

**BENJAMIN E. MAYS: THE ROLE OF CHARACTER IN THE
PROLONGED STRUGGLE FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN CIVIL
RIGHTS**

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Milton Lawler

ABSTRACT

This study examined the life of Benjamin Elijah Mays, in terms of discerning his character strengths and the role they played in addressing equality issues during his lifetime and beyond. Character was defined by the analytic framework of Peterson and Seligman's *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*. An examination of Mays's written archived works as well as key secondary references served as data sources. Peterson and Seligman's Values In Action-Inventory of Strengths (derived from and based upon their classification scheme) was converted into *if/then* statements to identify Mays's character strengths and virtues associated with specific historical events. The historical context focused on the social setting/event of *Jim Crow* and legally sanctioned segregation. Addressed was how Mays's character assisted in bringing about the end of segregation in public venues, ushering in voting rights for all disenfranchised Americans, and his use of the church and academia to recruit champions for equality in worship and life. Mays undertook an 88 year journey toward equality, a journey that spanned *second slavery*, passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, implementation of and failure to enforce affirmative action plans, and 44 years as a leader in the fight against segregation. Despite the fact that both the United States Senate and the House of Representatives unanimously passed resolutions in 1983 and 2001 (SRs 188 and 23; HRs 17 and 49, respectively) to award Mays the Presidential Medal of Freedom "*in honor of his distinguished career as an educator, civil and human rights leader, and public theologian,*" the Medal was denied by the Reagan and G.W. Bush administrations. The equality issues that existed during Mays's life continue to haunt American society, but Mays's importance to the continuing struggle for civil rights and the character strengths that he brought to this struggle are undeniable and provide fertile territory for future research.

Dedication

By the strength of my faith I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Ora Lisbeth Lawler; my children, Danyel N. Jennings, Travis Wells, Leighla-Chanel E. Roper and her husband Dewayne A. Roper, Milton Frank Lawler, and Fortune Joshua Lawler; my grandchildren, Darrin D. Sutton, Michole-Chanee Allen, Cornelia Allen, Aaaqil Lateeff Abdullah-Jennings, Taaliyah Danyel Allen, Dewayne Andre' Roper Jr. (DJ), Amayah Elise Roper; my great granddaughters, Ruqayyah and Dhamira; my great grandson, Darrin Dhamir Sutton, Jr.; my mother, Earline Lawler, and my father, Jesse Frank Lawler; Kenneth F. Fortune and M. Cassandra Fortune (Father and Mother-in-law); finally to my brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, in-laws, family, friends, and church members. May my blessing be a blessing to you and to your children. May God's favor be with you forever and a day.

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Marcie Boucouvalas, Co-Chair, spoke life into the different iterations of topics and foci. She gave me the ability to regain my voice, which I suppressed because I did not know how to communicate my message effectively. Marcie rekindled the correct level of militancy to serve my community, society-at-large, and our nation. Marcie also guided my writing to reflect the correct level of scholarship. For this, I am eternally grateful. Linda Morris helped take my level of understanding the abstract to a new dimension. The “Red Herrings” are finally pickled. Co-Chair Paul Renard for the toughening of the “egg shells” and the valuable time you spent reconstructing the dissertation and defense. Paul’s reconstruction of the dissertation posed findings and recommendations in a scholarly sequence. Finally, to Clare Klunk who gave me a sense of accomplishment. Whether during her presentation, the mini-dissertation sessions, or the conference in North Carolina, she always steered me toward the big picture. Also to former committee member Elizabeth “Liz” Roslewicz who reminded me that racism is still alive and well in the United States. Liz assisted me when I had to place people into their roles and race when telling their story.

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Attribution Page

Some of the concepts, premises, and future foci for research were adopted from conversations and revisions with Drs. Marcie Boucouvalas, Paul Renard, and Beverly Bunch-Lyons. Marcie challenged me to use the Peterson and Seligman's *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* to define character. Mays's character during his campaign to eliminate legally sanctioned segregation was the subject of the approved dissertation. Paul guided my research and helped me to mold it into a historical research. He articulated the tenor and the future foci for research. Beverly interpreted the premise of the dissertation, "that if Mays had accepted concessions on segregation, the ramifications of his acceptance would have been significant, and may have diluted the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education Topeka* decision, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and affirmative action." Also Clare Klunk and Linda Morris's advice helped shape the final document. I would be remiss if I did not give them credit for their scholarships permeate the dissertation.

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Understanding the Study

Catalyst for My Scholarly Pursuit of Benjamin Elijah Mays: A Man of Good Character

As the tumultuous 19th Century ended and the equally tumultuous 20th Century began Benjamin Elijah Mays was born, witnessed his first lynch mob, and received an admonishment from his mother. Mays entered this world on the 1st of August 1894 and by the time he was four, on the 8th of November 1898, he and his father were threatened by a lynch mob in Phoenix, South Carolina. At the tender age of six his mother told him that only he could allow someone to make him feel inferior.¹ His parents did not know that he would grow up to encourage his protégés to end legally sanctioned segregation. Segregation in public places was a societal calamity which treated Negro Americans as inferior members of American society. I selected literature about the character and energetic life of Mays to reveal an American who did not allow his birth, exposure to racism, or the restrictive nature of segregation to deny him an opportunity to achieve equality.²

In order to identify Mays's character Christopher Peterson and Martin E.P. Seligman's research became a part of the investigation. I used Peterson and Seligman's definition of character from their *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification (CSVHC)* to define Mays's character.³ The *CSVHC* also removes the nebulous cloud normally associated with past attempts to define character. Analysis of primary and secondary literary works about Mays's character revealed an alignment with the *CSVHC* (discussed in greater detail below),

¹ Benjamin E. Mays, *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography*, (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1971), 2-6.

² Leon McKenzie, "Analysis of Bildungsroman Literature as a Research Modality in Adult Education: an Inquiry," *Adult Education Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (1975): 209-16. McKenzie's research concluded, "Literary research in terms of character analysis is described and it is suggested that analysis of literature possesses the potential to be an authentic modality of research."

³ Christopher Peterson and Martin E.P. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). (*hereafter CSVHC*).

which in turn revealed his strong character and pointed to his character-enriched stance against legally sanctioned segregation.⁴ Mays's autobiography was a primary source of information as were documents from his papers at Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Center and the Library of Congress Manuscript Reading Room, in addition to other scholarly research about his life and times. Analysis of the literature illuminated the process of mobilizing a community and a society that would see the walls of legally sanctioned injustice tumble and fall—injustices stemming from the repeal of the Civil Rights Acts of 1866 and 1875, federal protection in 1877, and *Plessy vs. Ferguson* in 1896.⁵ My research convinced me that if Mays had accepted concessions on segregation, the ramifications of his acceptance would have been significant, and may have diluted the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education Topeka* decision, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and affirmative action.

It was within this context that Mays demonstrated his character in an often unfriendly environment that included opposition from the government. A major example of this environment was when the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) tried to discredit and destroy the leaders of the equality movements. J. Edgar Hoover, then-Director of the FBI, was of the position that either the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) had infiltrated the equality movements or the movements' leaders were under the influence of the CPUSA.⁶ Per FBI documents, Hoover defined anybody advocating change to the status quo as a communist or under the influence of Communist party members.⁷ While the FBI did not

⁴ *Ibid.*, 29-30. The *CSVHC* identifies a person of good character when one to two character strengths supports the virtues of wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, or transcendence.

⁵ Ralph D. Abernathy, *And The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 113; Darlene Clark Hine, William C. Hine, and Stanley Harrold, *The African American Odyssey*, 3 ed., (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2006), a14-a23.

⁶ U.S. Senate.gov, "Church Committee Created," (January 27, 1975), http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Church_Committee_Created.htm .

⁷ David Brancaccio, "Going undercover/criminalizing dissent?," in NOW (n.d.); U.S. Senate.gov, "Church Committee Created"; Federal Bureau of Investigation.gov, "Freedom of Information Act-Martin Luther King, Jr.

specifically target Mays, he lived through a period when Civil Rights advocates were often assumed to be and treated as traitors to the United States. As a result of this treatment he ushered in an environment where a black Jamaican-American was appointed to the posts of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of State; a Black American woman became the Secretary of State; and a black Kenyan-American became the President of the United States with a Black American woman as the First Lady. The activities of Mays made the turbulent racial environment at the end of the second millennium more inclusive. This inclusive environment was paramount to ushering in an era of equality for the third millennium.

The Scholarly Beginning

Affirmative action—a culmination to the Civil Rights Movement—and the continuing debate against affirmative action as well as discussions with Marcie Boucouvalas and an article by Lorraine M. Zinn served as the initial foci of my study.⁸ However, after acknowledging the complexities of such a study, I decided to investigate the life of Benjamin E. Mays, a strong voice for affirmative action, and his character. I specifically focused on how the people and events in his life contributed to his character development and how he mentored others. An article by Roger Wilkins about Mays and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* provided an initial impetus for a better understanding of character development, and I decided to use, as an analytic framework, Peterson and Seligman's *CSVHC* which is written from the perspective that character could be developed.⁹

Part 1 and Part 2,"

<http://vault.fbi.gov/Martin%20Luther%20King%2C%20Jr./Martin%20Luther%20King%2C%20Jr.%20Part%201%20of%202/view> and

<http://vault.fbi.gov/Martin%20Luther%20King%2C%20Jr./Martin%20Luther%20King%2C%20Jr.%20Part%202%20of%202/view>. B-114.

⁸ Lorraine M. Zinn, "Spirituality in Adult Education," *Adult Learning* 8, no. 5-6 (1997).

⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. F.H. Peters (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1893).

Dr. Mays's character was formed during 88 years of life spanning *second slavery*; passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, implementation of affirmative action plans, and the decision by the Reagan administration not to enforce affirmative action. These acts were pivotal events in American history. Mays believed that integration must be mutually agreed upon whereas desegregation must be enforced by legislation. He saw this in practice over his lifetime. Enforceable civil rights legislation was a goal of the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, and Mays played a key role in shaping the movement and the minds of some of its leaders. It became evident to me that the *CSVHC* was an objective source to use to investigate Mays's character.

Peterson and Seligman: The Lens

Peterson and Seligman developed the *CSVHC* as a classifications system for character strengths and virtues. I adapted their analytical approach to use it in a historical setting of socially tense relationships during the period of Jim Crow, and focused on the relationship between an individual, Mays, and the social environment, during the challenging events in Mays's personal history.¹⁰ In essence, I have employed the *CSVHC* as a lens to help me view the events of Mays's life and to identify the growth of his character strengths and virtues.¹¹ There are three key concepts that form this lens: social setting/events (derived from situational themes), virtues, and character strengths. Each will be discussed in individual paragraphs. However,

¹⁰ Dictionary.com., in The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004).The systematic practice of discriminating against and segregating black people, especially as practiced in the American South from the end of Reconstruction to the mid-1900s.

¹¹Roger Wilkins, "As the 'Schoolmaster of the Movement,' He Shaped Generations of Men: Benjamin Mays," *The Nation* 227, no. 3 (2003): 26-30; W. E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward History of The Part Which Black Folk Played in The Attempt To Reconstruct Democracy in America*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1935); Benjamin E. Mays, "The New Social Order when Integrated," in Benjamin E. Mays Papers (Washington: Howard University, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, n.d.); Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 309. DuBois coined the term second slavery after his extensive research depicting the treatment of African Americans during reconstruction. Mays admitted that he did not know how to "bring the integrated society into existence."

before I discuss the three key concepts it is germane to the research to review the *CSVHC*'s board categories of virtues.

