Segregationist Liberalism:
The NAACP and Resistance to Civil-Defense Planning in the Early Cold War, 1951–1953

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The Cold War Imperative and Segregationist Liberalism

This paper investigates how civilian defense planning during the early Cold War was configured by two enduring facts of American political development: race and geography. Before the Brown v. Board of Education ruling by the Supreme Court in 1954, public policy was fundamentally affected by racial considerations. In the South, state-level planners used race to determine how, where, and in what quantity a wide range of public goods were delivered to citizens. In the North, race and racism were just as much a part of the public policy calculation as in the South. Truman Administration officials viewed themselves as defenders of liberal democracy, and with Cold War tensions at the fore of both domestic and foreign policy, U.S. officials used the model of American liberalism as an ideological and political instrument for waging Cold War. The seeming conflict between the idea of progressive liberalism and legal racism was clear to many in U.S. society, both in and out of the Truman Administration. The State Department, for instance, put pressure on the Truman Administration to improve the treatment of African-American citizens, especially in the South. This essay is concerned with one aspect of this conflict: In the areas of federal emergency planning and national security policy in general, a form of segregationist liberalism held sway among Truman Administration policy planners. The result was an interesting, even bizarre, planning structure for nuclear-age civil defense, which pitted urban and suburban sections of the country against one another for emergency services and at the same time wove pre-Brown v. Board of Education racial policy into overall civil defense disaster planning. While the majority of citizens in the United States were learning to “duck and cover,” the National Association of Colored People (NAACP) was involved in an internal debate about whether African Americans, given the realities of Jim Crow in the South and the treatment of African Americans as second-class citizens, should even take
part in civil defense activities. The internal debate resulted in a decidedly mixed outcome for the
NAACP: part resistance and part acceptance of the Truman Administration’s civil defense policy. What follows is small piece of a much larger story about resistance and acceptance of Cold War national security policy and liberalism in the U.S. between 1951 and 1953.3

Segregationist liberalism4

Without entering into a complex discussion of political theory, it is plain that there is not an intrinsic contradiction between traditional liberalism and systematic legal racial separation.5 In American history, we do not have to look very hard to find an example of a multifaceted liberalism that accepted racism in principle. Not only did Plessy v. Ferguson establish a race-based legal structure in the South, but the whole Plessy era is replete with arguments, many quite complex and learned, that support the position that liberalism and segregation are compatible in both theory and practice.6 As a constitutional scholar has pointed out, “during the Plessy era there was no evident disparity between [white] elite and popular attitudes on issues like racial segregation, black disfranchisement, and black jury service. Such a gap may have existed on issues like lynching, but not on the race questions that became subjects of the Supreme Court litigation.”7 In the broadest sense, this observation encapsulates liberal segregationist thinking.

I focus here on the interplay among the Truman Administration, the Federal Civil Defense Administration’s (FCDA) first administrator Millard F. Caldwell Jr., and the NAACP. My purpose is not to document the tensions of the time, although this is an important historical fact, but to show how the Truman Administration not only accepted the idea of segregationist liberalism but incorporated this idea into its emergency policy planning. Consider a segregated bomb shelter. As harebrained as this idea might sound, such bomb shelters existed. For the
most part, planners did not think there was anything wrong with the principle of “separate-but-equal” bomb shelters as long as they were equal in their ability to protect citizens from the effects of nuclear weapons. Given the way race was used to delimit how “goods” were delivered during this era, there was no “equality” regarding civil defense protection. In fact, the NAACP mobilized a protest against the Truman Administration on this issue. Only within the liberal segregationist political and ideological regime of the early 1950s could FCDA planners go about their work as if there were nothing wrong with protecting a political order based on a two-tiered citizenship.

Overview

"Civil defense for national security" was a phrase used by policy planners in the Truman Administration when they considered how a nuclear war might be fought or, preferably, deterred. As public policy, civil defense planning was rationalized by the Truman Administration's National Security Resources Board's (NSRB) Office of Civil Defense Planning (OCDP), which handled the early logistical and theoretical planning for a national civil defense program. In January, 1951 the newly created line agency, the United States Federal Civil Defense Administration, took over civilian defense planning from the NSRB and the OCDP. Publicly, FCDA civil defense plans called for the protection of "all citizens" and the continuity of a liberal–democratic polity and social order in the event of war. In practice, however, the agency ignored large groups of people, not only for operational reasons, but because planners viewed the social order in both racial and geographic terms. As a result, FCDA emergency plans exhibited stark geographic and racial biases while simultaneously providing the illusion of protection for middle-class suburbia. In planning for home-front survival, FCDA planners used
racial demographics and geography as delimiting factors for determining which groups of citizens would receive maximum consideration in an emergency and which groups would, in effect, have to fend for themselves.\textsuperscript{9} In theory, FCDA planning would have reestablished the contemporary social order of the early 1950s in a post-nuclear era with one fundamental difference: the post-attack demographic reality that civilian defense planners used resembled Alexis Tocqueville's homogenous America of the 1830s, not the country of the early 1950s.

