Movement. Historical research was reviewed and the leaders of each organization and the protests of the 1950s and 1960s were charted.

It was found that the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement all belonged to the middle to upper African American classes. This insight further revealed that the similarities between all key leaders led back to economics, in that each had economic security from an early age. None had to worry about financial security as their jobs and livelihoods were not controlled by a white employer. If they participated in or led a protest, they would not have been affected from a financial perspective due to backlash stemming from their actions. However, this does not mean they had physical or emotional protection from the actions of the white community, only that they would not lose their homes or have their credit ruined, unlike their less-wealthy counterparts. Given their financial status, these leaders clearly felt they had a larger obligation. Reading the testimony of religious civil rights leaders, including Jemison, indicated how these civil rights leaders picked certain people from the community to perform certain tasks during a protest, and why. Their economic security created an ideology of moral obligation to their community, as they could stand in the front lines and not worry about financial repercussions on their families. These men already felt their first role was to protect and

guide their community, and their economic security gave them a way to lessen the fear of financial loss away from their community.

The discovery of the moral role economics played during the Civil Rights Movement also suggested a role for the church outside a religious frame. The vast majority of activists were religious leaders, and the church allowed them access to important resources, such as the unlimited trust of their communities, which allowed them to spread their message and evolve the narrative altogether. In certain cases, their roles within the church gained them a level of respectability from the white community. However, it is important to understand that a person's status or role within the church did not guarantee them physical or mental protection from the white community. There are cases of pastors being pulled from their churches and beaten by the police that supposedly swore an oath to protect them. The key to this discovery was the understanding of how the church served more as a tool or resource for the movement, rather than as the center of the movement, as suggested by scholars like David Chappell in *A Stone of Hope*.

Ironically, reviewing the economic divide allowed for the discovery of the internal divide in the African American community itself. The divide is represented in three parts. First, the economic security of those who led the Civil Rights Movement meant they would be among the first to benefit from the new rights. Second, the roles they already held in the community granted them more opportunities for economic growth, which led to the ability to seek higher education from more advanced universities, the ability to move into areas that had promising growth in their fields, and

allowed them to relocate to new neighborhoods, which brought further benefits such as better schooling for their children.

Uncovering the role of economics and economic status within the larger Civil Rights Movement shows the deeper role of not just economics but of the leaders themselves. It demonstrates the moral obligation felt by the middle and upper-class community leaders, which led to them placing themselves on the frontlines. Applying these discoveries to the events of the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott allows a deeper understanding of why and how Jemison was so successful in the boycott. Chapter 4 discusses why he chose certain members of the community for certain roles and demonstrates how to use the framework above to understand the necessity of his actions.

Education

For years, scholars have studied the role of education as it relates to the Civil Rights Movement. However, this parameter has usually been viewed through the lens of desegregation and how the fight for desegregation created its own inspiration. Further consideration of the connection between education and the Civil Rights Movement will enable us to understand the role education played outside of ending segregation in schools, and if it did play a role, what that was. It became clear through reading the testimonies of leaders such as Jemison that they finalized their ideas about how to fight for equality during their higher education. For example, Jemison earned his first degree from Alabama State University in 1940, a Bachelor of Science. He later earned a Bachelor of Divinity from Virginia Union University in 1945, and then a Masters in Psychology from New York University (graduation year unknown). Education allowed African American leaders to gain knowledge and insight not just from their own leaders

but from the great leaders of the world. It allowed them a place to explore and grow to understand the thoughts, ideas, actions, and events of some of history's greatest philosophers.

This leads to the question of how these future leaders could learn about fighting for rights while attending institutions whose leaders publicly disagreed with the protests. Histories of colleges and universities during the Civil Rights Movement often focus on the actions of the students themselves or mention the disapproval of their presidents or deans over the protests. More often than not, leaders of higher educational institutions viewed protests as civil disobedience and thought they would create more issues for the college.

Understanding the disconnection between the actions of students and the words of the leaders of higher education requires extensive research into the pedagogy of the colleges and universities. Ironically, what was being publicly stated was not the same as what was being stated in the classroom. Each piece of knowledge taught to these young people allowed them the ability to shape their own ideas about how to fight for equality. It showed them the successes and failures of the past, not just of the African American community but of the larger world as well. In this way, armed with empowering ideas, leaders like Jemison were able first to understand that the narrative and location of the fight for equality had to change. They also believed that this change had to be done from a peaceful standpoint, inspired by Gandhi, and that more battles were won through peace than through fighting. Jemison's alma mater, Virginia Union University, instilled in its students' principles of equality and justice from its location at the heart of the Confederacy. Jemison was not the only activist to walk the halls of this university:

Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker and the Richmond 34 also attended. The ideas and thoughts gained at university had to be combined with knowledge from religious legacies to succeed within the larger African American community.

Social Capital

The final piece of the puzzle that reveals how Jemison and other civil rights leaders were so successful emerged from two themes that appeared via each of the parameters above. First, the notion of human worth, self-worth, morality, and obligation appeared throughout the themes of religious legacies, economics, and education. The second common notion was the need for unity and the idea that everyone was needed to win the fight. “Social capital” refers to coming together as a community to achieve a goal, benefit, or objective. The key to its success is understanding and promoting the idea that everyone is needed, everyone’s role is equally important, and that everyone must bring their unique abilities together to achieve the final outcome. Jemison’s father instilled in him the belief that every person was equal no matter their race, gender, or economic status. Every person deserved to live their lives safely without being harmed, to have a safe place to raise their family, and to feel protected by their community.

Through his higher education, Jemison learned to push the foundation of his father’s ideas further and to blend them with the ideas of peaceful leaders such as Gandhi. As a result, Jemison understood that he needed to express and use social capital in his community’s fight for equality. Examples can be seen in how he deployed each individual to a task that would create the most impact toward the overall objective, and how he made sure that everyone knew their role was equally important. His community had faced enough mental, physical, and verbal abuse from the outside world; the last

thing they needed was to diminish each other. David Goldfield stated that “in the era of white supremacy, all blacks had shared segregation and the demanding etiquette of southern race relations; the virtual demise of those constraints broke the bond of suffering uniting all blacks, whatever their socioeconomic differences” (221). Even though there were economic differences between the middle and lower-class black communities, reverends such as Jemison used the church to build bridges between them. He did so by giving the community something to stand for together that affected all of them equally. By presenting a solid united force to the white community, they demonstrated that they had humanity, morality, and self-worth, and could rise above the abuse and not let it create fissures within their own community. Instead, they used it as glue to strengthen their bond and give them ammunition in their fight for equality.

Understanding how and why Jemison succeeded in laying this foundation of equality within his own community through acts of kindness, trust, and preaching the concept of self-worth was the final piece in the puzzle of fully understanding how Jemison was able to orchestrate the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott and create a road map for future leaders. Jemison adhered to the wisdom of great leaders and combined this with the notion of self-worth to fight for equality for his community.