Peterson and Seligman articulated virtues as the core characteristics valued by Western and Eastern moral philosophers and religious thinkers. They are wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Their broad categories of virtues emerged from a distillation of their multi-faceted analysis of data sources gathered from a variety of cultures: reviews of literature (historical to contemporary), brainstorming, conversations with scholars, discussions with conference participants, perusal of the popular press, and other sources. They excluded characteristics that were not valued across multiple cultures. The result was a collection of what they termed universal virtues.¹²

Virtue and Character Strengths

Peterson and Seligman identified six virtues that appear to resonate across all cultures: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Each virtue consists of corresponding character strengths, as discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3. For example, justice contains the character strengths of leadership, fairness, and citizenship. A person must have all six virtues present at or above threshold value (i.e., one to two character strengths supporting each virtue) for an individual to be deemed of good character. Embracing the position that good character could be cultivated, Peterson and Seligman developed conceptual and empirical tools to design and evaluate interventions, the efforts of family and friends seeking help for a person displaying negative behaviors. They used previous studies from a wide group of psychiatrists and psychologists to design their assessment tool. They also incorporated psychological information from across cultures as the basis for developing a

¹² Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 59.

complementary multicultural method to identify good character. The handbook focused on how the experiences of stressful life events across time have the potential to facilitate the development of a character strength such as perspective.¹³ This seemed to be the case with Benjamin Mays. Early in his childhood his mother and father encouraged him to seek positive remedies to his dilemma.

A positive remedy to life's challenges leads to good mental health. Peterson and Seligman took an important step toward a common vocabulary of measurable positive mental health with their classification system. In that vein, they additionally focused on youth development and interventions, targeting youth in crisis. They emphasized that psychological development of good character deserves further investigation and application to a wider audience—especially youth developing character before and into adulthood. This observation is particularly pertinent in that Mays had the opportunity to be exposed to *crisis* events as a young child that forged many of his character strengths, as described in Chapter 4.

Use of the Peterson and Seligman framework as a lens illuminated the character strengths and virtues in Mays's life. The social setting/events provided the environment and context within which Mays experienced education, employment, and suffrage issues during his lifetime (1894 to 1984). His social setting/events forged his developing character strengths and virtues. I placed the historical events and the character strengths and virtues developed during those events in Appendix B, interweaving them throughout the chapters as well.¹⁴ My analysis resonated with Peterson and Seligman's perspective that character can be developed.

The authors further asserted that character strengths are distinguishable routes for supporting each virtue. In essence a person must display one or two character strengths

¹³Ibid., v, 5, 14, 53-81,190-93.

¹⁴ Ibid., 81, 85, 65-66, 12.

associated with the appropriate virtue to be someone of good character. The *CSVHC* classification includes the identification of 24 character strengths mapped to specific virtues.¹⁵

The virtues and their associated character strengths that emerge from specific behaviors during social setting/events are

- Wisdom and knowledge – creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, and perspective.
- Courage – bravery, persistence, integrity, and vitality.
- Humanity – love, kindness, and social intelligence.
- Justice – citizenship, fairness, and leadership.
- Temperance – forgiveness and mercy, humility/modesty, prudence, and self-regulation (self-control).
- Transcendence – appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, and spirituality.

Situational Themes

According to Peterson and Seligman, situational themes provide the environment for the specific habits to emerge that lead people to manifest given character strengths in given situations and that contribute to virtues. However, I have used the term “*behaviors*” in lieu of the term “*habits*” employed by Peterson and Seligman. I believe the term “behaviors” more accurately describes my observations of the events of Mays’ life. In this context, a behavior emerges when a person starts to develop a character strength forged in a social setting/event. The situational themes or social settings/events must take place setting by setting (e.g., the

¹⁵ Ibid., 33-52, 53-89.

workplace, the family, etc.). The setting for purposes of this inquiry is the context/social setting of the Jim Crow era and the various social events that manifested during this period. Also, while Peterson and Seligman addressed how one person relates to other individuals, I expanded that scope to include how Mays related not only to individuals but also to groups, institutions, and society-at-large.¹⁶

Peterson and Seligman described how a person can achieve the same result (i.e., the development of a character strength) by using different configurations of themes indicating that there is more than one way to become a person of good character. It is critical that a person find a venue in which his or her themes produce the desired end. The historical periods that affected Mays's life and the major historical influences that arose during those periods provide the basis for understanding and defining his social setting/events. A social setting/event transitions Peterson and Seligman's situational theme from a narrower setting such as the workplace to an historical event or historical condition where a person can interact with a small or larger group to challenge injustices like Jim Crow, lack of access to an education, lack of access to adequate housing, the power of the media, and discrimination. Character strength emerges as a derivative of the behaviors developed to overcome or deal with a social setting/event and galvanizes a person to perform noble acts for others as well as for self.

Distilling Mays's character using the three key concepts made this a scholarly learning experience for me because I had to dig deep into my inner self to discard bias, preconceived notions, and ignorance about attempts by agencies of the government of the United States to discredit the Civil Rights Movement. By addressing these diverse national issues I was better empowered to tell the story of an American hero who fought injustices against American citizens. While some identifiers, such as those a person can self-select on the census, may be

¹⁶ Ibid., 14.

suitable for purposes of racial and cultural identity, as civilized human beings we need to rise above the adverse use of such labels that serve to separate us in order to embrace the richness our society possesses. The literature about the energetic life of Benjamin Elijah Mays revealed his character strengths and virtues to provide an inspiring example of hope to all Americans especially the children of the Baby Boomers.¹⁷ Many of the accomplishments of the equality movements were supported by members of the Baby Boomer generation. It is necessary for their descendants (millennial generation) to continue the momentum to assure equality for all.

Questions Guiding the Inquiry

Much of Mays's life was connected to the fight against segregation, and at each step along his path, he demonstrated the character strengths and virtues needed to sustain him in a lifelong struggle. The following questions guided the study:

1. From a historical perspective, what was the role of character in Benjamin Elijah Mays's quest for equal opportunity? How did his character correspond to the Peterson and Seligman classifications on the three conceptual levels?
2. What role did his protégés' play in dismantling legally sanctioned segregation? What role did character play in his protégés' efforts to prevent the dismantling of affirmative action, the culmination of Mays's quest for equal opportunity?

Chapter Organization.

This document is organized into seven chapters: Chapter 1, Overview of the Study; Chapter 2, Review of Related Literature; Chapter 3, Method; Chapter 4, "Bubba" and "Bennie" Mays (1894 through 1920); Chapter 5, Graduate Education and Employment: A Life's Work

¹⁷McKenzie, "Analysis of Bildungsroman Literature as a Research Modality in Adult Education: An Inquiry," 209-16.

1920-1984; Chapter 6, Selected Protégés of Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays; and Chapter 7, Benjamin Elijah Mays: A Life Worth Living.¹⁸

¹⁸ Rex Barnett, "Benjamin E. Mays: Failure is not reaching your goal; failure is having no goal to reach for," (Atlanta, GA: History on Video, Inc., 1992). Dr. Mays revealed in the video that his family called him "Bubba" as a child.

Chapter One - Overview of the Study

President Johnson's speech at Howard University, a precursor to his signing the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and Executive Order 11246, in a sense summarized Benjamin Elijah Mays's lifelong fight for equal opportunity:

You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, 'You are free to compete with all the others,' and still justly believe that you have been completely fair.¹⁹

Mays's quest for equality occurred during a time when Jim Crow was the law of the land and segregation was the way of life for most Americans. His developed or developing virtues and character strengths emerged during the historical events that shaped his life and provided evidence of his character (see Appendix B).

The *CSVHC* offered a tool to discuss character in a more systematic and structured way. While many Americans believed Mays was a man of good character, their opinions of him were generally based on observations of the man, personally reading his writings about his life and work to end segregation, and reading or hearing what others wrote about him. Toward this end I employed Peterson and Seligman's definition of character to help provide a clearer and more objective set of defined factors for character strength. The starting point for this research was to

¹⁹ Lyndon B. Johnson, "'To fulfill these rights.' Speech delivered at Howard University on June 4, 1965," in *The Affirmative Action Debate*, ed. George E. Curry (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1996), 16. President Johnson signed The Voting Rights Act on August 6, 1965, and Executive Order 11246 (affirmative action) on September 24, 1965.

determine if Mays evidenced the six *CSVHC* virtues with one or more character strength(s) per virtue, as discussed further in Chapter 3 on Method.²⁰

As described later, Mays displayed the six *CSVHC* virtues of wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Relevant to his virtue of wisdom and knowledge, he showed evidence of the character strengths of curiosity, creativity, open mindedness, love of learning, and perspective. Bravery, persistence, integrity, and vitality were evident in his virtue of courage. Love, kindness, and social intelligence supported his virtue of humanity. His virtue of justice consisted of the strengths of citizenship, fairness, and leadership. Mays displayed forgiveness and mercy, humility/modesty, and self-regulation for the virtue of temperance. Appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, and spirituality were character strengths evident in his life to support his virtue of transcendence. Of the 24 character strengths the title for appreciation of beauty and excellence might be most confusing because Peterson and Seligman did not distinguish between beauty and excellence. For the purpose of this research, the emphasis will always be on excellence, unless otherwise noted, to identify Mays's display of this character strength.

According to the *CSVHC*, virtues and character strengths emerge from behaviors developed in relating to others in specific settings. This concept, labeled a "situational theme," describes how one relates to others in a specific setting. The concept was expanded for purposes of this study to target the entire environment and social climate as a setting, including social events occurring during an era of social tension in a particular historic time/space. For example, Jim Crow and the accompanying era of social tension was a setting in which Mays cultivated his virtues and character strengths. The *de jure* segregation of his time provided a context for his

²⁰ Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 13-30. A person is a person of good character when the six virtues are evident in their life and supported by one to two character strengths for each virtue.

development as a person and as a leader, and a target for his endeavors. Other social historical events affecting Mays were the Great Depression, the World War II migration of blacks from the South to the North, the emerging Civil Rights movement, and the frustration caused by continuing racism and inequality.

Together, social setting/events, virtues, and character strengths galvanized Mays's behavior in accepting and taking responsibility for his actions and feelings. He also felt empowered to play a behind the scenes role, mentoring his protégés on how to both develop good character and end legally sanctioned segregation. Finally, his virtues, further elaborated upon in Appendix B, prepared him mentally to take responsibility for any failures associated with his quest for equality, and America benefited from Mays's struggle to help the country embrace diversity.²¹

People who knew him continue to admire Mays. He was twice unanimously nominated for the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Most Congressional members recognized him as a man who deserved the medal because of his contributions to the Civil Rights Movement, American higher education, and American theology.²²

Unfortunately, Mays was not universally beloved, and formal recognition of his character was derailed by his political opponents. Senators Richard Russell and Herman Talmadge of Georgia wrongly accused Dr. Mays of having communist leanings in the 1960s.²³ President

²¹Ibid., 250; Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 137; Wilkins, "As the 'Schoolmaster of the Movement,' He Shaped Generations of Men: Benjamin Mays," 26-30. Mays received a Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) conferred by the University of Chicago in 1935.