Early Cold War mobilization had a fundamental impact on postwar American political development. There are at least two interpretations of exactly what that impact was on race relations in the Plessy era. One interpretation of the Cold War holds that the civil rights movement would not have taken hold or, at the very least, the federal government would have moved very slowly in making fundamental changes to the Jim Crow system and other matters of race and politics without the pressure of Cold War mobilization. A shorthand version of this argument holds that the Cold War laid bare the contradictions between the United States' stated international political goals for liberal democracy and its treatment of African-Americans citizens at home. As a result, the Truman Administration had to confront what it identified as the "colored problem," first in the armed forces and then, more slowly, within the society as a whole. An implication of this interpretation of postwar civil rights history is that the Truman Administration acted "progressively" (in the context of the times) with respect to issues of race in American society.

Against this interpretation, I take a different view: The Cold War and the dominant concern about national security essentially limited what was possible with respect to civil rights and, more broadly, American liberalism. Under both the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations, the federal government had to balance pressure to support civil rights for
African Americans (and others) against what both Administrations viewed as the primary grand strategic aim of the United States: the swift rationalization of national security policy. The most important of the domestic mobilization aims was a secure domestic political consensus in support of U.S. Cold War policy. Support for the Cold War became a litmus test for patriotism. Protest of any sort was generally viewed by most of the public and politicians as an internal security problem that could threaten the United States. The Truman Administration’s approach to the early Cold War crisis provided the basis for the militarization of Cold War political culture through civilian defense planning, the demonization by the FBI of the postwar civil-rights movement as a communist-inspired “fifth column,” the self-purging of the labor movement of its “communist influences,” and the institutional basis for the growing national security state. The Cold War effort to secure both domestic and international security thus hindered an expansive liberalism in favor of a constricted "Cold War liberalism" that refracted domestic politics through the lens of national security policy.

The Federal Civil Defense Administration

The early Cold War presented several challenges to U.S. national security planners. One challenge that explicitly connected domestic public policy and national security policy was the problematic nature of life in the "atomic age." The "next war," policy planners such as Secretary of Defense James Forrestal claimed, would include the use of atomic, biological, and chemical weapons against the continental United States. "The impact of initial surprise assaults which will involve new weapons such as the atomic bomb and which will be accompanied by widespread sabotage may cripple the mobilization of the nation for war and at the same time result in a large demand for defensive resources." For U.S. planners and the general public, Hiroshima and
Nagasaki were the touchstones for the future of war in the modern age. By 1950, a picture of World War III was indelibly etched in the minds and the imagination of policy makers: millions dead in the pulverized and radiating ruins of major cities in the United States. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were harbingers for Chicago, New York, and Detroit if the Cold War became a "hot" war. U.S. citizens, Secretary of Defense James Forrestal and other national security planners argued, had to come to grips with the possibility—even probability—that the Cold War would pose the ultimate challenge to the American social order: nuclear war. In the early 1950s, the Truman Administration lent support to the argument that the primary target for Soviet atomic weapons was the American people: "an enemy must strike first at the home front which is the source of our strength-in-arms. If an enemy is unable to crush our will to fight and cripple our production lines, then he cannot win a war against America."\(^\text{13}\) On this view, strategic policy planners in the United States argued that it was the home front that was the target for a Soviet attack.