Conclusion

Looking at the parameters of religious legacies, education, economics, and social capital helps reveal the elements that define and shape a person. How does one’s economic status alter their perspective of their role in the community? Jemison’s knowledge about the leaders of the past helped him create a philosophy built on community and self-worth, which leads to a greater understanding of the Civil Rights Movement. It demonstrates a

brotherhood of connections and histories shared through religious legacies. Those religious legacies not only passed down the knowledge of the past but also provided the ability to create opportunities that benefited the overall movement. Understanding the role of economics shows how economic security created more than just financial stability; it also created a moral ideology and belief among religious civil rights leaders that they should protect their communities. Scholarship must move beyond the scope of just religion or politics in regards to the Civil Rights Movement. Adopting other research methodologies uncovered a new understanding of the Civil Rights Movement. This view demonstrated the need for further exploration of the relationship between higher education and inspiration. The very topic of morality that the narrative of the fight needed to shift toward was the notion that held the community together. These parameters will help demonstrate the power of community and will answer the question of how the Civil Rights Movement was so successful by following the story of Jemison and his Baton Rouge Bus Boycott.

Chapter IV: Findings and Discoveries

When scholars and historians discuss the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, they often first recall the following dates, events, and people. On March 19th, 1941, the U.S. War Department established the 99th Pursuit Squadron, better known as the Tuskegee Airmen. Seven years later, on July 26th, 1948, President Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9981, ending segregation in the Armed Services. On May 17th, 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of *Brown v. Board of Education*, which legally mandated the end of racial segregation in public schools. The following year, on December 1st, 1955, Parks refused to give up her seat, leading to the year-long Montgomery Bus Boycott. Often, popular opinion or casual historical analysis states that the Civil Rights Movement started with King and the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

However, this narrative overshadows one event usually unknown outside of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, that was key to the success of the Civil Rights Movement: The Baton Rouge Bus Boycott. This not only provided vital information, as King noted, but was the first successful demonstration of how powerful the African American community could be in the south. However, even more important than the bus boycott itself was the man behind it, Jemison. Understanding what shaped Jemison into the man who led the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott not only shows *how* he was successful but also the bond that existed between civil rights leaders.

This thesis hypothesizes that by understanding a civil rights leader's religious legacy, economic status, education, and social capital, scholars can not only demonstrate the magnitude of Jemison's success but also gain deeper insight into the successes of other religious civil rights leaders. To fully understand how this process works, this thesis

applies the parameters above to Jemison and his work during the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott. This research reveals that Jemison was not only one of the early forefathers of the Civil Rights Movement, but that his actions and philosophy created a road map for future civil rights leaders such as King. Within this chapter I will analyze the discoveries of the influence of family, religious members, the connections between economics and activist, the role of higher education in shaping the minds of future activist and the role of social capital within the community. The section on religious legacy will discuss Jemison's father's influence on him and key connections between the two in their words and actions. Additionally, I will discuss the role of a religious leader within the community through the history of the African American community, and how this role evolved over time and assisted leaders like Jemison during the Civil Rights Movement. In the section on economics, I will discuss the implications of financial status and security on who led the Civil Rights Movement, and how economics played a role in how leaders determined ways for people to help. I will reference examples of the relationship between economics, Jemison, King, and the bus boycotts in both Baton Rouge and Montgomery. The education section will focus less on the role of segregation and more on the pedagogy being taught in higher education, such as the philosophy, ideas, and practices being shared with future civil rights leaders. Additionally, the combined section on economics and education will examine the negative outcomes of the relationship between the two during and post-Civil Rights Movement. The social capital section will address in what ways leaders like Jemison implemented their actions and how they rebuilt self-worth and respect into the African American communities.

Religious Legacy

Religious civil rights leaders were more than just political leaders or people who shared information on protests and calls for help. A religious civil rights leader was a person who held a role in the church—usually a leadership role such as a bishop, reverend, or pastor—and who used that role in the fight for equality. They did that by spreading information about protests, activism, and to call upon their congregation for assistance, financially and physically. Also, they used their role to alter the message of the fight for equality into a message of activism and morality: to no longer view equality as something that would happen by taking a silent stand but instead something that could only happen if a physical stance was taken, and evolving the message of equality from a civil right to a moral and basic human right. Whether as a civil rights leader or activist, religious leaders used their roles as a political stance in the fight for equality. They still called upon people from the community to assist, but their calls to action would often differ in message. An interesting comparison is to review the actions of King and the original Black Panthers. One took a peaceful stance for equality while the other took a more militant stance.

When many people think of legacy, they consider it to be something being passed down. When referring to an individual's legacy, we are often referring to things the person did while they were alive, including the places they visited, their goals, successes, and failures. Religious legacies are comprised of two parts: the first is the role of a religious leader who shares the ideas, actions, and beliefs of earlier religious leaders. The second relates to who the religious leaders share the information with, a new generation of religious leaders. Leaders like Jemison came from a line of religious leaders whose role was to protect the community both physically and spiritually. The line of religious

legacy is not a blood connection but rather a spiritual one. Some members of the cloth joined the church due to their close connection with their spiritual leaders rather than follow in their family members' footsteps. When discussing religious legacy, the concept should not be confined to the legacy of a particular African American religion or one individual of a certain faith or denomination. Rather, it refers to a person who held a religious role in the community who shared the values and cultures of that community from one generation of religious leaders to the next. Examples of traditions in the African American community passed down from generation to generation are dancing, the facing of the church door, items of spiritual blessing, and speaking in tongues. These practices can be linked to cultural roots in Africa and are connected with tribal or Islamic traditions based on a family's lineage.

Jemison described the role of the leader of the African American church most poetically as the guidepost that shows people how to regain their humanity, their hope, their dignity during the conference *The Disadvantaged Among the Disadvantaged* in 1987.¹ Religious leaders were the people who saved the history of the African American community when scholars only wrote of them as despairing and unworthy. Jemison noted that the history of the "black pastor of the early Afro-American church was everything to everyone in the black community. Many times, he was the doctor, the lawyer, the teacher, and the preacher" (Thiemann 26). Yet, their roles and connections within the community often went unrecognized during the 1950s and 1960s because they were frequently forced into the same narratives that only provide a narrow view of one of the most transformative periods of American history. Moving beyond the lenses of religion and

¹ Full conference title: *The Disadvantaged Among the Disadvantaged: Responsibility of the Black Church's to the Underclass at Harvard Divinity School*.

politics permits an exploration of the connections, shared history, and family lineages from which people like Jemison drew their inspiration.