²² Mays protégés Michael Lomax, Andrew Young, and Julian Bond as well as King's protégés John Lewis, Walter Fauntroy, and Jesse Jackson are alive and in positions to remind the country of Mays's contribution to diversity.

²³98th US Congress, "Senate Resolution. Presidential Medal of Freedom to Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays, SR 188," (July 29, 1983); 98th US Congress, "House. Presidential Medal of Freedom to Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays, HR 17," (January 3, 1983); 107th U.S. Congress, "Senate Resolution. Presidential Medal of Freedom Posthumously to Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays, SR 23," (February 14, 2001); 107th U.S. Congress, "House Resolution. Presidential Medal of Freedom Posthumously to Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays, HR 49," (February 14, 2001); Foreword by Orville Vernon Burton in Mays, *Born to Rebel*, xxix.

Ronald Reagan, a staunch anti-communist, denied Mays the first Congressional recommendation for the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1983.²⁴

The 107th Congress unanimously passed a second resolution in 2001, seventeen years after Mays's death and without amendment, requesting the President to award the Presidential Medal of Freedom, posthumously, to Dr. Mays. The 107th Congress resolved that Dr. Mays should receive the award in honor of his distinguished career as an educator, civil and human rights leader, and public theologian. President George W. Bush declined to honor Mays with the award.

Mays's Uncompromising Position

As a theologian, human rights activist, and educator, Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays was highly qualified to make a key argument against legally sanctioned segregation. Compromise with injustice was impossible. Mays wanted all Americans to have an opportunity equal to the majority White male, and to fully enjoy the rights and benefits bestowed in the Declaration of Independence. Mays's refusal to compromise on the issue of legally sanctioned segregation was justified and was pursued through his character strengths of persistence, citizenship, and fairness.

Both friends and opponents had mixed views about Mays's intransigence in accepting any aspect of Jim Crow. His lawyer, Thurgood Marshall, viewed his refusal to compromise as a strength because Mays fought for his rights in the courts and voted to use the legal team of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to defend the rights of others as well. Other Civil Rights movement decision makers (e.g., the leaders of the Urban League) considered his stance a weakness because Mays did not compromise his position even

²⁴Bob Herbert, "Righting Reagan's Wrongs?," *New York Times* November 13, 2007. I loosely applied the same adapted *CSVHC* evaluation process for President Reagan. The literature appeared to show that Reagan was also a man of good character. Initial review revealed that Reagan displayed all six virtues with 19 character strengths. Persistence, citizenship, and fairness are three of the 24 character strengths listed in the *CSVHC*.

when concessions were made to offset poverty. It is my position that any concession by Mays on segregation would have diluted *Brown v. Board of Education Topeka* (1954), the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and affirmative action. This position is based on the country's race history which shows that complacent and half-hearted attempts to change the status quo resulted in weak and unenforceable legislation. Mays was a consistent participant and leader in the great struggle against segregation.²⁵

His ability to remain committed to a cause or position not only showed the character strength of hope but also built trust and rapport when he refused to voluntarily participate in segregated institutions in 1916. This was one of his first displays of his character strength of leadership. Mays used self-discipline to foster leadership personally and in others.

Moreover, his refusal to allow the perpetuation of segregation in his home in 1927 was very effective in stressing the need for perspective. He ensured the successful enactment of legislation when he refused to end *Freedom Summer* after three civil rights workers' bodies were discovered in Philadelphia, Mississippi on August 5, 1964. He had the ability and education to choose a prestigious career in Negro American academia or become a minister at a large church. However, he remained on the front lines in the fight against segregation, and chose to be brave and speak up for what he believed was right.²⁶

He refused to adjust his stance against legally sanctioned segregation, and conveyed this stance to his protégés; his protégés in turn exposed their protégés to Mays's stance. Mays was vehemently opposed to segregation because it perpetuated the inferior/superior relationship

²⁵ Benjamin E. Mays, "A letter from Mays to Mr. J.O. Thomas," in *The National Urban League Southeastern Office, Benjamin E. Mays' Correspondence 1926-1928* (Washington: Library of Congress Manuscript Room, October 17, 1927). This letter from Mays to Mr. J.O. Thomas was militant in nature considering the traditions of the South. Mays was opposed to providing special provisions for a segregated luncheon at his house.

²⁶ Associated Press, "Probe of 1964 Miss. Killings to Continue," *Washington Post*, August 16, 2009, A5. This case is open because the key suspects remain free due to lack of evidence.

between Blacks and Whites. His opposition was based on the fact the inferiority stunted the development of the Negro Community as well as hindering the country's efforts to combat against fascism and communism worldwide. His protégés adopted the same or a similar stance to help end the crippling affect of segregation in the United States. At each level they stayed the course until the objectives of the Civil Rights Movement were passed as affirmative action legislation enforceable by the federal government.

The founding fathers chose to guarantee the rights of the majority male while denying the rights of women, Native Americans, Latinos, and Negroes. Mays chose the route of legal challenges to discrimination because the states would not voluntarily provide equal opportunity for its citizens, and believed that "ceaseless agitation" would be ineffective.²⁷ Mays was about to bring suit against the Southern Railway in 1944, when the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) did not rule in his favor. Mays's lawyers, Thurgood Marshall, Spottswood Robinson, and Robert L. Carter argued that Mays "had been refused service because of ... [his] race and that statutes relied upon to segregate first-class passengers did not apply to interstate passengers."²⁸ Before Mays sued Southern Railway, Elmer W. Henderson, *Elmer W. Henderson vs. United States, et al.*, had "won a similar case in court, and the dining car curtain became a relic for the museum."²⁹ With the Henderson victory, which ended segregated dining aboard rail cars, Mays resolved to work through the legislative process to extract equal opportunity for oppressed Americans, another display of his character strength of perspective.³⁰

²⁷ George B. Tindall and David E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1997), 581. W.E.B. DuBois adopted Frederick Douglass's ceaseless agitation tactic. Ceaseless agitation was effective in ending slavery it was not effective during the Civil Rights Movement.

²⁸ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 199.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 199. Mays and his legal team decided that this victory was sufficient to end segregation in the rail road dining car.

Significance of the Study

Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays was a disenfranchised American from 1895 to 1946.³¹ Along with many other roles he was the “spiritual mentor” to Martin Luther King Jr., a client of Thurgood Marshall, an advisor to Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Carter, a chaperone to Dorothy I. Height, and a dishwasher at Highlander Folk School in 1956.³² Mays was an extraordinarily complex and constantly astonishing person. Mays understood and supported the Highlander’s policy of *a turn for everyone*. In a sense, this was the essence of the man known as the *Last of the Great Schoolmasters*, always willing to do what was necessary to accomplish the task. Even while at leisure, the events of the day constantly shaped him.³³

An evening at Highlander illustrated the complexities of his life. After Mays finished washing dishes with Robert and Jean Graetz, the White American couple had to leave early. Robert and Jean Graetz, and their neighbor Rosa Parks, had to return to Montgomery, Alabama because their home had been bombed. Before they departed the participants at Highlander sang, “*Just like a tree planted by the water, we shall not be moved!*”³⁴ The words to the song were a good standard and apt description for Mays’s 44 year quest for equal opportunity. He is a fitting subject for an analysis of character strength, and a person who deserves to be remembered and emulated for the qualities that are discussed in the CSVHC.

³¹ Ibid., 324.

³² Freddie C. Colston, "Mays as Mentor to King," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998). ; Dorothy I. Height, *Open Wide The Freedom Gates: A Memoir*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2003); Mays, *Born to Rebel*. Robert D. Graetz and Jean Ellis Graetz, "Letter to the editor 'Dr. Benjamin E. Mays'," *Ebony*, November 1, 2004.

³³ Lerone Jr. Bennett, "The Last of the Great Schoolmasters," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 333-40.

³⁴ Graetz and Graetz, "Letter to the editor 'Dr. Benjamin E. Mays'," 17; Lutherans Online.com, "A White Preacher's Message...Rev. Robert S. Graetz," http://www.lutheranonline.com/servlet/lo_ProcServ/dbpage=page&mode=display&gid=20052687771948356801111555. Robert and Jean Graetz were the White pastor and pastor’s wife of the Black Lutheran church in Montgomery. Graetz was the secretary of the Montgomery Improvement Association in 1955. Graetz received the Russwurm Award from the National Negro Newspaper Publishers Association in 1957.

Chapter Two - Review of Related Literature

Capturing the essence of the “*Schoolmaster of the Movement*” was not an easy task. In reviewing the literature about Mays’s character, it became evident that I had to be selective to randomly distill the literature that spoke about Mays’s never-changing stance against legally sanctioned segregation. With this as the starting point, contextualizing the study in its historical time period was an equally important aim of the chapter.³⁵

The review of literature revolved around the study’s key focus, the historical and future interpretation of Mays’s character in his quest for equality, as well as an exploration of the relationships Mays had with U.S. presidents, Civil Rights leaders, and other members of society. Specific attention was directed to the benefits he brought to society; the role his protégés played in dismantling legally sanctioned segregation; and the role his protégés were playing to prevent the dismantling or dilution of affirmative action. The literature review also focused on his behind the scenes actions and how they have helped to preserve the recognition of his character 27 years after his death.

Accordingly, the chapter is divided into six sections. First, an understanding of the analytic classification framework of Peterson and Seligman on character is offered, followed by two sections on Negro American history before Mays’s birth: the period of slavery (1619-1865) and post-Civil War America (1866-1877). A section on the second reconstruction (1878-1964) follows. The final two sections address Mays’s life (1894-1984) and work (1921-1984): the genesis of the Civil Rights Movement; key protégés of Mays; civil rights legislation; and African American leadership history in relationship to the ongoing affirmative action debate. These

³⁵ Lerone Jr. Bennett, *The Shaping Of Black America: The Struggles and Triumphs of African-Americans, 1619 to the 1990s*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1993); Bennett, "The Last of the Great Schoolmasters."

provided identification of the social settings/events (themes) and the behaviors that emerged within those social settings/events.

Basis for Peterson and Seligman's Character Strengths and Virtues

To better understand the role character played in Mays's life, a brief look at Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is useful before discussing the Peterson and Seligman survey of character strengths. The ancient scholar's philosophy on character shapes the character landscape, affording me a start in defining a person with good character. *Nicomachean Ethics* states,

Excellence, then, being of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual excellence owes its birth and growth mainly to instruction, and so requires time and experience, while moral excellence is the result of habit or custom....From this it is plain that none of the moral excellences or virtues is implanted in us by nature; for that which is by nature cannot be altered by training...The virtues, then, come neither by nature nor against nature, but nature gives the capacity for acquiring them, and this is developed by training.³⁶

Mays knew from intellectual and moral experience that compromise on segregation would only lead to a weak temporary solution.³⁷ Intellectually and morally Mays had an understanding of Aristotle's belief that

Every art and every inquiry, and likewise every act and purpose, seems to aim at some good; and so it has been well said that the good is that at which everything aims...Now since there are many kinds of actions and many arts and sciences, it follows that there are

³⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*: 25.