In 1951, two years after the Soviet Union tested an atomic device and one year after the Korean War began, the FCDA established civil defense programs to handle the problem of nuclear fear, or in the vernacular of the time, "the problem of panic."\(^\text{14}\) In order to prevent panic and channel fear into constructive activities such as civil defense, the FCDA set its civil defense education and training in an imaginary world where the referent for citizens was "conventional" war. In *Survival Under Atomic Attack*, a booklet produced by the FCDA, everyone was assured, "You can live through an atom bomb raid and you won't have to have a Geiger counter, protective clothing, or special training in order to do it."\(^\text{15}\) The primer ends with a warning for the American people that *they* and their ability to control their own emotions were the key to surviving a nuclear war—*not* the fact that these new weapons were qualitatively different from
conventional weapons: "But if you lose your head and blindly attempt to run from the dangers, you may touch off a panic that will cost your life and put tremendous obstacles in the way of your Civil Defense Corps." The FCDA also set up the civil defense education project through the public school system and used training narratives and short films to teach the general public what a nuclear war might be like. In short, the "normal" post-attack environment, in which everyday life resumes as if nuclear war was simply a problem of logistics, emotional control, and ritualization, was the crucial theme in all FCDA training. Readers of FCDA literature such as *Survival Under Atomic Attack* assumed that, "you can get rid of all the radioactive dirt you've picked up if you keep scrubbing." Who were the people that the FCDA portrayed as "riding out" nuclear war in their home bomb shelters or in their local community shelters? Where did they live? What kind of social order framed the attack and post-attack environment in which the FCDA set its civil defense education syllabi and programs? The answers to these questions depended on the way FCDA planners conceived the relationship between civil defense and society. In almost all mass-produced booklets, pamphlets, and training programs, suburban households are used as the sole model for civil defense training. For the Truman Administration’s FCDA, it was the suburban "nuclear family" that was the first line of defense in a nuclear war.

**CRISIS AND EXCLUSION:**

**CIVIL DEFENSE, ADMINISTRATIVE DISCRETION, AND THE NAACP**

*If a bomb drops, we don’t want regulations that require colored citizens to run ten blocks to separate racial shelter when one designated “whites only” is just around the corner.*

*We believe that in an attack by an enemy Governor Caldwell would put white supremacy*
and segregation ahead of the welfare of the citizens the Defense Office is established to protect. Therefore, we urge that his appointment be rejected.\textsuperscript{20}

Just before the FCDA was created, there was significant concern in Congress about how to evacuate cities in a war. Evacuation planning (civilian and industrial) was the most important analysis of the NSRB's civil defense arm, the OCDP. Uneasiness about evacuation planning broke along sectional lines in Congress. During the debate concerning the enactment of the Civil Defense Act of 1950, representatives from southern and rural states were concerned about central-state expansion via the FCDA. One can imagine the anxiety of representatives from the Midwest when they contemplated the relocation of, say, Brooklyn, New York to southern Illinois. More seriously, even intra-state mass relocation held the potential for social disruption—and if we add to the mix the issue of race and the place of African Americans in American society in 1950, the potential for political conflict was high.\textsuperscript{21} President Truman, fully aware of the consequential political role southern Democrats played on key Congressional committees, appointed a southern Democrat, Millard F. Caldwell, Jr., as the first administrator of the FCDA.\textsuperscript{22} If one lived in the urban core or in the South where Jim Crow norms remained part of the legal structure, the appointment of Caldwell to head the FCDA substantially affected public policy planning for civil defense.\textsuperscript{23}

Imagine a "community" bomb shelter in Georgia where, if a nuclear attack took place, black and white Americans would have to live together for an extended time in horrific conditions. In 1953, black Americans and white Americans in Georgia were not even allowed to drink out of the same water fountain--and yet, in theory, they were to be protected by a federal agency in an equal fashion if war came. FCDA considerations on race relations and preservation
of the social order were whipped by the politics of Southern states' rights, de facto Northern segregation patterns, and the exigencies of operational planning. Specifically with regard to the issue of states’ rights, Congressional concerns focused on the tremendous discretionary political power that accrued to the unelected FCDA administrator in an emergency.

Briefly, if the FCDA Administrator survived an attack on the United States, he would have carte blanche with respect to relocating evacuees around the country. This enormous discretionary power was part of the original civil defense legislation in 1951, specifically, Title III of the Civil Defense Act, "Emergency Power." As Representative Dewey Short of Missouri noted during the floor debate concerning the civil defense legislation, "In case of an atomic attack the power of the Administrator would be almost unlimited." The Title III powers established a disaster-planning regime where evacuees would be shifted arbitrarily to "safe zones" around the country with federal protection if local command and control broke down. Also, the administrator would be able to declare martial law in areas that were without civilian or military command and control structures. The potential power of the FCDA Administrator became a source of concern for Southern democrats and rural Republicans, who viewed refugee problems and FCDA evacuation planning schemes as a likely means of central-state expansion.