Using the parameters of religious legacy allows for insights into the deeper connections among civil rights leaders, their communities, and outside forces. A person with a religious legacy or who is connected to one should not simply be seen as a religious person or just a Christian. The idea of legacy shows how their shared bonds with one another not only allowed for thoughts and ideas to pass from one person to another and from generation to generation, but also allowed for a shared meaningful history within the African American community. As Paul Harvey stated, “African Americans had to create their history and historiography within a context of American history writing that ignored, patronized, or demonized Negroes” (121). The African American community relied on their leaders to leave behind their history, culture, and beliefs for future generations. Scholars like Gayraud Wilmore also argue that without “Black pride and power, Black nationalism and Pan-Africanism have had no past without the Black church and Black religion,” and that the leaders of the church kept the spirit of hope alive within the community (3), whether through passing down knowledge from generation to generation or via words of encouragement in the fight for equality. Church leaders were a central component of African American religious culture, which is why this thesis argues that the Civil Rights Movement should be viewed outside of just the framework of politics or religion. However, when it is viewed through the framework of religion, it should be viewed as more than just religious leaders leading the community.

The largest religious influence on Jemison came from his own father, Reverend David V. Jemison. Jemison Sr.’s own father was a slave; however, he bought the

plantation where he had once worked (Fallin 177). Doing so allowed David Jemison to attend Selma University and graduate in 1905 with a Bachelor of Divinity degree.

Reverend Jemison Sr. served as the President of the National Baptist Convention from 1941–1952 and served as the President of the Alabama Baptist Convention for nearly forty years. Whether Jemison Sr. was speaking to civil rights groups or to his congregation during Sunday morning services, his message never changed: everyone deserved the right to fairness and justice. In 1921, Jemison Sr. addressed the courts to demand fairness. “He made it clear that he opposed crime, but he asserted that ‘black crime was exaggerated because of the injustices in courts.’ Blacks did not receive fair trials, and that fact accounted for their disproportionate numbers in penal institutions” (Fallin 168). It is important to note the elder Jemison’s word choices: African Americans deserved fairness and justice, and upon further investigation, common stereotypical views of blacks would be quickly dismissed with hard evidence of abuse from the legal system. His son would later go in front of the mayor of Baton Rouge to present his case in much the same manner.

Another parallel between the actions of father and son can be found in their words to their communities. During one of David Jemison’s speeches at an Alabama Baptist Convention meeting, he urged blacks “to stand still, stand prepared, provoke no riot, just let God do his work. He may permit a few riots in order to force the Negroes closer together. Riots do not mean that we shall be defeated if we trust him. Let us learn the lesson He is teaching us. God’s lesson was that through faith and patience, victory over racism would come” (Fallin 169). His son put forth this same narrative when he encouraged his community to stay home in the days leading up to the boycott and during

the protest. The reason he did so was the tense race relations that followed the bus driver's termination. He also asked all African Americans who owned bars and restaurants to close their doors during the protest to help prevent unlawful arrests or fights, and he asked for his people to remain calm if they were arrested, as he would not be far behind to help them (Vincent, Fenton & Vines 445).

When Jemison followed and promoted his father's belief that peace would go further than force, he gained the respect of not just the Baton Rouge police force but the mayor as well. Jemison stated: "I didn't have the deep-seated problems with others, having been on this side or that side. I was a middle-of-the-road man" (Morris 21). Jemison referred to himself as a newcomer due to the lack of prejudice he felt about certain matters that had taken place prior to 1949 when he moved to Baton Rouge. By the time the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott took place Jemison had only lived in Baton Rouge for four years. An example of the cooperative relationship between Jemison and the police chief was when the police unlawfully arrested a bodyguard of Jemison's during a large meeting at McKinley High School. In the days leading up to and during the protest, there was a massive increase in threats and cross burnings in Baton Rouge, leading to the presence of bodyguards. Three crosses were burned in Jemison's front yard during the protests. Jemison, "upon learning of the arrest after the meeting, immediately contact[ed] the Chief of Police Wingate White, who personally instructed the desk sergeant to release the bodyguard, thereby avoiding a possible incident" (Sinclair 356). Jemison was able to de-escalate the issue without anyone facing life-threatening punishment from the police or the Ku Klux Klan.

Jemison used his status as a newcomer to build bridges within the white community, as well as to change the narrative of the church. He avoided promoting a message of force and shifted the church's dogma "away from eternal salvation and toward attaining justice in this life," allowing for the narrative of the Civil Rights Movement to evolve (Jelks 830). By changing the narrative, he was able to demonstrate to the community his realization that the issue of segregation and racism was no longer a legal question, or one "of biblical provenance of their taboos and traditions" in white churches (Jelks 831). Rather, it was a fight that for many white southerners involved a great deal of soul-searching. Without the fight being taken out of the courtrooms and placed in communities, the narrative would not have experienced the shift it needed from both parties. The problem would not have been humanized in the white community, nor would acceptance between civil rights leaders and legal authorities have been able to grow. Jemison's father passed down a religious legacy that favored a path of peace over conflict. Jemison's actions reflected his father's influences, whether in the courtroom requesting seats for the African Americans on the bus, stepping between a person in his community and the police, or taking out full-length ads in the newspaper to seek justice for a black father and mother along with their children. Jemison became aware that a black man and woman, along with their nine children, were living in a 14-by-14-foot room. Jemison called upon the community to pool resources to purchase the family an adequate living space. Several members of the white community made the remark that "people just don't do what he did" (Morris 20). To combat statements such as these and maintain the reputation of himself and those who assisted him, he had the deed to the house placed on the front cover of the local newspaper. No other words were written with

the deed. Incidents like these allowed for Jemison to gain the respect and confidence of the African American community. It proved to them that he was not going to back down to the white community when pressured; rather, he would stand his ground and protect them no matter the cost.

By moving the fight into downtown Baton Rouge in a peaceful way, Jemison gave a face to the protestors. He showed the upper-class white community a new side of segregation and its effects. In one instance, in the summer of 1956, a group of white visitors to the French Quarter asked a young African American boy to polish their shoes. The young man set to work immediately, and witnesses say everyone seemed to be in a good mood, including the boy. However, this changed when “a decrepit, bloated face bleary-eyed policeman pounced upon the boy, calling him ‘black bastard’ and using vile profanity” (Haas 360). The young man tried to explain to the officer that this was his profession and that the visitors had asked him to polish their shoes. Instead of listening, the officer took the boy’s shoeshine box from him. When the visitors tried to put themselves between the officer and the boy, “the wild-eyed patrolman told them gruffly to keep out of it” (Haas 360). The officer took possession of the box and dumped its contents across the center of Charles Street, and “proceeded to kick furiously at the articles until after twenty kicks; he had sent them all down the sewer” (Haas 360). Prior to Jemison coming to Baton Rouge, locals stated that the crowd would likely have moved on; however, after Jemison’s presence, the locals became more aware of the abuse the African American community faced. Further showing what great strides race relations had made were the actions of a white female, Armand St. Martin. Instead of simply telling the officer at the time how barbaric his behavior was, she went directly to Mayor

DeLesseps Morrison's office to demand the officer be removed from the police force.