³⁷ Mays, *Born to Rebel*.

many ends also; e.g., health is the end of medicine, ships of shipbuilding, victory of the art of war, and wealth of economy.³⁸

Mays participated in the civil rights movement (action) and mentored some of the leaders of the movement (action) to achieve equal opportunity (end). He demonstrated his judgment when he chose to remain in the segregated South rather than pursue ample opportunities in the North. “But each man can form a judgment about what he knows, and is called ‘a good judge’ of that—of any special matter when he has received special education therein.”³⁹ He chose to give up his ability to vote and instead lived in states where Negro American disenfranchisement was legal, while constantly pursuing equality for every American. In a sense, Mays shaped his social setting/events by learning how to defeat the powerful system of segregation by living in its presence.

By living in the presence of segregation his view of character was defined in his day by the Greek scholars. Mays, as a student of Greek at Bates College, was familiar with the ancient Greek philosophers’ concept of character. As a result, his understanding of character in all probability was correspondingly aligned with an ancient Greek philosopher, such as Aristotle, and he used this understanding to achieve the goals of equality for all Americans. Such a framework may have been an additional influence on his behavior and character development and, although outside the scope of the present study, could be the focus of a future inquiry. The ancient Greek concepts of character and virtue were, in fact, ones that Peterson and Seligman started with. They used Aristotle’s work to define virtue as “an acquired skill learned through trial and error.”⁴⁰ The *CSVHC* authors also drew from Alfarabi, a founder of Islamic philosophy. Alfarabi’s definition of virtue constitutes a philosophical and religious perspective of virtue.

³⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*: 1.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁰ Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 46-50.

Both Aristotle and Alfarabi viewed virtues as character strengths between multiple associated character strengths and their vices, e.g., the virtue of courage separated bravery from its vice of cowardice; integrity from its vice of dishonesty; and perseverance from its vice of surrender. St. Thomas Aquinas, whose virtues Peterson and Seligman also used, constructed a list of Seven Heavenly Virtues or cardinal virtues. He, “constructed his list by retaining the cardinal virtues of temperance, courage, justice, and wisdom and then adding the three theological virtues proposed by Saint Paul: faith, hope, and charity (or love).”⁴¹

Beyond these influences Peterson and Seligman elected to define character in a way that would cross cultural boundaries. Accordingly, the authors only identified character strengths and virtues that met “10 criteria” across cultures:⁴²

- Criterion 1: A strength contributes to various fulfillments that constitute the good life, for oneself and for others. Although strengths and virtues determine how an individual copes with adversity, the authors’ focus is on how they fulfill an individual.
- Criterion 2: Although strengths can and do produce desirable outcomes, each strength is morally valued in its own right, even in the absence of obvious beneficial outcomes.
- Criterion 3: The display of a strength by one person does not diminish other people in the vicinity.
- Criterion 4: Being able to phrase the “opposite” of a putative strength in a felicitous way counts against regarding it as a character strength.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 17-27.

- Criterion 5: A strength needs to be manifest in the range of an individual's behavior—thoughts, feelings, and/or actions—in such a way that it can be assessed. It should be trait like in the sense of having a degree of generality across situations and stability across time.
- Criterion 6: The strength is distinct from other positive traits in the classification and cannot be decomposed into them.
- Criterion 7: A character strength is embodied in consensual paragons.
- Criterion 8: We do not believe this feature can be applied to all strengths, but an additional criterion where sensible is the existence of prodigies with respect to the strength.
- Criterion 9: Conversely, another criterion for a character strength is the existence of people who show—selectively—the total absence of a given strength.
- Criterion 10: As suggested by Erikson's 1963 discussion of psychosocial stages and the virtues that result from their satisfactory resolutions, the larger society provides institutions and associated rituals for cultivating strengths and virtues and then for sustaining their practice.

Peterson and Seligman interlaced religious thought —Judaism; Confucianism and Taoism; Islam; Buddhism ; Christianity; and Hinduism—with the Eastern and Western philosophers' concept of character to identify good character, defined as developing the six virtues.⁴³

⁴³ Ibid., 5, 10, 13-14.

The Period of Slavery (1619-1865)

The literature review had an additional focus on a wide range of historical events spanning the introduction of slavery to the English settlers' North America through the modern era. Although Mays was not born until 1894, he started life under the shadow of slavery. He was born in Epworth, South Carolina on August 1st, 1894 to Hezekiah and Louvenia Carter Mays, both former slaves who were freed after the Civil War. Hezekiah became a sharecropper or a renter of a farm to support his family of ten, mother and father and their eight children (three girls and five boys).⁴⁴

With Mays's family history in mind, I chose to use Frederick Douglass's view of slavery as a starting point, and contrast it with that of Booker T. Washington, who like Hezekiah Mays, was nine years old when freed from slavery in 1865.

Frederick Douglass wrote in the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* that his life as a slave was very hard and degrading.⁴⁵ Douglass's story is illustrative of the problems facing even the most intelligent and self-directed slaves. During his time as a slave, from his birth in 1818 until his escape in 1838, Douglass discovered that an education was the pathway to freedom. He deduced this from his self-education and lessons from the schoolboys he met. After being hired out by his slave owner Hugh Auld, and wrestling the slave trainer Edward Covey to submission, Douglass escaped captivity and six years later, in 1845, was an articulate leader of the Abolition Movement. In December 1846, Douglass received \$700 dollars from Ellen and Anna Richardson of England to pay Auld (an example of integrity despite the injustice associated with slavery). Upon receipt of the payment from the

⁴⁴ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 4-5. Mays distinguished between the sharecropper who worked for someone else and a person who rented their farm. The renter had a greater status than a sharecropper because the renter had more control over their labor and earnings.

⁴⁵ Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845).

Richardson family, Auld legally emancipated Frederick Douglass (an example of an individual operating within the legal system to secure legal change for the masses). While he abhorred slavery, he chose to abide by the law of the land. As an escaped slave, he could easily be captured and returned to bondage. Douglass knew that a return to bondage would have hampered his work as an abolitionist. Therefore, after emancipation, Douglass developed and employed the technique of “ceaseless agitation” to achieve his goals and the goals of the abolitionists as well as those of the fledgling Women’s Movement. With the exception of ceaseless agitation, Mays emulated some of Douglass’s methods , especially the concept of working within the parameters of the existing law even when you oppose the provisions of the law. Douglass’s view stands in stark contrast to that of Booker T. Washington.⁴⁶

Booker T. Washington was born into slavery in 1856, nearly ten years after Douglass’s emancipation. Unlike Douglass, Washington was a child during his period of enslavement. My research leads me to believe that Washington’s view of slavery was made more positive by his pleasant childhood memories as chronicled in his autobiography *Up from Slavery*. He admitted to living in the midst of “miserable, desolate, and discouraging surroundings. This was so, however, [he continued] not because my owners were especially cruel, for they were not, as compared with many others.”⁴⁷ Although Washington said his mother ran away because the slave owner treated her badly, the only torture he received during slavery was when he received his scratchy flax shirt (a flax garment was woven with coarse or fine fibers from a flax plant, the durable material.).

⁴⁶ Hine, Hine, and Harrold, *The African American Odyssey*, 409. Booker T. Washington realized the flaw in ceaseless agitation when Monroe Trotter and W.E.B. DuBois were unsuccessful in their attempts to wrestle political and economic power from Washington by supporting President Woodrow Wilson.

⁴⁷ Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*, (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1901).

According to Shirley Graham DuBois, Washington wanted to model himself after Frederick Douglass and he sought an education regardless of the cost. Although Washington chose accommodation over ceaseless agitation, he nevertheless devoted his life to securing an equitable education for the Negro American while increasing the community's economic opportunities. In addition, Washington chose an *Industrial Education* over a liberal education. While Douglass's and Washington's slavery experiences were at different ends of the spectrum, the slave owner's techniques were very similar.⁴⁸

Stubblefield and Keane discussed how the slave owner desired to take advantage of skill training, slave socialization, and slave religiosity to maintain the self-sufficiency of the plantation. The self-sufficient plantation produced the majority of the items needed to keep the plantation profitable. Many slave owners sought to have their slaves receive skilled training from a journeyman or by other informal means such as a skilled slave teaching another slave a trade.⁴⁹

Joseph F. Kett reported that in order for a young man to receive a liberal education he would have to be in the company of one who had a liberal education. The choice of an *Industrial Education* as the goal for the Negro American Community was slightly counter-balanced when Washington introduced the *Chautauqua Assemblies* version of a liberal education to portions of the Negro American Community. General Samuel Armstrong and the professors at Hampton Institute exposed Washington and the other Negro Students to the Chautauqua Assemblies.

⁴⁸ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*; Shirley Graham DuBois, *Booker T. Washington, Educator of Hand, Head, and Heart*, (New York: Messner, 1955); Washington, *Up from Slavery*. An Industrial Education was closely related to the training former slaves received to assure the plantation was self-sustaining. Washington's accommodation tactic accepted the status quo in exchange for opportunity to participate as equals in the future.

⁴⁹ Harold W. Stubblefield and Patrick Keane, *Adult Education in the American Experience: From the Colonial Period to the Present*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994).

Washington not only was a frequent speaker at Chautauqua events nationwide, he also established a close relationship with John Heyl Vincent and his family.⁵⁰

In colonial and antebellum times, a liberal education was not available to people of a social standing lower than the gentry. The larger cities had schools for persons of lower social standing and some societies had literary societies to help a person who desired to receive a liberal education. However, for the majority of White Americans considered lower class, this was not an option. The North as well as the South needed skilled workers to support the industries necessary to enrich the economic infrastructure of the country.⁵¹ It was expedient for the country to have a large pool of highly skilled but uneducated labor so it was by design to intentionally limit a person's access to a liberal education. The slave was at the bottom of the social ranking and perceived by some White Americans as unworthy of any education higher than one needed to gain an industrial skill.

Slavery had an important economic component. Page Smith wrote that the value of a field hand was from \$500 to \$1200. As in the case of Frederick Douglass, certain elements in society believed that an educated Negro was useless as a field hand or industrial worker. Smith compared the value of a field hand to the acreage the slaveholder owned. He calculated that when the slave escaped it was equal to losing five to ten acres of land.⁵²

While the slave owner lived with the daily fear of losing his investment, the slaves turned their harsh living conditions into emotional Christian armor to protect their souls with the hope of deliverance. Thus, the church became a catalyst for further intimidation, manipulation, and

⁵⁰ Emmitt J. Scott and L. Beecher Stowe, *Booker T. Washington, Builder of a Civilization*, (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1916); Washington, *Up from Slavery*. The Chautauqua Assembly exposed participants to adult education classes covering the arts, religious education, etc. The movement was started by John Heyl Vincent and Lewis Miller at Lake Chautauqua, New York.

⁵¹ Joseph F. Kett, *The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties: From Self-Improvement to Adult Education in America 1750-1990*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

⁵² Page Smith, *The Shaping of America*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980).

domination of the slave by the slave owner. The church eventually became the place where slaves met to discuss the need for social change. E. Franklin Frazier reported that the Negro American minister had traditionally used the church and a relationship with Jesus Christ to mobilize the community into action through an adult education campaign focusing on the issue of the day.⁵³ Christian ministers operated homogenously distinct places of worship (one of the places where segregation was and continues to be practiced). Frazier discussed how the Christian churches in the North and South split and set up separate organizations because the church organizations in the South justified slavery using the Holy Scriptures. The Northern elements of the church organizations, however, refused to justify slavery on Christian grounds.