President Truman acted quickly to assuage Congressional concerns by appointing the ex-governor of Florida, Millard F. Caldwell, Jr., as the first Administrator of the FCDA. A Democrat and staunch backer of states’ rights, Caldwell supported Truman in 1948, when many other Southern Democrats bolted the party, and to some extent his appointment to the FCDA was a pay-back by the President. Caldwell was a “moderate” when compared to other Southern governors; nevertheless, he was deeply committed to the separate-but-equal system that developed in the American South under Jim Crow. For Caldwell, as for many people of the
South, the heartfelt commitment to states’ rights simply overpowered any reflective impulse to interrogate the jurisprudential theory on which Jim Crow rested or its long-term effects on citizenship rights. 28 Therefore, even though Truman was able to protect his political flank within his party—as the remarks on the Caldwell appointment by Rep. Dewey Short of Missouri illustrate: "a good, loyal Florida Democrat and...he is a great American”—the Caldwell appointment was an affront to African Americans. 29 Although the NAACP began to organize a high-level lobbying campaign to block Caldwell’s appointment as early as December 1950, it found little support in official Washington. The next move that the NAACP took was to try and develop a popular mobilization against Caldwell’s confirmation. 30 Washington, D.C. director of the NAACP, Clarence Mitchell, remarked when Caldwell was appointed to lead the FCDA that "this appointment was an insult to the colored people, because it was an action on the part of the President (Mr Harry S. Truman) and the Democratic Party which gave aid and comfort to what was popularly called the Dixiecrat wing of the Democratic Party." 31 The Truman Administration, true to form on this particular issue, ignored the NAACP and its constituency when it came to issues of national security.

As the FCDA’s first administrator, Caldwell proposed a comprehensive national civilian defense system of "hardened" community bomb shelters. Known as the "Caldwell Shelter Program," it sought to alleviate the logistical and political problems of mass emergency evacuation. The program advanced a federally funded, deep underground, and locally administered mass, community bomb-shelter system. As policy, the Caldwell program represented a philosophical shift in disaster planning that emphasized "digging in" rather than "running" if war came. It also had the immediate brief effect of moving overall planning discussion and operations away from the politically hot issue of evacuation to intra-state,
regional city, and suburban emergency planning. The Caldwell shelter program would have allowed each state and locality to control the bomb-shelter issue at the politically less sensitive state and local level. Thus, in the American South, community bomb-shelter programs could be developed within a framework of Jim Crow legal structures and, equally important, with a minimum of central-state expansion and oversight. By 1953, Southern civil defense planning produced both segregated bomb shelters and a segregated civil defense corps. The sociology of disaster planning was not an exclusively southern issue, however. The problem of what kind of "sociological mix" was optimal in community bomb shelters was appraised by municipal governments in all locales; for example, housing studies in New York and other core industrial areas used the delimiting analytical device of "white" and "non-white" when studying housing and emergency billeting. As public policy, the Caldwell Shelter Program failed because of its immense cost, estimates of which reached a staggering 300 billion in 1950 dollars. With the failure of the Caldwell Shelter Program, FCDA emergency planning switched back to evacuation planning with all of its potential sociological and logistical problems.

The political exigencies of operational planning also exposed the geographic bias in FCDA planning, which affected African Americans as well as citizens living in most large urban centers of the country. Because operational planning for the urban core was too expensive and logistically futile, FCDA planning favored suburban and rural sections of the country over urban industrial areas. From a public policy implementation perspective, only in suburban localities did the minimal physical and architectural requirements exist for individual small bomb shelters and small community evacuation areas. A home and open space are necessary for a home bomb shelter or a workable evacuation plan. This obvious fact becomes clear in considering emergency operational planning at the state and community level. In comparing operational
civil defense plans for a city such as Chicago in 1950-1951 with suburban and rural operational plans, it is clear that urban centers could not hope to protect their inhabitants. Alternatively, in suburban civil defense plans there was at least the possibility that people could be evacuated and billeted for a time—even though most evacuees would die, slowly and horribly, in the post-attack environment that the FCDA planners actually modeled between 1952 and 1956.34