Although she was not successful, this story shows that peaceful protest in the community brought awareness of the need to reevaluate race relations in Baton Rouge.

Tara Wicker, present day Councilwoman from the East Baton Rouge Parish Metro, stated that Jemison "was a trailblazer and he was a man that left a mark on our history and really taught many of us as young African Americans the importance of being able to stand up for what you believe in" (Wallace 1). Further, Jemison "integrated into community activities and belonged to a number of organizations. As a minister, he was clearly connected to the black masses and the black clergy network that stretched across Baton Rouge" (Morris 21). Some groups Jemison was involved in were the Baton Rouge Community Group and the NAACP, on which he had served as President prior to moving to Baton Rouge. Jemison built a strong network of connections throughout Baton Rouge that allowed him access to resources through which to fight inequality.

Jemison used his religious role as a protective barrier for his people. He was able "to inspire, to preach, to convey the idea that this is a righteous, God-ordained struggle [that] also conveyed a kind of respectability on the protest that afforded a great degree of respect by [the] white [community]" (Melton 14). Jemison's work demonstrated the many roles a pastor in the African American church held during the Civil Rights Movement. By learning from his father's own actions, words, ideas, and practices, Jemison continued to evolve the role of a religious civil rights leader. It had been ingrained in him by his father that the fight for civil rights should be led by the church. An example of his father's own work was in his fight to end the illegal arrest of African Americans and the unjust sentencing they received. The idea that an active but peaceful

fight for rights should be led by the church was passed down from Jemison to future civil rights leaders, showing the strong bond of brotherhood behind religious legacies.

Jemison argued that the church itself was not the center of the fight; the man behind the Bible was at the center: “Historically, the Afro-American church has always been the hope and aspiration of the black community,” but this came from the pastor (Thiemann 26). Thiemann notes that “the black pastor of the early Afro-American church was everything to the black community” (26). The success of these men was based on their own interpersonal connections with each other. Their ability to connect people to the past, present, or hoped-for future came from calling on the words of those who came before them, following paths that led to victory while blending them with the necessities of success in their times. Jemison argued that “the Afro-American churches must serve as a guidepost in directing our people to who is best for us and who will answer more adequately our needs” (Thiemann 27). However, the pastor served as more than a guidepost for the community; he also became a guidepost for future civil rights leaders. The religious leaders of the past, sharing their legacies with future generations, created a brotherhood, a support system that young civil rights leaders could call upon for guidance.

One of Jemison’s first steps in creating a road map for future generations was to apply his father’s legacy to his own fight for justice. His next step in inspiring the Civil Rights Movement was to pass on his own religious legacy to King. On December 8, 1955, during the first negotiation meeting with the city commission, Police Commissioner Sellers informed King, in passing, that there was about to be a new law passed that “limited the taxis to a minimum fare” (King & Carson 60). Due to the law,

King struggled to keep the Montgomery Bus Boycott alive. The new city restrictions on African American taxi companies required them to charge passengers the same amount regardless of race, gender, or whether they supported the protest. This created a financial struggle for the African American community and the movement itself. Knowing his “dear friend” Jemison had already been where he was now, King reached out for advice on how to move forward with the movement. King stated that “Jemison and his associates had set up an effective private carpool, I put in a long-distance call to ask him for suggestions for a similar pool in Montgomery” (King & Carson 61). This once again shows the unity of brotherhood stemming from religious legacies assisting civil rights leaders. In his autobiographical account of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, *Stride Towards Freedom*, King describes Jemison’s help as “invaluable” to the Montgomery Bus Boycott (King & Carson 61). King further said that without Jemison’s “painstaking description of the Baton Rouge experience” as fuel to continue the Montgomery Bus Boycott, it would not have been able to succeed (King & Carson 61). Given Jemison and King’s religious roles, it is not surprising their paths crossed. Their shared religious legacy included not only generations of knowledge passed down from leader to leader, but also a strong brotherhood that could assist each man when needed. Their friendship and shared desire for equality would eventually lead the men to work together to find the Negro Leaders Conference on Nonviolent Integration, later renamed the Southern Negro Leaders Conference, on February 15, 1957, in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Economics

Religious legacy was not the sole factor assisting Jemison’s success in Baton Rouge. Economics played a variety of roles in determining who the leaders would be, too.

During the Civil Rights Movement, churches served as centralized meeting places for planning protests. However, the church became a centralized location because of who was leading the Civil Rights Movement. Scholars often discuss the Civil Rights Movement within the framework of religion, and there is usually assumed to be a spiritual or faith-based reason why the church was at the forefront. To say that a person's spiritual faith had no connection to their involvement would be incorrect, but there was a deeper meaning for why the church was involved, especially the church leaders. The key is to view civil rights through economics; not just economic status, but also what was gained or lost due to a person's wealth, class, or occupation. Focusing on economics in the case of Jemison shows the vast control economics had, including determining who would be the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement.

The most important role economics played in Jemison's life was job security. As religious leaders like Jemison were employed by their congregation, they did not have to worry about repercussions from their employers. Members of the working class or African Americans employed by the white community could face job loss, jail time, eviction, loss of livelihood, or loss of financial credit. Further, these religious leaders realized the power they held over both the white and black communities: "These activist ministers who became the leaders and symbols of the mass bus boycotts, controlled the resource-filled churches of the black masses, had economic independence and flexible schedules, were members of ministerial alliances that spoke the same spiritual and financial language whether in Brooklyn or Birmingham and who came to understand that there is power harnessed in an organized group" (Morris 87). These men could be the guidepost to their community, in the form of economic leadership and security.

Jemison himself benefited in many ways from his economic security during the boycott due to his role in the church. It gave him a necessary meeting space to plan the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott; it granted him access to the bodies required to notify the community of the boycott, as well as a phone line that riders could use to call to request rides. From his position, he was able to call for nightly meetings where an offering plate was passed around for donations to cover the gas for the cars driving people to and from work. Further, using his position to present a stable and strong front provided a sense of security to his community during a time of unease and unrest. The Baton Rouge Bus Boycott would not be the only time Jemison leveraged his role as a religious leader.