C. Eric Lincoln described how segregation in the churches, started during slavery, benefited the Civil Rights Movement, and how the segregated church helped Black ministers in Philadelphia under the leadership of Reverend Leon Sullivan to end blatant forms of discrimination. Unlike the Negro American church on the plantations and in the South, where slave owners could fire the pastor if they did not like his preaching, Sullivan was able to target racist businesses because the owners and managers did not control the church. Businesses practicing discrimination in Philadelphia were not able to demand that ministers stop their protest against job discrimination. Unlike the South where churches were supported by the land owners, most Northern Negro churches were supported by the parishioners.⁵⁴

In summary, activist ministers mobilized the community through the invocation of a non-racist Jesus Christ to eliminate conflicts between religion and justice. This was necessary especially in the South because the South started the process of returning Negro Americans to a

⁵³ Edward Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1964).

⁵⁴ C. E. Lincoln, *The Black Church since Frazier*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1974). The targeted businesses operated within the Black communities and did not hire Blacks or they received city contracts and did not hire Blacks.

slave-like status well before Jim Crow became the law of the United States (*Plessy vs. Ferguson*, 1896). The process and its restrictive results lasted well into the mid-1960s.

Post-Civil War America, 1865-1877

Carter G. Woodson and Charles H. Wesley documented the beginning of the disenfranchisement of Negro American men. In *The Negro in Our History*, the authors described how Mississippi re-implemented the “grandfather clause” in 1890 for this purpose although the *Black Codes* were repealed in 1865. This clause allowed White men to vote if their grandfathers had previously exercised the privilege to vote. At the time, no Negro American man had had an African voting grandfather. While some had White grandfathers, the Negro American man could not prove the relationship since White men normally did not admit they had fathered Negro children.⁵⁵

Woodson and Wesley reported that South Carolina followed Mississippi’s lead in 1895. Louisiana added the clause in 1898. North Carolina passed restrictive suffrage measures in 1900. Virginia and Alabama passed their restrictive suffrage measures in 1901. Georgia did the same in 1907 and Oklahoma passed similar legislation in 1910.

The states’ legislation effectively invalidated the 15th Amendment to the United States Constitution. The denial of the right to vote was a cornerstone of the segregation law that also curtailed the Negro American’s privilege to ride the railways, attend school, or visit an amusement park. Woodson and Wesley felt the laws were passed in reaction to the liberties the Negro American enjoyed under Reconstruction and protection from the federal government.⁵⁶ The United States Supreme Court nullified the Civil Rights Act of 1875 through reactionary

⁵⁵ Carter G. Woodson and Charles H. Wesley, *The Negro in Our History*, 10th ed. (Washington: The Associated Publishers Inc., 1962).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

rulings that favored a return to the subjugation of Negro Americans and the elevation of the White American over the Negro American community.

Woodson described how the Founding Fathers considered the lack of education as the reason behind the misconception that the Negro American was inferior to the White man. This misconception became the justification for both slavery and segregation. In later writings, Woodson stated that misinterpretations of the Bible—misuse of the verses to justify segregation—led to the *mis-education* of the Negro American. In other words, they caused misleading education to flourish, which caused Negro Americans to accept behavior that retarded their development as a people.⁵⁷

Louis R. Harlan wrote about the spread of segregation from the South to the North. Whereas the South used segregation as a way to deny human status and dignity to Black Americans, Northern Whites adopted segregation, from 1865 to 1964, as a way to promote White supremacy in occupational and residential arenas. White supremacists enforced segregation by lynching victims and through race riots.⁵⁸

W.E.B. DuBois wrote critically of Mays's childhood hero Booker T. Washington. DuBois felt that Washington's Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition speech sped the wheels of disenfranchisement.⁵⁹ Washington, the first Negro American to head a Negro school, was invited by the president of the Exposition to speak about the *Negro Problem*. He addressed the exposition on September 18th, 1895. The attendees at the exposition, the press, and the president applauded the words Washington used in his address and propelled him to the

⁵⁷ Carter G Woodson, *The Mis-education of the Negro*, (Washington, DC: Associated Publishers, 1933).

⁵⁸ Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856-1901*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901-1915*, (New York Oxford University Press, 1983); Harlan, *Booker T. Washington in Perspective: Essays of Louis R. Harlan*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988).

⁵⁹ W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York: Penguin, 1903); DuBois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America*.

position of spokesman for the Negro American people to fill the void left by Frederick Douglass's death on February 20th, 1895.⁶⁰

DuBois labeled Washington's speech as the "Atlanta Compromise." According to DuBois, the compromise signaled a change from Frederick Douglass's direction for assimilation through self-assertion. He made that accusation before his 1935 study, in which DuBois chronicled the 1868 Negro Hunt in Bossier Parrish, Louisiana, where White hunters killed 120 Negroes during the hunt.⁶¹

DuBois's study of the Philadelphia Negro in 1899 stated that in 1847 only ten percent of the adults and youth in the Negro American community in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania had received an education. DuBois's studies and writings reflected a society where Negro life and Negro rights were not important to the residents of White society; they also established the social setting for Dr. Mays's life and his life's work. DuBois's studies and writings also illustrated the effects of segregation, discrimination, lack of adequate housing and access to education, and lynchings, all of which affected Mays during his struggle for equality.

Second Reconstruction, 1877-1964

John Hope Franklin, in an experience similar to that of Mays, detailed how from age 6 to 80 he encountered and endured segregation and racism from Tulsa, Oklahoma to Washington, D.C. Similar to Mays he experienced lynch mob violence at an early age when racists in Tulsa's race riot destroyed the *Black Wall Street*. In 1955, Franklin was appointed to the program committee of the Southern Historical Association. The program was held in the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee, which did not allow Black diners or guests. Although he was not in

⁶⁰ Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader*, 1856-1901.

⁶¹ DuBois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward History of The Part Which Black Folk Played in The Attempt To Reconstruct Democracy in America*.

attendance at the program, he regretted not hearing William Faulkner; however, he quoted a portion of Mays's speech, "As this country could not exist half slave and half free, it cannot exist half-segregated and half-desegregated." Dr. Franklin also gave insight to help develop the origins of the possible acrimonious relationship between Mays and the Reagan administration, a speculation in need of further research postulated in this study.⁶²

Charlotte Morgan detailed the conditions that led to the 1911 merging of the National League for the Protection of Colored Women, the Committee on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, and the Committee for Improving the Industrial Conditions Among Negroes under the umbrella of the National Urban League. The conditions justifying the merger were low wages, intolerable living conditions, and limited opportunities for advancement. The League was effective in achieving some of its goals. However, it consciously created segregated work councils under the guise that they were "of Black workers for Black workers." The establishment of Jim Crow councils drew criticism from the public.⁶³

Jim Crow conditions led to the riots at MacDill Field in Tampa, Florida. Alan Osur described how race relations in Tampa during the 1943 riot were similar to race relations that Benjamin E. Mays encountered in 1926. It appeared that little had changed since Mays tried to initiate change in Tampa from 1926 to 1928. Osur illustrated another racially insensitive type incident when he reported that the Black soldier's trains were met by the local sheriff who told the soldiers where they could socialize and introduced them to a local "good nigger" who gave the soldiers instructions on how to act in Tampa. Gropman listed the lack of race relations education as a cause for the riot at MacDill Field. He told how the commanders initially blamed

⁶² John Hope Franklin, *Mirror to America: The Autobiography of John Hope Franklin*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005).

⁶³ Charlotte T. Morgan, "Workers Education and the National Urban League," <http://www-distance.syr.edu/morgan.html>

the riots on communist agitation and refused to consider the Jim Crow conditions in Tampa as the source for the riot. This leads to the discussion of the writings by Mays.⁶⁴

The Written Works of Benjamin Elijah Mays

Benjamin Mays and Joseph Nicholson conducted research on the Negro church in a detailed study of 609 urban and 185 rural churches. Their findings showed how the Negro adjusted to social proscription, economic limitation, and spiritual domination. As slaves, Negroes had no control over their public and at times their private lives. The Negro developed survival tactics that allowed him to release suppressed emotions through a keen sense of humor and dance. This survival tactic crossed into the worship arena and Negro spirituals were added as an emotional vent. These songs were identified not as songs of hate, revenge, war, or conquest, but rather as songs of the soil and of the soul. By releasing his suppressed emotions in the Negro church through song and dance, the Negro created an opportunity to develop his own leadership. Although he was suppressed in other areas of his life, he had freedom in the church. Freedom in the church opened the way to freedom in other social and political arenas.⁶⁵

Mays wrote about church values and race. He stated his belief that the church as an institution stands for the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the Christian emphasis set forth by Jesus were the supreme values of the universe where human values with ideals were exemplified by service, practice, and fellowship. This became the basis for his objection to the way Negro Americans were treated within the church and society-at-large. In keeping with his

⁶⁴ Alan L. Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates, 1945-1964*, (Washington: United States Air Force, 1985); Alan M. Osur, *Blacks in the Army Air Forces during World War II*, (Washington: United States Air Force, 1986). Mays was responsible for educating the races in Tampa on better relations and acceptance of their differences. The National Urban League wanted their local offices to take the lead in race relations education.

⁶⁵ DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*; Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph William Nicholson., *The Negro's Church*, (New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1933); Washington, *Up from Slavery*. W.E.B. DuBois observed that the Negro Church was the only institution controlled by the Black American; Booker T. Washington also reflected on the need for the Negro to establish other venues other than the church to develop their community.

thesis on the church, Mays looked into the church affiliation of Negro American students. He wrote that it was safe to assume that a considerable majority of Negro American students enrolled in high schools and colleges were members of some church. The assumption showed that a vast majority of Negro American students were church members at some colleges, in fact, over 90 per cent. He used geographically diverse Howard University as a low-end example. Howard students were not the typical Negro American student, because Howard was not a church sponsored school. Since most Negro American colleges were affiliated with a religious denomination it was safe to assume their percentage of student church membership was higher than Howard's.⁶⁶

In the 25th Annual Report of the President 1965, "Morehouse College: Past, Present, Future, So Much with So Little" (Typed draft with revisions by Mays), Mays reflected on the history of the college from 1867 to 1965. The college graduated 3012 men, in ninety-eight years, with the first graduating class consisting of three graduates. Although Morehouse shifted its emphasis from religion to liberal arts, Morehouse graduates pastored churches in twenty-three major cities.⁶⁷ Morehouse men led nineteen Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), served on the faculty of fifty-eight HBCUs and twenty white colleges, and the number of Morehouse men in the public schools was impressive.⁶⁸

In a draft entitled "Segregation and the Status of Desegregation in Southern United States," Mays reported that segregation has no respectable place in the world and that it cannot

⁶⁶ Benjamin E. Mays, *Seeking to Be Christian in Race Relations*, (New York: Friendship Press, 1957); Mays, "The Religious Life and Needs of Negro Students: The Negro Adolescent and his Education," *Journal of Negro Education* 9, no. 3 (July 1940): 332-43.

⁶⁷ Mays, "The Present and Future Position of the Negro in the American Social Order," *Journal of Negro Education* 8, no. 3 (July, 1939): 530-38.