Local-level FCDA programs that were aimed at suburban homeowners also fit Caldwell's political belief about the primacy of states' rights and local control over centralized federal control. Under Caldwell's direction, viewing comprehensive, national civil defense as an individual, local problem achieved two important corollary objectives: local management was favored over federal administration, and the Truman Administration was able to foster the illusion that the postwar suburban middle classes would survive during and after a nuclear war. For domestic political reasons, both the Truman and later the Eisenhower Administration viewed this constituency as vital for developing and nurturing the Cold War domestic political consensus.35 These new middle-class, first-generation suburbanites had to be unequivocally convinced that the government could do something to protect them if the worst happened. By the early 1950s, the large-scale out-migration to suburbia from northern cities was underway, and millions of people were moving out of the cities to get a piece of the “good life” that has, in retrospect, come to represent the mostly white, middle-class, suburban America of the early 1950s.36 Contemporary sectional politics and operational planning under the Truman Administration’s FCDA corresponded to Caldwell’s and other state managers’ deeply held view about the primacy of states' rights politics. This fact gave a surreal twist to FCDA anecdotes and its social construction of what nuclear war might be like: on the one hand, FCDA narratives promised that civil defense training, education, and planning would produce a post-attack
The Board expressed its shock that you would appoint as director of the civil defense [sic] one who is unwilling to observe even the simplest amenities in writing to American citizens who do not happen to be white. [Caldwell] told the committee bluntly that, "I reserve the right to address any person, whether he be citizen of my state or any other state in such manner as I please and in accordance with my own views." We believe this is a measure of Mr. Caldwell's hostile attitude towards Negroes or anyone else he personally refuses to recognize as a citizen entitled to the same respect and protection guaranteed by our Constitution and laws. The Board of Directors was equally shocked when it was announced that Mr. Caldwell's chief qualification for the job as director of civil defense was his experience in working out interstate compacts. The interstate compact that Mr. Caldwell has been most prominently identified is [sic] is the one in which he and other southern governors attempted to defeat decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court...with the creation of the so-called "southern regional plan"...the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, in the interest of national unity, urges his removal as the Chief of Civil Defense.38
The NAACP response reflected a regional outrage as well. In a letter to President Truman, Dr. Errold Collymore, President of the New York branch of the NAACP, wrote:

We urge his removal in the interest of national unity, and because of his well known hostility to the Negro, and his consistent advocacy of total racial segregation. His well known attitude toward Negro citizens is a factor that would destroy any sense of security to Negro citizens throughout the country in the event of a common disaster caused by possible atomic attack upon our country.39

Dr. Collymore's concern about the protection of all citizens is clear in his letter to President Truman. It also signals a suspicion of civil defense planning and operations that was well founded and long-lasting.40 To Dr. Collymore and other African Americans, it was clear that any post-attack social order conceived by the FCDA's Caldwell would recreate a two-tiered citizenship structure. For example, it was well known to both national and local members of the NAACP that as Governor of Florida, Millard Caldwell had openly denounced the 1944 Supreme Court ruling in *Smith v. Allwright* that citizens could not be barred from voting in primary elections because of race or color.41 As Dr. Collymore implied in his letter, how could any African American gain any sense of security when the President has entrusted national protection to Millard Caldwell? M. E. Diggs, Secretary of the Norfolk Branch of the NAACP--which was heavily involved in politics over the integration of the U.S. Navy--also wrote President Truman with concern about Caldwell: "His open defiance of the Constitution, the decisions of the U.S. Courts and resistance thereto, and brutal advocacy of "white supremacy by any and all means," utterly unfits [sic] him for the office he holds or any office within our national government."42

Grass-roots resistance
A two-pronged strategy was developed by the NAACP to overturn President Truman’s appointment of Caldwell: a high-level approach to seek the impeachment of Caldwell; and a grass-roots protest that included a low-level form of civil disobedience calling for African-American civil servants and citizens to refuse to take part in civil defense training programs. The first plan ran into a political roadblock: Congress was not prepared to impeach Caldwell. In 1951, contrary to some interpretations of how the Cold War and the Truman Administration propelled the rise of a “progressive” civil rights movement, African Americans did not exactly have a Congress brimming with allies for their cause. The impeachment approach failed. The second strategy, which had some success at the grass-roots level and is discussed below, also caused tension within the NAACP because national security policy was such a potent and politically risky issue on which to base a public protest. Some NAACP members believed that the organization should not pick a fight around this type of national security issue. Many believed that patriotism dictated that national security (except in the area of the integration of the armed services) was not the issue on which to protest the Truman Administration’s racial policies (especially while fighting the Korean War). The domestic Cold War mobilization process so narrowed the definition of what it meant to be a loyal citizen that it essentially limited the cohesion among leaders in the NAACP.

First, all civil service employees such as teachers, fireman, policeman are pledged to civilian defense. Also doctors and nurses are pledged to the same thing. I can picture the criticism heaped upon us, if we urge these people not to cooperate with their white co-workers. On the other hand I can see nothing that would please Mr. Caldwell more, than to have a lily white civilian defense setup. I would rather see Negroes in every branch of this defense program, working to see that there is no discrimination in any form. In this way, we could much more effectively harass Mr. Millard Caldwell and also Pres. Truman, who made this very inept appointment.43
Even with this internal debate underway, the NAACP launched an “Oust Caldwell Campaign” in which a substantial number of NAACP chapters took part (see Table One).