It is evident that Jemison shared more than just knowledge of the ride program with King. Jemison encouraged King to reach out to other religious leaders within the community. By working together, they would be able to increase their resources, both financially and physically. Jemison also directed King to reach out to his own community to find drivers during the boycott, and the first people he asked were fellow religious leaders (King & Carson 61). King pointed out that if anyone should risk the consequences of driving members of the community it should be the leaders, because they had the least to lose, unlike members of their congregations. Each of the pastors King asked for help received similar results when they asked the community to help, and the largest number of volunteers came from the ministers themselves. King stated in his book referenced earlier that Jemison's advice was "invaluable" in their fight for equality (King & Carson 61). He used the same tactics to call for volunteers to drive and had black-owned bars and restaurants serve as "dispatch and pick-up stations" for passengers (King & Carson 62). Asking those in the community who were economically secure to

take on the financial burden of being on the frontline protected those who already suffered the most. The community's involvement in arranging rides and coming together in solidarity not only encouraged a message of hope and humanity but also started to reinstall pride into the African American community.

Activists like King and Jemison stated that, in King's words, so "profoundly had the spirit of the protest become a part of the people's lives that sometimes they even preferred to walk when a ride was available" (King & Carson 63). The connections and influences of economics were discovered due to research into the influences of religious legacies on the black community before and during the Civil Rights Movement. It offered insight first into job security. However, more importantly, research on the benefits gained from a religious leader leading the Civil Rights Movement offered a new perspective on the role of the church and religion. For example, the discovery that it was not the church itself that was at the center of the community but the leaders of the church. Second, they were able to gain the trust of the community through their outreach efforts and community-service involvement. Without applying the factors of religious legacy to see how connections were made through religious legacies and economics, it would not have been possible to see the culture and social capital shared by the African American community. It was not just the preachers who spread the word of the Civil Rights Movement but the community itself who also built the message of hope and humanity back into their lives. By doing so, they were able to reunite people from a myriad of different working, educational, and social backgrounds who shared different beliefs and economic statuses once again under one roof. People saw how they, as individuals, could help in the overall fight, even just by driving a car or standing by the phone to schedule

drivers for riders. It allowed them to see their worth at a time when they were being told by the dominant white community that they had no worth.

Jemison described “the Afro-American church [as having the] grave responsibility to reaffirm the humanity of those who are denied personhood because they lack social, political, economic, or physical privilege” (Thiemann 26). While it is necessary to understand the role of the church within the Civil Rights Movement, it is just as important to understand what happens in non-religious areas, too. Changing the narrative shared within the church from the notion that we must accept the difficulties of life because happiness happens after death, to the idea that it is time to stand up and fight for equality as a basic human right, was necessary during the Civil Rights Movement. That change can be seen in Jemison’s words. His ability to make those changes stemmed from his religious legacies and economic security, but he also drew from his educational background and social capital.

Education

When scholars discuss education, they often focus on the fight to end segregation in the public-school system. However, during the 1930s and 1940s, higher education for African American leaders became vital in developing future roles in the African American community. Further, focusing on what they studied and who received education is particularly important. To date, there has been minimal historical study of the curriculum of African American colleges and universities. Scholars should pay more

attention to the historical impact of the curricula of African American colleges and universities during the Civil Rights Movement.

Higher education played a vital role in developing the actions of future civil rights leaders, even though most presidents of historically African American colleges and universities held “weak advocacy [in the fight for] racial equality,” to the point of threatening students with expulsion if caught protesting (Hutcheson 123). The curriculum at such institutions was based on educating “student[s] about possibilities for activism in civil rights” (Hutcheson 123). Additionally, the curriculum taught in colleges and universities did not differ significantly from university to university. Each of the leaders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference went to different colleges and universities, and each credited their institution for their knowledge on “the great black protest leaders of the past—Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, Booker T Washington, Harriet Tubman, and W. E. B. DuBois and about the protest tradition they spearheaded” (Morris 88). There was a balance between the principles of the colleges and universities regarding students protesting, and what they were educating them on in the classrooms.

It is important to note who was educating students in the classroom and what was being taught within colleges and universities. When reviewing the public conversations of the professors of Jemison (Alabama State University), King (Morehouse College), Bayard Rustin (Wilberforce University), or recently laid-to-rest John Lewis (Fisk University), many of them outwardly expressed disagreement with protests, sit-ins, or marches due to the disruption it brought to the community and schools. However, upon

further investigation, the same professors, deans, and headmasters were educating these men on the ideas and philosophies of great fighters and protestors of the past.

Many of their professors were also clergymen within the community, “whose advanced degrees made them familiar figures in both campus and church settings” (Hutcheson 219). These men drew from and shared their religious legacies and were a part of the brotherhood that each of these future civil rights leaders would later join. These men, through their “speeches, sermons, and innumerable published works, asserted the sacredness of the human personality, attacked segregation as sin, and advocated nonviolent strategies against Jim Crow that required both courage and conscience” (Hutcheson 219). Jemison received a full education, which brought him the added benefit of knowledge about earlier civil rights leaders in the fight to end slavery, but also knowledge of some of the world’s greatest thinkers and novelists. He learned about the philosophies and thinking of Marx, Nietzsche, Gandhi, and Niebuhr’s *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. Each of these scholars offered Jemison new insight or allowed him to see how their arguments might translate (or not) into the modern-day fight for justice. Jemison’s education taught him about the successes and failures of past leaders so that he was able to create his own path in the fight for equality.

Similar to Jemison, throughout his college years King developed an understanding of peaceful protest techniques. An example is when he read Thoreau’s essay ‘Civil Disobedience’. King would later state that his work in Montgomery was similar to what Thoreau had expressed in his essay and that the black community was “simply saying to the white community, ‘We can no longer lend our cooperation to an evil system’” (King & Carson 39). Guidance from the great leaders of the past and

present helped shape and define one of the best-known civil rights moments, the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Economics and Education

The parameter of education also shows the connection between economics and religious legacies. If a person came from a religious legacy, they were more likely to be from a financially stable family lineage, thus offering them the chance to finish elementary school, let alone complete higher education. By examining the family history of the civil rights leaders from the 1940s to 1960s it is evident that each had a strong connection to financial stability, whether through their parents' professional status as religious leaders, doctors, or lawyers, or from their connections to the church. Reviewing the great divide between the middle and lower class in the African American community demonstrates that the divide was always there. Evidence of the divide and its effects can be seen as far back as of 1885 in the words W. E. B. Du Bois, when he discussed his time at Fisk University. Du Bois described his experience with the "encountered [of] rural black poverty and ignorance at first hand, when for two summers he taught in black schools in Tennessee. [The] experience confirmed growing belief in the power of education and the reason to resolve racial conflict and secure black advancement. At the same time, it also increased awareness of the enormous intellectual gulf felt between himself and the generality of black people" (White 50). At the same time, Du Bois strongly felt that only an "educated and cultured man of 'good manners' could deliver the world from evil" (White 50). Leaders such as Du Bois and Bishop Richard Allen felt that one of the only ways to freedom was through imitating upper-class white men. These sentiments still lingered during Jemison and King's days, evident in how they held themselves, dressed,

and acted toward members of the white community. Both Du Bois and King are also noted to have encouraged members of the black community to dress as if they were always heading to church, to give an appearance of purpose rather than the alternative stigma they would receive from the white community if they dressed too plain in work clothes such as uniforms outside of work. The African American community still held stigma from being considered a lesser subspecies of human. Since the time of slavery, they had been fighting against police brutality. Racist ideologies posited that a person's skin color determined their intelligence, brain size, and physical capabilities. However, leaders like King felt they could overcome these beliefs if they imitated the white man, whether in dress or language.