⁶⁸ Mays, "25th Annual Report of the President 1965, Morehouse College: Past, Present, Future, So Much with So Little," in *Mays Papers*, (Washington: Howard University, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, 1965).

stand.⁶⁹ This sentiment was echoed throughout the Mays, Stokes, Tobias, and Wesley collaboration in which the authors denounced the state of relations between White churchmen and Negro churchmen. In the forward, Bradford S. Abernathy, Director, Commission on the Church and Minority Peoples, said the work “is being distributed for the consideration of the churches as a contribution to that fuller mutual understanding which is basic to any effective dealing with the problem of color within the Church and in society.”⁷⁰ The authors expressed the view that the power of the Church’s message was necessary to create change in people who, they believed, knew what was right but nonetheless did not follow the right path. They also said,

Our social and racial ills do not necessarily grow out of ignorance of the teachings of the Christian religion, science, and democracy. Human beings can know what is right and fail to do it. Man must continue to heed the Gospel that calls him to repentance and to complete submission to God's will. The mind, the heart, and the will of man must be changed. And this is the power of the Gospel of Christ and the task of the Christian ministry.⁷¹

Finally, the authors stated their belief:⁷²

In this brief statement we attempt to do two things: (1) to point out the scriptural emphasis which are fundamental concepts in the relations of Christian peoples; to set forth the verdict of modern science on race; to point out the racial implications of the Constitution of the United States; and (2) to indicate the direction which we must travel now and in the post-war years if we are to prove true to our Christian

⁶⁹ Mays, “Segregation and the Status of Desegregation in Southern United States,” in *Mays Papers*, (Washington: Howard University, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, 1955).

⁷⁰ Benjamin E. Mays et al., "Negro Churchmen Speak to White Churchmen," *Journal of Negro Education* 3, no. 2 (April 1945): 236-42.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Mays, "Draft of 'Negro Churchmen Speak to White Churchmen'," in *Mays Papers*, (Washington: Howard University, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, n.d.).

heritage. We speak with a deep sense of humility for we are by no means certain that we, as Negro churchmen, have earned the right to speak in this manner to White churchmen. We are also conscious of the fact that a message equally relevant might be addressed to Negro churchmen; and yet we are confident that our voices should be heard and our convictions recorded. Then, too, a considerable part of this document applies to both Negro and White Christians.

Mays and his collaborators asked for a single standard for both Negro and White Christians.

According to Mays, he developed his character and adult education philosophy in the local churches, from his parents and teachers, and in his first non-academic position as the Executive Secretary of the Tampa (Florida) Urban League.⁷³ I identified the Urban League as the venue for Black churches to become involved in community affairs. This involvement assisted the Black clergy in politically charging their message about the conditions within the Black community.

In his autobiography, Mays described his belief that action was necessary to make things (the end of legally sanctioned segregation, equal opportunity) happen.⁷⁴ He felt that the action was not worth the effort if a person was not willing to act on his beliefs. Mays believed in the family structure and left South Carolina State College when the president, Robert Shaw Wilkinson, refused to set aside the rule that prevented married couples from teaching at the college. He and his wife accepted positions in Tampa, Florida. After two tumultuous years in Tampa, Florida, Benjamin and Sadie Mays left Florida to accept a position in Atlanta, Georgia.

⁷³Tom Cowan and Jack Maguire, *Timelines of African –American History: 500 Years of Black Achievement*, (New York: Roundtable Press /Perigee, 1994), 143. Created in 1910, the League is a voluntary service agency of business, labor, civic, and religious leaders. The original goal was to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on race or color and to achieve full citizenship for Negroes.

⁷⁴Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 291.

Mays's time in Tampa, Florida punctuated his quest for equality by giving him a laboratory to research the ills of segregation on the lives of White and Black Americans.⁷⁵

Mays returned to Tampa and delivered a speech to 800 White men. The question Mays answered was the never-ending curiosity in a segregated society: what does the American Negro want? The short answer was the "Negro wants a chance to live his life as an American citizen with equal opportunities."⁷⁶ With the disparities evident to the Negro but not to the Majority Male, Mays struck a common cord with the attendees when he said that the Negro wanted to live his life as an American citizen with equal opportunities.

In Memphis, Tennessee, Mays suggested that a reason it took so long for some American Christians to allow Negro Americans equal rights and opportunities was because they were not really practicing Christianity. Mays addressed the practice of segregation as being immoral if the dominant group administers all the laws, distributes all the money, and determines all the policies without acknowledging that man was created in the image of God. He also pointed out that if the dominant group were atheistic and practiced segregation then they committed an immoral act against humanity. Segregation not only retarded the development of the Negro, but also restricted the development of the United States as a moral world leader. The world viewed the United States as a hypocrite because one year it was leading the world to victory over Hitler's Racist Germany and in the same and subsequent years, the country allowed racists to kill and segregationists to continue the practice of segregating the American Negro.⁷⁷ At least somewhat in a possible response to this perception, President Harry S. Truman issued Executive

⁷⁵ Mays, "Response to Thomas' August 11, 1926 letter," in *The National Urban League's Southeastern Office, Benjamin E. Mays' Correspondence 1926-1928*, (Washington: Library of Congress Manuscript Room, August 21, 1926). Benjamin E. Mays sent a letter of acceptance to Jesse O. Thomas for the position of Executive Secretary Tampa Urban League.

⁷⁶ Mays, "800 Whites Hear Mr. Mays in Auditorium Monday, January 30," *Tampa Bulletin*, February 4, 1930.

⁷⁷ Mays, "Veterans: It Need Not Happen Again," *Phylon* 6, no. 3 (3rd Quarter 1945).

Order 9981 on July 26, 1948. Truman ordered the armed forces to desegregate. Six years later in 1954, the Department of Defense announced the end of segregation in the armed forces.⁷⁸

In *Seeking to Be a Christian in Race Relations*, Mays eloquently detailed the effects of eliminating discrimination and segregation in the sports and armed forces arenas. The pundits predicted that the White athlete and soldier would not allow the Negro to participate as equals and there would be riots. Politicians resisted integration efforts and vehemently opposed desegregating the schools. Mays believed that there should be no conflict between believing in desegregation and taking the action necessary to desegregate. He further believed that our beliefs should coincide with what we do. His theme of acting on our beliefs gave a person the ability to possess knowledge. Mays also believed good educators gave their students the opportunity to explore and demonstrate their acquisition of knowledge. In the same vein, Mays believed that every American should have equal opportunity to develop his mind and character. Mays suggested that a Christian who was intimidated could act on his beliefs by establishing a policy to hire and promote people based on their character and competence. Faith in action leads to brotherhood.⁷⁹

The Life of Benjamin Elijah Mays

Mays described his life from birth until 1970 in his autobiography *Born to Rebel*. While some current historians regard Mays as a leader to be emulated, one who helped the African American improve their social and educational well-being, acted as King's intellectual mentor, and served as a major force in the formative days of the Civil Rights Movement, other scholars viewed Mays mainly as a shaper of modern African American leadership. In 1998, Lawrence E. Carter edited a compilation of 19 essays written between 1971 and 1998 by scholars who were

⁷⁸ Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 1945-1964; Osur, *Blacks in the Army Air Forces during World War II*.

⁷⁹ Mays, *Seeking to Be Christian in Race Relations*.

influenced by Mays as a protégé, student, or researcher. The following section is an overview of Carter's, *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King Jr.*⁸⁰

Carter wrote in his essay "The Life of Benjamin E. Mays" about Mays's initial frustration because it took over 17 years to receive and complete his secondary education. He started at age six and graduated before his 22nd birthday. Mays's frustration had its origins in the fact that his father did not support his attempt to receive an education and the reality that Negro schools were only open from November to March, during the times after planting and harvesting. Carter gave Mays's life similar coverage as Mays did in his autobiography.⁸¹ The essay spoke briefly about Mays's life after 1971 and mentioned President Reagan's refusal to sign the recommendation from the 98th Congress to award Dr. Mays the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Burton allowed his foreword to *Born to Rebel* to be reprinted for the 1998 *Walking Integrity* compilation. After World War II, while Americans were "obsessed with communism and McCarthyism," Mays continued his crusade against injustice in American society.⁸² Mays isolated himself from mainstream American society when he shared his views that Blacks and Whites were equal and should be treated as equals. Burton eloquently described Mays's stance when he said, "Mays lived in a segregated society, but refused to support or be a part of segregation." One of the most disturbing facts listed in Burton's piece was the table on lynching cases in the states where Mays lived from 1894-1950.⁸³

Branham entitled his essay "Emancipating Myself: Mays the Debater," and gave an account of Mays's time at Bates College and his membership on the school debate team. He

⁸⁰ Lawrence E. Carter Sr., ed. *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998).

⁸¹ Carter, "The Life of Benjamin Elijah Mays," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 1-32.

⁸² Orville V. Burton, "Born to Rebel," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 33-80.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 46.

described how, after Bates, Mays took his lessons learned to Morehouse College when he was a professor from 1921-1924 and used them again as an appointee to the World Council of Churches. Mays used his position to try to break the Dutch Reformed Church's approval of apartheid in South Africa decades before Americans decided that South African apartheid was morally wrong and had to end.⁸⁴

Jelks discussed Mays's education in his essay "Mays's Academic Formation 1917-1936" in which he gave a good account of Mays's infusion of Northern spiritual liberalism and his roots in the African American Protestant church. Using this infusion Mays adjusted his religiosity and possibly reinforced the spirituality he learned from his mother. Jelks credited Mays's education and his positions as being pivotal to Mays being able to engage in a relentless attack on the cultural and legal effects of segregation.⁸⁵

Fisher reviewed Mays's years at Howard University from 1936-1940. Fisher said Mays felt more secure in Washington during his tenure as the Dean of the School of Religion than he did when he arrived in Atlanta to assume the Presidency of Morehouse College. The author reported that although Mays was in a secure environment he continued to speak against and write about segregation. Fisher revealed that whether Mays was attending a World Council of Churches conference or another international conference he stressed that the acceptance of segregation as a part of Christianity was an injustice to the Black men of the world. It was during this period that Mays started to be influenced by Gandhi. Fisher described how Howard Thurman, a former student of Mays at Morehouse and later a member of his faculty, initially met

⁸⁴ Robert J. Branham, "Emancipating Myself: Mays The Debater," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 81-110.

⁸⁵ Randal M. Jelks, "Mays's Academic Formation, 1917-1936," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 111-30.

with Gandhi in 1936. It was based on this meeting that Mays sought an audience with Gandhi in India.⁸⁶

Mikelson illuminated Mays's position on segregation in his essay "Mays, King, and the Negro's God." Mikelson used Mays's 1938 observation about a person's image of God to show how Mays influenced King's conception of God. Mays believed that people develop their image of God based on their circumstances at the time they establish that image. The essay was primarily about King instead of Mays.⁸⁷

Equal opportunity was Mays's goal when he accepted the position of President of Morehouse College. Dereck Rovaris described how Mays shaped Morehouse into an institute that produced a number of scholars, physicians, and civil rights leaders. These graduates became the legendary *Morehouse Man*. Rovaris also described Mays as a distinguished leader in the fields of education, civil rights, and religion who challenged his protégés, like Martin Luther King, Jr., to excel in their chosen fields.⁸⁸

Davis honed in on the essence of Mays in "Mays's Spiritual Rebellion." Davis skillfully summed up Mays's position in the following quote, "Mays realized that one must first become aware of the destructive psychological images of radical inferiority and actively work to free oneself and others from embodying and perpetuating them. To accept such images is to destroy true self-actualization for African Americans and to 'choose the low road in life.'"⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Miles M. Fisher IV, "The Howard Years," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998).