African Americans who were mobilized were asked to protest against FCDA civil defense alerts and ignore training exercises (to do so was illegal at the time). The mobilization effort was located primarily in big cities and organized through the churches and by way of pamphlets posted in and around African-American neighborhoods (see Figure One below). The organizing effort was labor intensive; passionate in their anger at the Truman Administration’s choice to lead the FCDA, the posters were clearly designed and reproduced by hand. Although this passion did not translate into huge protests, it did diminish participation on the part of many African Americans in civil defense programs, at least in the core industrial cities.
Table One

NAACP Branches Responding to the “Oust Caldwell Campaign”

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Source: Compiled from Papers of the NAACP, Part 18: Special Subjects, General Office File.
Figure One

Oust-Caldwell Campaign Posters

Source: Papers of the NAACP, Part 18, Subject Files 1940-55, Series B, General Office Files, Caldwell, Millard issue.
African Americans understood well what was going on and more than anecdotal evidence suggests that FCDA programs were less than successful at mobilizing them. For example, the FCDA produced an enormous quantity of public relations literature that was disseminated through national newspapers. Yet, there is little evidence in independent African-American newspapers that FCDA education was being redistributed (as was planned by the FCDA) through the African-American media. The Michigan Chronicle, a "New Deal" African-American independent newspaper based in Detroit, ran stories about how few African Americans participated in civil defense training compared to white involvement in the same kinds of programs. The city of Detroit was a primary target, according to the FCDA, so one might assume that there would be interracial, or at least segregated, involvement in civil defense training. The auxiliary fire-fighters (an all-white organization) in Detroit pleaded with African Americans through The Michigan Chronicle: "Only a handful of Negro citizens have responded to the appeal of the Auxiliary Fire Fighters for Civil Defense." In a appeal to The Michigan Chronicle, Harold C. Reinelt said: "Negroes' contribution to defense in case of enemy attack, sabotage, or conflagration has been practically negligible." The article ends with a lamentation: "Is a nine hour investment in the safety of everything we all value asking too much of our citizens?" In Detroit, Michigan, at least, the answer was an unequivocal yes. The same kind of African-American concern about fairness and sincerity was prevalent in New York City as well, where the civil defense programs failed in Harlem even as they were quite successful in other areas of the city and the region. Under the sub-heading of "Harlem a sitting-duck" the African-American periodical Our World found FCDA concern about urban America deficient, even though Our World tended, in the early 1950s, to support FCDA training programs. Although there may have been numerous reasons why African Americans did not participate in civil
defense training in cities, one important reason was that African Americans knew that the FCDA strategies for post-attack recovery were framed by the social norm of racial segregation.

What was the Truman Administration's reaction to African-American concerns about the FCDA and Millard Caldwell? Caldwell made an attempt to meet some members of the NAACP, but since he would not address key members of the NAACP by their professional titles during his confirmation hearings before Congress (and continued his refusal to do so), this attempt at negotiation failed, with NAACP leaders refusing the meeting. The Truman Administration made it clear that the issue of race would not be a concern for the FCDA. More important, it would do nothing to compromise the primacy of Cold War national security planning.

The Post-Attack Social Order?

Suppose a strategic nuclear war had taken place in the early 1950s. Using FCDA models under the Caldwell regime, what would the post-attack social order look like? As FCDA literature and public education syllabi regularly suggested, if the citizens practiced civil defense drills, nuclear war, like conventional war, could be successfully managed without serious consequence to the American social order. In the post-attack world, people would go back to work, the government would continue to function, the country would "prevail" as it always did in war.

However, the real demographics of nuclear war, which were well known, configured how the FCDA actually planned for the ultimate emergency. Writing in 1963, but using data drawn mainly from the 1950 census, FCDA studies, and studies from the FCDA's successor agency, the Office of Civil Defense Mobilization, sociologists Robert Dentler and Phillips Cutright prepared a “demographic effects” study using FCDA planning models. The results of their analysis remain stunning: seventy-two million U.S. citizens would have died outright in the attack
scenario modeled on a 2,000-megaton attack on seventy urban areas. Using the FCDA's own civil defense urban analysis of 1953, we can see what the post-attack environment would have looked like from an ethnographic perspective. We can establish that, for example, the religious composition of the United States would have been fundamentally reconstituted in the post-attack world: killed outright would have been 93 percent of all Jews, 65 percent of all Catholics, and 33 percent of all Protestants. The reason for these kinds of casualties is obvious: in the early 1950s, the target cities all had large numbers of these ethnic and religious groups residing in them. We can infer as well that large segments of first- and second-generation Southern and Eastern European ethnic groups and the increasingly large African-American population that resided in the major target city areas would also have perished.