The benefits of higher education and financial stability granted to African American religious leaders, doctors, lawyers, and business owners meant their legacies would survive, their people would prosper, and good would come from these advantages. Those who led partly because of their economic security experienced some level of respect from the white community. The fallout from the economic divide in the African American community was the replacement of morality with materialism after the Civil Rights Movement ended in the 1970s. David Goldfield, in *Black, White and Southern*, argues that the more the African American upper class grew, the more they would forget what it took for them to get where they were. Sociologist John Shelton Reed states that “people evaluate their situation not only in terms of how good or bad it is but in light of how it is changing, and how rapidly” (Goldfield 220). Between 1965 and 1970, the middle class viewed the growth of and changes in their communities' wealth, job development, and social equality as proof of justice. However, “more pertinent to the

persisting problems of the southern black poor, the advance experienced by middle-class blacks widened the gap between the two groups” (Goldfield 221). During segregation, the black community “held a shared segregation and demeaning etiquette of southern race relations,” but without those barriers, the classes started to view each other in a different light (Goldfield 221). The middle class viewed the behavior of the lower economic classes as examples of how not to behave because their behavior perpetuated stereotypes of African Americans.

The importance of this ideology of a person’s image being connected to their worth is that it brings into question the ideas and beliefs passed down from the earlier leaders to the 1950s generation of religious civil rights activists, which would cause more harm than good at the end of the movement. During the Civil Rights Movement, leaders such as King often followed a conservative dress code of dark suits; further, King encouraged his followers to dress in the same manner, stating that poor dress led to the impression that a person was lower class and thus perpetuating the stereotypes that African Americans faced from the white community (Goldfield 221).

Unexpectedly, by achieving their goal, they created a divide so great that it is still felt today within the African American community. For those like King, “behavior, appearance, and stability were important objectives; for the black poor, the goal was simply survival” (Goldfield 222). For this reason, during the 1970s it became increasingly difficult for local organizations to call upon local youths for help. The growing divide created distrust and hatred between the youth and local civil rights organizations. To the youth, the message seemed to focus more on materialism than fairness for all African Americans. As one student pointed out, “we want what the white

folks have got” (Goldfield 222). The moral emphasis of the original message had faded while the divide between classes grew.

This issue brings into question the actions of the civil rights activists. What practices, whether deliberately or subconsciously, did they undertake that would alter the message or outcome within the community? The original intent of the religious leader was to guide their community, contain their history, culture, and practices. Yet, during the fight for equality, the people leading the fight were unknowingly creating an even greater divide. Without the singular threat and goal, the community broke apart, and with it, many histories and cultures. By examining the influences and advantages of higher education, one of the biggest disadvantages is revealed. Therefore, there needs to be more research and more exploration of the curriculum, beliefs, and knowledge shared during those pivotal moments in American history. The biggest question that arose from the research that could not be answered was whether leaders like Jemison knew that what they gained from higher education, which determined their courses of action, would end with equality but also one of the greatest divides in their community.

Social Capital

Examining the strengths and disadvantages of religious legacies, economics, and higher education finally led to the theme of social capital. Social capital refers to a network of individuals who use their relationships to find solutions to problems and to gain other benefits. In the field of political science, the three key points of social capital include the “interconnected networks of relationships between individuals and groups, levels of trust that characterize these ties, and resources or benefits that are both gained and transferred by virtue of social ties and social participation” (Poteyeva 1). Social capital within a

community creates a greater understanding of individual self-worth, trust, and overall well-being. Social capital was the final tool Jemison needed to bring his community together. He used social capital to help change the narrative within his church, as mentioned earlier. Jemison fought to instill the core values of togetherness and self-worth in the minds of his community. He understood that a man who knew his self-worth could accomplish more in life than a man who let the hatred of others trap him in a cycle of doubt. The key to social capital functioning is that everyone in the network must understand their own self-worth, and they must understand that no one is the same but that everyone brings something important to the community. Jemison used his roles to help people discover what they could bring to the community and what they could use in their fight for equality.

Jemison used his social capital as a glue to bring the black community together, creating an even playing field where people were no longer separated by economic class, professional roles, or levels of education. An example of this can be seen in his organization of the boycott. The Baton Rouge Bus Boycott provided an outlet for activism in which the whole community could participate, whether that was the women contributing their cooking skills to raise money through bake sales or creating a phone tree system to spread updates and help arrange rides for workers. Those who may not have had the financial resources to help contributed by providing transportation during the protests, which allowed the boycott to extend beyond one or two days. Additionally, participants reached out to ask businesses to close their doors and to serve as home bases for ride services and meetings. Jemison showed his community that no single role or person was too small, and that everyone was needed, even the paperboys who spread the

news of the bus boycott. Jemison told them their role was important because no one knew the community and where everyone lived better than those who provided daily services to them. Further, although it might appear that the women were tasked with organizing the phone tree because they were women, they participated in this role because they were the most involved in community outreach programs.

Jemison demonstrated trust in these women because he knew they already had the knowledge and understanding of how to operate the phone tree to the greatest benefit. By encouraging them to handle it instead of passing the task to others with no experience but possibly more education or a higher economic status, Jemison showed his community that everyone had a role and, most importantly, that a person's economic status did not determine their worth in the battle for equality. Although the church is credited with creating common ground, this had more to do with the fact that people like Jemison used their social capital to show everyone's self-worth, and that everyone was equally needed. Ted Jemison, son of Theodore Jemison, stated that his father "came up in a time when there was overt racism, but he always preached togetherness. He also believed that everybody deserves a fair share. I think that is one of the greatest things about him. He never changed his tune. He believed in a man's worth, regardless of skin color" (*The Louisiana Weekly*). King recognized the role economics play in creating and sustaining racial inequities, but he believed that the ideology of a successful African American man was one who replicated a successful white man, which would later evolve into the ideology that a man's worth was based on his belongings and wealth rather than their own social capital. Conversely, Jemison led a life similar to his father's and believed all men were created equal. He used his role to encourage his community to believe they

were all equally important: that a person's wealth, education, class, or color does not determine their self-worth. Rather, their self-worth is determined by what they can bring to the community.