⁸⁷ Thomas Mikelson, "Mays, King, and the Negro's God," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 153-84.

⁸⁸ Dereck J. Rovaris, "Developer of an Institution: Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, Morehouse College President, 1940-1967" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1990). The "Morehouse Man" was a leader in the Black community who furthered the community's goals of higher education, civil rights, and moral purity.

⁸⁹ Illya E. Davis, "Mays's Spiritual Rebellion," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 185-96.

Colston continued the theme with his essay “Mays as Mentor to King” and identified the following individuals as protégés of Mays: Lerone Bennett, Samuel D. Cook, Charles V. Willie, Mayor Maynard Jackson, Benjamin Payton, Leroy Keith, Charles Merideth, the late William E. Gardner, Hanes Walton Jr., Tobe Johnson, Abraham L. Davis, Alton Hornsby Jr., Michael Lomax, Lonnie King, Julian Bond, Judge Horace Ward, Andrew Young, James M. Nabrit, Samuel Nabrit, Louis Sullivan, Walter Massey, Howard Thurman, Herschelle Challenor, Marion Wright Edelman, Hamilton Holmes, and Charlayne Hunter-Gault within the Civil Rights movement and in higher education.⁹⁰

In “Mays’s Educational Philosophy,” Lewinson established that Mays used his early childhood religious experience as the basis for his educational philosophy. She described the threefold purpose of education developed by Mays: (1) to train the mind to think clearly, logically and constructively; (2) to train the heart to understand and sympathize with the aspirations, the sufferings and injustices of humankind; and (3) to strengthen the will to act in the interest of the common good. According to Lewinson, Mays believed education was designed to glorify God and serve humankind. The purpose of education can only be accomplished with a moral commitment and a commitment to God to fulfill the desires and needs of others. Mays believed that the role of the historically black colleges and universities should be expanded to ensure the success of desegregation.⁹¹

Chapman tackled the issue of racism in Christianity in his essay, “‘Of One Blood:’ Mays and the Theology of Race Relations.” For years, Mays debated the gulf between Christian faith and the racist practices Blacks encountered in the White Christian church. As with his attack on

⁹⁰ Colston, "Mays as Mentor to King."

⁹¹ Barbara Sue K. Lewinson, "Mays's Educational Philosophy," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 215-32.

the debilitating effects of segregation, Mays and others argued, “that the unity of the human family compelled Christians to be concerned about the welfare of every human being.”

Chapman labeled segregation as the greatest scandal within the Church. Chapman reported that Mays believed African Americans participated in segregation when they dishonestly and evasively avoid discussing the issues with Whites. Mays used scriptures from the New Testament of the Bible to offer evidence that Jesus Christ advocated universalism and repudiated segregation based on race.⁹²

Matthews stated in “Mays and Racial Justice” that,

Racial justice for Mays is the fair and equal treatment practiced by one race toward another race living in the same community (whether it be on a local, national, or international level), based on the right of persons of every race to have equal opportunities to grow, learn and live to the best of their native abilities.

According to Matthews, Mays considered education essential to the well-being of every society.

Matthews also reported that Mays saw education as preparing individuals to be liberated from ignorance and fear, to be able to do something in the world around them to correct some of the problems, and to make it a better place in which to live. Finally, Matthews said that Mays defined education in terms of social responsibility and the educated person as a change agent for positive social change in society.⁹³

Cook wrote “Mays and the Kingdom not of this World” as a call for moral perfection.

Cook said,

⁹² Mark L. Chapman, "Of One Blood': Mays and the Theology of Race Relations," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 233-62.

⁹³ Verner R. Matthews, "Mays and Racial Justice," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 263-88.

The kingdom not of this world represents an uneasy conscience, a disturbed conscience. The kingdom not of this world should make us profoundly disturbed by the tragedy of racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, poverty, hunger, homelessness, violence, militarism, oppression, illicit drugs, sexual license, homophobia, adult literacy, AIDS, teen-age pregnancy, alcoholism, child abuse, neglect, children born to drugged-addicted mothers, capital punishment, terrorism, ecological exploitation and indifference, the plight of the handicapped and the disabled, and the illegal drug culture. We should be profoundly disturbed by insufficient affordable housing, inadequate health insurance, the astronomical school drop-out rate, twisted values and priorities, the pathology of our inner cities, underemployment, unemployment, the terrible plight of the Black underclass, the radical decline in the sense of personal responsibility, and the increasing rush to blame others, 'the system, culture, or history for our failures.'⁹⁴

As a protégé of Mays, Cook took up Mays's symbolic cross and spoke out against social injustice.

Bennett relived the days when Mays was "The Last of the Great Schoolmasters." Bennett bestowed the title of "Schoolmaster of the Movement" on his mentor. Mays believed education was an obligation, not a privilege. Bennett portrayed how Mays prayed for the opportunity to obtain an education and described how Mays paid for his tuition by cleaning outhouses and other odd jobs to finish high school, college, and graduate school. Bennett said, "He always believed, with Kant, that moral worth, not happiness, is the goal of life."⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Samuel DuBois Cook, "Mays and the Kingdom Not of This World," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 325-32.

⁹⁵ Bennett, "The Last of the Great Schoolmasters," 333-40.

Mays's personal correspondence and documents from 1926 to 1928 while he served as the Executive Secretary of the Tampa Urban League established Mays's written disagreement with the perpetuation of segregation.⁹⁶

Henry Louis Gates emphasized the importance of obtaining an education while fighting segregation, without the hindrance of uncertainty. Gates told the story of Vernon Jordan's struggle to survive in his youth. Jordan had the privilege of living near Morehouse College in Atlanta. Growing up in one of the first public housing projects for Black people, it was in this setting that Jordan first encountered Mays. Although he had many adult role models from varying social and economic levels, Jordan recalled seeing Mays walk through the campus of Morehouse. Since Mays always walked erect, Jordan felt that he was a giant, someone important. Vernon Jordan took pride in walking twenty yards behind him, "emulating Dr. Mays."⁹⁷

Gates joined Cornel West in 2000 in compiling vignettes about some of the personalities in the African American community who helped shape the United States of America. Starting in 1900 and ending in 2000, the authors gave insight into Angela Davis, Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy I. Height, and Spike Lee—protégés, academic colleagues, and spiritual descendants of Mays.⁹⁸

Cornel West credited Mays with refining the perspective of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the Black church's role and influence. While at Morehouse, Mays honed King's theology and showed him ways to morally condemn the hypocrisy of Southern White racist Christians and their alleged adherence to the Christian gospel. West reported that Mays desired to develop a

⁹⁶Mays, "Mays Collection Library of Congress."

⁹⁷ Henry L. Jr. Gates, *America behind The Color Line: Dialogues with African Americans*, (New York: Warner Books, 2004), 31.

⁹⁸ Henry L. Jr. Gates and Cornel West, *The African-American Century: How Black Americans Have Shaped Our Country*, (New York: The Free Press, 2004).

modernist view of Christianity by educating and engaging Black ministers to use prophetic Christianity to empower people to fight against oppression and struggle for freedom and justice. He believed this view resolved some of the critiques on religion put forward by Marx and Nietzsche.⁹⁹

Ralph Abernathy made an interesting observation about the relationship between Dr. Mays and Dr. King. Abernathy recalled Mrs. Mays becoming upset when she discovered that Martin Luther King Jr. borrowed liberally from Dr. Mays's sermons without giving credit to Dr. Mays for the original idea. During chapel services at Morehouse, King was considered a genius and Mays was possibly seen as a plagiarist. In spite of this slight, Mays gave the benediction at the 1963 March on Washington and was the eulogist at King's funeral in 1968. Because he was truly a man of integrity, he never corrected his pupil and allowed King to receive full credit for using his ideas. Reusing or adopting the eloquent words of fellow members of the Civil Rights Movement, without citation, was common practice.¹⁰⁰

Finally, Zaslow described how the Reverend Archibald Carey Jr.'s daughter Carolyn Carey-Jones wished King had credited her father for the phrase "Let freedom ring from the hilltops of New Hampshire...from the mighty mountains of New York...from the Stone Mountain of Georgia...from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee..." Reverend Carey used the original idea when he addressed the 1952 Republican National Convention. Carey was only one of many ministers whose speeches and sermons King and others borrowed because it was the common practice of his day.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Cornel West, *The Cornel West Reader*, (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 430.

¹⁰⁰ Abernathy, *And The Walls Came Tumbling Down*.

¹⁰¹ Jeffrey Zaslow, "Inspiration Points: For Many Cities, Dr. King's 'Dream' is Theirs too, Famed Washington Speech of Nearly 40 Years Ago had Roots in Other Spots, a Motown Records Version," *Wall Street Journal*, July 25, 2003, A1, A10.

The literature illustrates the settings for the emergence of Mays's character strengths and virtues. Since, as discussed in Chapter Three, the *CSVHC* requires a person to self-report their character strengths and virtues, I combined the decision logic table's process and historical inquiry methods into if/then statements. Such an approach serves to simulate the self-report process for a deceased person and calls upon the literature cited above for instances that could be mined for information about Mays's character.

Chapter Three – Method

The Peterson and Seligman *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* was designed to classify character strengths and virtues that are common to most cultures. Simultaneously concerned with assessment, the authors created the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) as a scientifically validated tool to measure character strengths. The VIA-IS is a 30 to 45 minute 240-question survey which helps respondents identify their top five strengths. Once the survey is completed, it renders a report which reveals one's character strengths with a brief description of each strength.¹⁰²

In an attempt to overcome the challenge of using the tool to measure a historical person's character, I adapted the principles of decision logic tables, computer programming *if/then* statements, Seibel's qualitative data analysis, and historical research method to apply Peterson and Seligman's approach. I reasoned that since the VIA-IS allowed respondents to self-report their character a researcher should be able to use certain aspects of the tool to determine if literature about an historical figure could meet the *CSVHC* criteria. Accordingly, once the historical events were selected from the chosen literature, I was able to use the VIA-IS as an assessment tool to determine the extent to which Mays was a person of good character, as defined by the *CSVHC*. The process was as follows:

1. Amass literature written by the person being studied or by people who knew the person. Select statements from the literature that displays actions taken during the social setting/event of Jim Crow, lack of access to adequate housing, lack of access to an education, or discrimination, e.g., [CONDITION]: "The maximum school term of the Negro school was four months—November through February. The White school

¹⁰² VIA Character.org, "Values in Action About the Three VIA Surveys," <http://www.viacharacter.org/VIASurvey/tabid/55/Default.aspx>. I chose not to identify Mays's top five character strengths.

usually ran six months. Discrimination and farm work accounted for the shorter term for Negroes. Most of the cotton was picked in September and October; and early in March work on the farm began. It would never have occurred to the White people in charge of the schools that they should allow school to interfere with the work on the farms. [ACTION] I was nineteen years old before I was able to remain in school for the full term.”¹⁰³ Determine if the statement reflects a character strength or vice (see figures 3-1).