Further, FCDA publications and government planners made a point of discussing, at least in public education and information, that "continuity of liberal democratic government" in a post-attack world would be maintained and there would be a "functioning" government body. FCDA planning for "continuity of government" is highly classified to this day, but we can make some inferences. Using the demographic analysis of the Dentler and Cutright study on the effects of nuclear attack on regional Standard Metropolitan Areas (SMAs), we get a picture of the hypothetical regional and ideological makeup of a post-nuclear attack Congress. The FCDA planned for a Congress that was highly sectionalized and devoid of the "problems" of a heterogenous society. The post-attack U.S. government would have consisted mainly of southern Democrats and rural Republicans (the postwar segregationist coalition), and the population of the United States would have been composed primarily of white southerners and economically disadvantaged African Americans from the rural agricultural "Black Belt" of the deep South. Structurally, we can say that FCDA plans for the continuity of government
looked a lot like the return of the antebellum southern United States to power, even though those plans were framed around an idealized notion of the middle-class American social order of the early 1950s. The target of FCDA planning was the political constituency—the suburban middle classes—that the Truman Administration thought needed to be convinced (for both strategic planning reasons and domestic political reasons) that if the worst happened, the United States government was prepared to protect them.

CONCLUSION

In summary, real FCDA civil defense planning gave the lie to its national-level civic education program, that everyone could be and would be protected if war came. In fact, the protection of cities was a logistical nightmare that could not be solved. One of the "logistical" problems was race and to a lesser extent ethnicity and the "problems" that inhere in a social order that accepts separation as the norm. This fact translated into racialized civil defense planning in the Truman Administration. The FCDA’s main goal was to promote an illusion of protection to a select but important political constituency: mostly white, middle-class, suburban America. Real civil defense would have had to establish a means by which the industrial and urban centers of the nation would be protected or, in the language of strategic planners, “hardened.” This was too expensive and probably impossible. Early resistance to the Truman Administration’s civil defense planning came primarily from one quarter: the NAACP, not from the protests in the later 1950s, as is often maintained. Partial success is all that can be attributed to that mobilization. The combination of the Cold War emergency, the ability of national security concerns to galvanize support within the African American community under the rubric of Cold War patriotism, and the broad notion of liberal segregationist thinking severely constrained any kind of public protest. The early Cold War era profoundly limited liberal politics, broadly
conceived, in the United States; for African Americans and for political moderates regardless of race or ethnicity it was a mean season. In the case of public policy planning for civil defense, the Truman Administration sanctioned emergency planning that wrote off huge portions of the U.S. citizenry and affirmed second-tier citizenship for others, even in an imaginary post-attack environment. Accept for the NAACP there was little organized protest about the ultimate values that inhered in Truman Administration’s FCDA disaster planning. When the striking contradiction between public statements about civil defense and actual policy planning were made public by NAACP protests, the Truman Administration did nothing. In the end, contrary to claims that Cold War national security issues drove the Truman Administration to act in a progressive fashion concerning African-American civil rights, this essay paints a picture of a Truman Administration intent on dealing with contemporary domestic racial issues as subordinate to national security imperatives.
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3. For an interesting and informative take on domestic politics, race, the Cold War, and the Truman Administration, see Penny M. Von Eschen, Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997) pp. 96-166.

4. Thanks to Glenn Perusek for sharing his ideas on this concept. I borrow the term
“segregationist liberalism” from Perusek’s forthcoming work *Citizenship in the Industrial Republic: Race, Labor, and Representation in Detroit, 1910-1945*.


8. Civil Defense Act of 1950, Public Law 920, 81st Congress, 2nd Session. See *Congressional Record*, 81st Congress, 2nd session, pp. 16825, 16841-43. For a complete text of the original Federal Civil Defense Act and the various amendments that were attached over the years, see Federal Civil Defense Administration, "The National Plan For Civil Defense Against Enemy Attack" (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1956), pp. 77-103.


12. See memo from Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal and Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson to President Harry S. Truman, "Determination of the Agencies Responsible for Civil Defense and Anti-Sabotage Activities," November 29, 1946, p. 1. Papers of Harry S. Truman (PHST), President's Secretary Files (PSF), Box 117, General File-Civil Defense Folder.