Jemison was the product of his place, his community, his culture, and his religious ties. Although not many people know about the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott or Jemison, without his success in Baton Rouge, other great wins of the Civil Rights Movement could not have happened. Some argue that Jemison gave up too soon and that more could have been done after seeing what the bus boycott accomplished in such a short time. Jemison risked his own life and those in his community to fight for the right of his people to have seats on a bus. Many of those involved stated that their objective at that point was not to end segregation but simply to gain the right to sit. They were tired of riding standing up on buses with empty seats, even though they paid the same amount to ride as the white passengers did. Activist such as Parks would claim that the events that took place in Baton Rouge was in the back of her mind when she refused to move from her seat. Furthermore, she argues that "Baton Rouge did not succeed because the thought was that the federal government was not going to be on the side of African Americans... but after '54, it seemed that what happened in Baton Rouge needed to be tested in some other southern city" she was going to be the first step (Melton 10). Within the city of Baton Rouge, Jemison is a hero, a man who fought against the injustices of his community through pacifism and force. His actions not only brought small justices to the community but allowed "for a community to heal" (*The Louisiana Weekly* 4). Jemison fought for equality for his people and showed them their self-worth in the process.

Conclusion

Many scholars note that after the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott, Jemison stepped away from the spotlight. At a time when his community was near breaking point from the injustices meted by the white community of Baton Rouge, Jemison gave them a strong image of strength and hope. Although he is less known and discussed in the scholarly world, Baton Rouge still honors Jemison as a beacon of hope. The mayor at the time of Jemison's death, Kip Holden, described Jemison in a local newspaper article "as an engaging minister with a great sense of humor" (*The Louisiana Weekly* 3). Even though "a lot of young people may not know much about Rev. Jemison, all of the freedom fighters and anyone who is serious about learning the history of the Civil Rights Movement know exactly who he was and what he contributed to the struggle" (*The Louisiana Weekly* 3). This statement holds powerful truths: those of the Civil Rights Movement era know of Jemison but history has left him from the pages. A person does not have to move far from Baton Rouge to discover how little is known about a man who once inspired thousands in the African American community nationwide. Reverend Raymond Brown, a community activist in New Orleans and the President of National Action, described Jemison to *The Louisiana Weekly* "as a man who stuck his neck out there and was on the front lines of the struggle for civil rights two years before the Montgomery Bus Boycott. He opened many doors for a lot of people and forever changed the course of American history" (*The Louisiana Weekly* 3). Jemison was more than just a pastor; he was the start of the evolution of the Civil Rights Movement. He was the reason Parks did not move from her

seat; he was the reason King was able to orchestrate a bus boycott two years later and eventually hold a dream of equality for his people.

Jemison's actions changed the path of the Civil Rights Movement. They demonstrated the importance of unity and showed the world the strength of community. Most importantly, they showed that understanding the Civil Rights Movement requires more than just viewing it through the parameters of religion and politics. The ideas of religious legacies and economics show how the past influenced the future, including how certain messages, ideas, thoughts, or beliefs are passed down from generation to generation. In particular, Jemison passed his own knowledge to King.

Additionally, two other important historical themes stand out: first, how education was a tool that led to success but that would eventually create a massive divide within the African American community. Second, social capital demonstrates how Jemison and other great civil rights leaders were able to bring their communities together. By showing community members their self-worth and self-truths, he built bridges between the economic and educational gaps in the community. Without including the full history of how each of these played a role in the Civil Rights Movement it is not possible to see the multiple layers that created civil rights leaders like Jemison, who would push his own religious legacies into the future to help the Civil Rights Movement. In the current times, the actions, words, and encouragement of leaders like Jemison are more needed in the history books than ever.

Chapter V: Conclusion and Recommendations

This thesis has focused on understanding how several parameters define and guided the Civil Rights Movement. As has been discussed, scholarship on the Civil Rights Movement uses the framework of either politics, religion, or a combination of the two. This limited focus has prevented the conversation from moving past a purely legal or spiritual conversation. However, members of the movement itself held various ideologies and beliefs, and to understand the movement from every perspective, the lens used to study the movement had to change. Given this understanding, this thesis explored the Civil Rights Movement through the parameters of religious legacy, economics, education, and social capital, which led to new discoveries and themes.

Applying these parameters to the life of Jemison shows how his earlier actions and beliefs helped alter the outcome of the Civil Rights Movement. This process began by asking where Jemison drew his inspiration from. Was he self-driven or did it come from another source such as his family, community, or schooling? Did civil rights leaders like Jemison intentionally use their pulpit and religious authority to gain an advantage among the African American and white communities, or did they do this unknowingly? After researching these questions according to the parameters above, the question became: Were the civil rights leaders primarily religious leaders, and was the church the center of the Civil Rights Movement? How did the thinking of great leaders of the past make its way to the forefront of those involved with the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s? With these questions in mind and using the lenses above, this thesis demonstrated that Jemison was not only the starting point for the Civil Rights Movement

in the 1950s, but that his actions and philosophy created a road map that was duplicated by future civil rights leaders like King.

Summary of Findings

Religious Legacies

Religious connections were vital during the Civil Rights Movement. King used his connection to Jemison to gain knowledge and direction during the Montgomery Bus Boycott two years after the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott. Jemison's father's connections and knowledge helped guide Jemison during his years of service to his community. Jemison also carried the religious legacies left by previous religious leaders of the African American community, who had instilled the virtues and tools that were then taken up in the struggle for equality. The religious leaders of the African American community are the reason the history, culture, and beliefs of their people survived.

Further, these legacies provided the brotherhood necessary knowledge to share and inspire each other in the fight ahead. Neither religious legacy nor education would have been enough alone; both were required for the success of the civil rights leaders. Religious legacies instilled the culture and shared struggles of the African American communities in the leaders, meaning they knew how to speak to their respective flocks. Most of all, religious legacies provided the same encouragement to the religious leaders of Jemison's time as they had to other leaders since the fight to end slavery. The strength of the brotherhood can also be seen in the passing of knowledge from one generation to another, as well as within the same generation. Jemison's use of his father's religious legacy and his connection to the African American religious community was the first step toward continuing the tradition and creating the first steps to success in the Civil Rights

Movement of the 1950s. Finally, religious legacies answer the question of where the inspiration for the fight came from, and how it passed from generation to generation. More than just facts, dates, and ideas were passed along; culture was embedded in this information too. This was the piece of their history that was needed to create their future.

Economics

Economics played a major role before, during, and after the 1950s and 1960s Civil Rights Movement. Economics determined not only who would lead the Civil Rights Movement but also who would succeed following the movement's demise. Jemison understood that the financial security of his role protected him and his family. However, this should not be confused with physical protection. Leaders like Jemison understood how they and others with economic security were protected and could stand at the frontline of the fight to decrease the harm already felt by the African American community.