16. Ibid., p. 31. On training of the civilian populace, see National Archives (NA), National Security Resources Board (NSRB), Records Group 304 (RG-304), Box 19, Project East River Folder "Information and Training For Civil Defense," Project East River, Part IX; "Panic Prevention and Control" and Appendix IXB, Part IX, pp. 55-65.


24. The Civil Defense Act is a classic example of vaguely written legislation that


27. On the importance of Southern Democratic support for President Truman in 1948, see V.O.Key, *Southern Politics In State And Nation* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986), pp. 329-44. For background on Caldwell as governor of Florida, see *ibid.*, pp. 82-105.

28. For Caldwell’s position on the role of the South and the states’ rights issue, see “Report to the State,” p. 11, August 13, 1945, Papers of Millard F. Caldwell, Jr., University of Florida, Gainesville, Speeches Delivered 1942-1946; and in general Box 10, Speeches Delivered Folder 1946-48. On the beginning of civil-rights mobilizations where Caldwell berates the “manipulators of controlled racial groups,” see “Report to the State” May 14, 1946, p. 5, *ibid*.


30. See correspondence, December 8, 1950, between Walter White, Executive Secretary to the NAACP in New York City, and Clarence Mitchell, Director of the Washington Bureau of the NAACP. Papers of the NAACP, Part 18, Special Subjects 1940-1955, Series B, General Office Files, Civil Defense, Caldwell Millard issue.


38. Walter White, Executive Secretary of the NAACP, to President Harry S. Truman, February 21, 1951, PHST, Official File (OF), Box 1743, 2965-Misc. Folder, pp. 1-2.


40. The FCDA and Air Force research studies throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s often considered "social stress" within a framework that used race, gender, religion, and
geography as fundamental principles for framing disaster studies. See, for example, Peter G. Nordlie and Robert D. Popper, Social Phenomena In A Post-Nuclear Attack Situation: Synopses of Likely Social Effects of the Physical Damage, Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR), Behavioral Sciences Division, Contract No. AF 49(638)-549, Project No 9779, Task No. 37735 (Arlington, Va.: Human Sciences Research Inc., 1961), pp. 12-34; 87-89. Writing in 1963, but drawing on his experiences in the early to mid-1950s, Dr. Nathan Hare of the Negro Digest wrote a piece on how, in effect, emergency planning of all sorts gave little consideration to issues of race. See Dr. Nathan Hare, "Can Negroes Survive A Nuclear War," Negro Digest (May 1963): pp. 26-33.


42. M.E. Diggs, Secretary, Norfolk Branch, NAACP, to President Harry S. Truman, March 21, 1951, PHST, OF, Box 1743, 2965-Misc. Folder, p. 1.


44. For a statistical breakout of the national public relations campaign that the FCDA engaged in, see Grossman, "Preparing for Cold War," pp. 96-149.

45. An exception was the African-American periodical Our World. In 1952, the journal ran a series of FCDA-sponsored civil defense instructions and stories. But even in this context, skepticism about how much concern there was for "all citizens" was high among African Americans. Our World editors made note in the essay that "where you experience any kind of discrimination write Our World immediately." See, "Negroes and the Atom Bomb," Our World (September 1952), pp. 28-31.
46. See The Michigan Chronicle, "Negro Response to City's Appeal for Auxiliary Fighters Negligible," July 26, 1952, p. 2. See also "What Would Happen if the bomb falls? Negroes not bothering to build fallout shelters—Southern civil defense programs racially segregated," Sepia, January 1962, pp. 9-11. By the late 1950s, the Rand Corporation did studies on the "problem" of race relations in the New York City subways, which were the designated bomb shelters. The concern was that there would be race riots in the subways.


49. It is important to note that this hypothetical post-attack analysis considers these issues before the deployment of intercontinental ballistic missiles. After 1960 many rural areas of the United States became prime target areas. However, between 1951 and 1954 the FCDA assumptions modeled a primary target list using seventy SMAs, which left areas of rural America, in theory at least, free of attack.

50. For contemporary theoretical consideration of nuclear war and continuity of liberal democratic governance, see Clinton Rossiter, Constitutional Dictatorship: Crisis Government in the Modern Democracies (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1948); Rossiter, "What of Congress in Atomic War," Western Political Quarterly 3 (December 1950):602-05; and Denis W. Brogan, Democratic Government In An Atomic World: A Lecture Delivered under the