The church played a central role in the Civil Rights Movement, providing more than just religious beliefs and acting as a shield for its community. Only considering the church as the center of the movement without also understanding *how* it became the center neglects to address a problem that arose after the Civil Rights Movement. The leaders of the movement, coming from the middle or upper classes, promised that the generation after them from the same class would reap the benefits and gain the most because, unlike the other classes, their status had already been solidified. They were the leaders because of the economic security granted them by their religious roles. Instead of religious leaders and their families having to start from scratch after the movement ended, they continued to build their wealth and power, resulting in a divide within the African American community. The shift in the civil rights message from legal rights to morality,

and then from morality to materialism, also created a new battle for Jemison and other leaders. The same protection that helped unify the classes in the civil rights fight ironically then became the most significant divide between them.

Education

Expanding the role of education in the Civil Rights Movement beyond segregation in the public-school system reveals the role of higher education in shaping and inspiring civil rights leaders. Higher education granted them the ability to explore the beliefs and philosophies of thinkers like Marx, Nietzsche, Gandhi, and Niebuhr. When they were unable to agree with one philosophy, they drew from many and let their thinking evolve and expand to create ideologies of their own. The acknowledgment of the evolution of the thoughts and ideas behind the modern Civil Rights Movement is fundamental to understanding leaders such as Jemison. He realized that for there to be any change, it was time to take the fight out of the courtrooms and place it into the communities. Moving the fight to a shared public space forced the white community to realize the demoralizing behavior they were subjecting to the African American community to. It forced the fight for equality to finally grow from a legal fight to a fight for humanity and morality.

Understanding the role of education in a different light shows the moment that civil rights leaders understood the message had to change. For the first time in the history of the movement, a new framework was applied: a blended methodology of action and instilling the belief into the community that they were worthy of equality in their current life, not just after death. Many would argue the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott was not a success, yet the Freedom Riders strongly disagreed, stating that Baton Rouge was their inspiration to continue their fight. They learned about methodologies applied in Baton

Rouge through their higher education, and the knowledge passed down from their religious leaders.

Social Capital

Through the use of social capital, Jemison proved to the community that the first step toward success was to understand the self-worth of every individual. He demonstrated to his community that everyone was needed in the fight, and that each role was equally important. No matter who someone was or where they were from, their life meant something, and it was no less than anyone else's in the community. Jemison's fight was not only a moral fight, but a fight to change the ideology of the white community in Baton Rouge. King describes segregation as an institution in both black and white communities and the call for reform was seen as an attack on the "entire social fabric of the South" (King & Carson 225). Thus, small-scale movements like the bus boycott in Baton Rouge were more than just a stance against physical inequality, but a stand to also change the ideologies and beliefs within the white community. Social capital granted Jemison the ability to bridge the gaps between members of his community and break down the walls of racism in the south.

Jemison stood his ground throughout his life and never wavered from his original message and intent, which was to remind all people of their self-worth. Further, helping his community recognize their self-worth resulted in them understanding their social capital, which he was able to use in the fight for equality. Social capital was how leaders like Jemison were able to bridge gaps and bring together people of the community. It demonstrated that it was not the imagery of the church that physically brought the community together, but rather the church leaders who used the church as a tool to spread

the message of love and trust in their communities. With that message, they used their communities in the fight for equality.

Implications for Practice

Applying new frameworks to the Civil Rights Movement expands the conversation and creates more questions for exploring one of America's greatest evolutions of morality and equality. These parameters have demonstrated not just the need for research on new perspectives on civil rights but have uncovered their main themes. Much of the history of civil rights is left to be uncovered, but this thesis has demonstrated the four fundamental notions that were vital in the Civil Rights Movement: religious legacies, economics, education, and social capital. Further, this research demonstrates the need for scholars to study less-frequently-mentioned figures because following their stories leads to deeper understandings of not just one individual but others, too. Understanding Jemison's religious legacies and education allowed for insight into where his inspiration came from and explained the ideas and notions from the past that were present at the time.

Further, this thesis shows how he was skilled at utilizing social capital in the community for the success of civil rights. Jemison's economic status also demonstrated the flaws that came from the leaders' economic stability, and points to the great divide this would eventually create. Most importantly, it explains why religious leaders were at the center of the Civil Rights Movement: because their roles within the church offered them financial security. The church granted access to meeting space and the ability to spread their message to the masses.

The key to the Civil Rights Movement was the leaders and what made them who they were. A deeper understanding of the components that created them can be found

through first observing their religious legacies, which bring insights into their history and the culture of their communities. Exploring the relationship between economics and the Civil Rights Movement leads to the discovery of the moral obligation felt by the religious leaders, which helped to evolve the historically rooted role of the religious leader in the African American community.

Recommendations for Research

It would be helpful for future research to examine the curricula that influenced the civil rights leaders, particularly the gap between the college and university leaders' disapproval of the Civil Rights Movement and their offering of courses on the philosophies of past leaders, which helped formulate civil rights leaders' thinking. This thesis addressed this gap but uncovering what is still unknown will require further study of figures lost to the history books. This thesis studied Jemison because his name was mentioned by some of the greatest known civil rights leaders, but his story was still relatively unknown. Although the hard facts of the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott are known, reviewing Jemison's story and life under different parameters allowed for a more in-depth insight into the Civil Rights Movement.

The exploration of the influences, traditions, and hardships of the African American community led to the underlying theme of social capital. Social capital allowed leaders to bridge the gap between racial and economic divides and gave them the ability to remind their community members of their self-worth—most importantly, that every soul was worthy of equality. A person's race, age, gender, or economic status did not determine their rights. Further, social capital showed the flaws and cracks that came to the African American community due to the tools used to succeed during the Civil Rights

Movement. The scholarship of the Civil Rights Movement needs to expand beyond “the greats”, and even beyond the 1950s. Smaller-scale movements in the 1930s and 1940s helped guide the civil rights leaders during the 1950s and 1960s, like the boycott led by Jemison.

Conclusion

The Civil Rights Movement is about more than just religion and politics; it was a battle of humanity and morality. It was a battle waged to remind the people of their self-worth and, more importantly, a battle to bring a community and a country together, across lines of race, gender, and economic status. Years before King had a dream, and two years before Parks refused to give up her seat, the fight had already started in Baton Rouge. To understand the larger protests and fights, scholars must look at the lives of the civil rights leaders to understand where their inspirations, ideas, and thought processes developed. Jemison not only revolutionized the Civil Rights Movement by changing the narrative but also laid a foundation for future protests. He bridged the gap between his community by using social capital; he learned from his ancestors and from history’s greatest leaders through religious legacies and higher education. He understood the dangers that would arise from economics in the future, which is why he encouraged everyone to understand that their worth did not come from money but from loving and believing in themselves. Although Jemison was a man before his time and a leader a nation never knew existed, it is never too late to pay respect to the man who revolutionized the Civil Rights Movement.

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