2. Develop character *if/then* statements using the Peterson and Seligman *CSVHC* definition and the *VIA-IS Survey*¹⁰⁴ (e.g., IF Mays loved to learn new things, loved school, reading, opportunities to learn THEN Mays exhibited the character strength of Love of Learning.)
3. Identify events in the literature that demonstrate evidence of character strengths as defined in the *CSVHC*.¹⁰⁵ For example, Mays gained a champion to help him further develop his character strength of Love of Learning. “When I was fifteen, Pastor Marshall persuaded my father to let me go to a small Baptist Association School in McCormick, South Carolina.”¹⁰⁶
4. Convert the *VIA-IS Survey* and the literary evidence of character from the historical events into *Seibel’s Qualitative Data Analysis* process which says to **collect** meaningful facts about the *VIA-IS Survey* (e.g., Mays chose to travel 125 miles to attend high school full-time. He defied his father’s wishes and had to clean outhouses

¹⁰³ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 3.

¹⁰⁴ VIA Character.org, "VIA Survey Interpretive Report " <http://www.viacharacter.org/Portals/0/SampleReport.pdf> .

¹⁰⁵ Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 629-37.

¹⁰⁶ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 37-39. McCormick was 24 miles from Greenwood. Mays still only had access to four months of school before returning to the farm. At age 19 Mays chose to go to high school at State College in Orangeburg, 125 miles from Greenwood.

to pay for his tuition); to **notice** unique facts about the collected evidence (Mays realized the value of education despite his father's insistence that Mays quit school to work the farm); and to **think** about the interesting facts [researcher's interpretation of the facts] "My father died in 1938. I am glad that he lived long enough for me to be graduated from the high school of the South Carolina State College, to earn a degree from Bates, to receive M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Chicago, and to become dean of the School of Religion at Howard University."¹⁰⁷

5. Confirm the autobiographical accounts through a historical research process that includes archival data (e.g., correspondence, papers, speeches, etc.), oral history data, and other published items such as, biographies, publications about Mays, video and sound recordings (See Figure 3-1).
6. List the process in a decision table (See Table 3.2) and the findings in Chapters 4 and 5. Figure 3-2 graphically shows an example of how I followed this process to arrive at my conclusions about Mays's character strengths. I weighed the historical evidence against each of the six groupings of vices and virtues, and analyzed Mays's behaviors, writings, and the writings of people who knew him to arrive at a conclusion in each case.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 37. The literary evidence showed that Mays developed the character strength love of learning that supports his virtue of wisdom and knowledge.

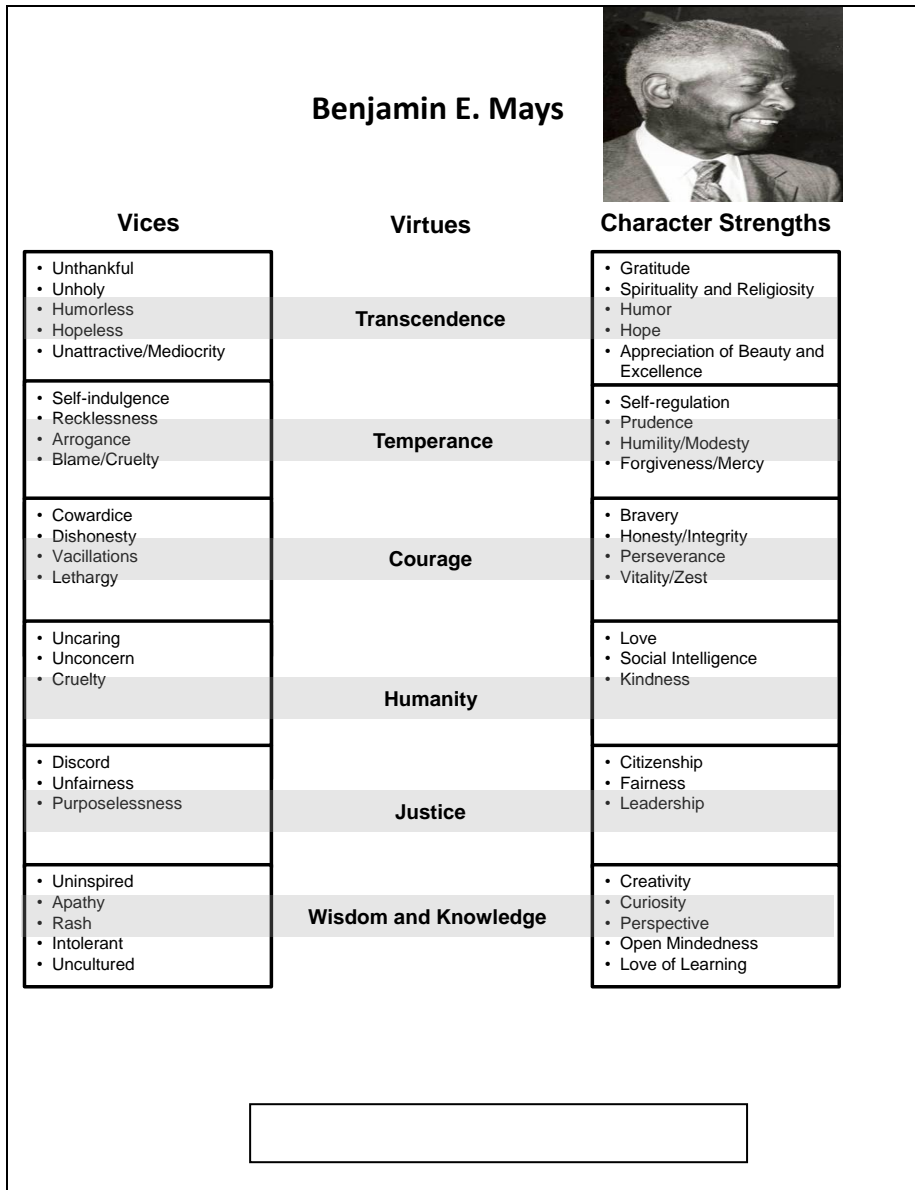


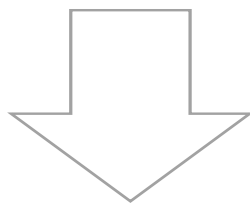
Figure 3-1: Manifestation of Virtues as Character Strengths and their Antithesis and Absence as Vices¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Mays's photograph used with permission. (Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, DC).

IF Mays loved to learn new things, loved school, reading, opportunities to learn

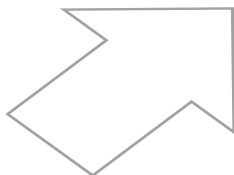
Attended the Brickhouse School, the Baptist Association School, South Carolina State College, Virginia Union, Bates College, and University of Chicago. Taught at Morehouse. Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 11, 37, 39, 52, 54, 65, 67.

THEN



Mays exhibited Love of Learning

Used Sylvia Cook's first cooking experience "as a teaching opportunity." Sylvia F. Cook. "Dr. and Mrs. Benjamin E. Mays: Personal Memories," in *Benjamin E. Mays: His Life, Contribution, and Legacy*, ed. Samuel DuBois Cook. (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 2009), 189-194.



"To challenge the minds of the student body, Dr. Mays lectured at 'Tuesday Morning Chapel,' in historic Sale Hall, where students learned about the Black Church and where he challenged and inspired them to excel in scholarship and in life itself." Carrie M. Dumas and Julie Hunter. *Benjamin Elijah Mays: A Pictorial Life and Times*. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 33.



Figure 3-2: Character Strengths and Virtues

In order to strive for objectivity I drew from the traditions of qualitative data analysis, historical inquiry, and historical case study, as mentioned in the preceding section. By using marginal notations, I identified character strengths and virtues that corresponded to the *CSVHC* definitions. I was careful to use historically accurate language that reflected the terms (i.e., Negro, Black, African American) that were adopted over time to shed the cloak of inferiority in Mays's community. Finally, I chose a single case modality—a focus on a single key aspect of Mays's life that was displayed in his struggle against segregation. While incorporating the qualitative traditions required adaptation of the *VIA-IS Survey: Interpretive Report's Definitive Character Strengths Statements*, the *VIA-IS* sample questions in checklist form offered a way to identify Mays's character strengths during his quest for equality, and also how they meet the *CSVHC*'s definition of character. Once this method was implemented, inspection of data became a search of character strengths versus a retelling of Mays's story. As instances of Mays's character strength emerged and similar instances were verified by additional sources I used

basic triangulation principles to strengthen the findings. The first point of my character triangle is autobiographical-evidenced character strengths as identified in the *CSVHC* and derived from the VIA-IS developed character *if/then* statement. The second point is either a historically verified event from archival or related research providing evidence of the emergence of the same character strength. The third point is evidence of the character strength from an additional source. My use of triangulation attempted to move the Mays character strength findings closer to the *CSVHC* definition of character. This study simulated the self-reported (autobiographical) instances of character strengths while attempting to discover two additional biographical or externally confirmed instances of the character strengths and virtues.

Table 3-1 Process to Identify Evidence of the CSVHC Character Strength Definition¹⁰⁹

Character Strength	Historical Evidence	Social Setting/Event	Protégés	Virtue
Creativity [originality, ingenuity]: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it	The Negro Study in Tampa ¹¹⁰ . The Negro Church Study ¹¹¹ . Assisted Julian Bond with a way to participate in the civil rights movement ¹¹² .	Racial segregation	Martin Luther King Jr.	Wisdom and Knowledge – Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge
	“Since Morehouse is all-male, it was hit particularly hard by World War II. Many students and faculty left the institution to serve in the armed forces. To keep the school’s doors open, Mays, always innovative and creative, instituted his own early admissions policy—long before the Ford Foundation began to put funds in such programs. Interestingly, Nobel Laureate Martin Luther King Jr., and Maynard H. Jackson, the first black mayor of Atlanta were early admissions students.” ¹¹³			
	The selected literature did not reveal additional sources identifying the character strength of creativity.			
Curiosity [interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience]: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering	Transferred from the Brickhouse School to the Baptist Association School in McCormack, South Carolina. ¹¹⁴ Earned a place on the Bates debate team without auditioning for a position ¹¹⁵	Limited access to an education.	Howard Thurman, James Nabrit	
	The selected literature did not reveal additional sources identifying the character strength of curiosity			
Judgment & Open-Mindedness [critical thinking]: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change	Won declamation contest at Bates and authored “Our Third Emancipation” – <i>Mays Papers</i> . ¹¹⁶	Racial hatred stirred up during the viewing of “Birth of a Nation” in Lewiston, Maine	Martin Luther King Jr. and Shelton “Spike” Jackson Lee	
	“How distinct was this man. Yes, he was a man of integrity, good judgment, basic kindness. One felt reassured, no matter where one stood, that our country, our time, still produced a man like Benjamin Elijah Mays.” ¹¹⁷			

¹⁰⁹ VIA Character.org, "VIA Survey Interpretive Report."

¹¹⁰ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 106-08.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 130-33.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 287-90.

¹¹³ Samuel DuBois Cook, "Mays and Morehouse (1940-67): The Golden Age Continuation," in *Benjamin E. Mays: His Life, Contribution, and Legacy*, ed. Samuel DuBois Cook, (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 2009), 55-129.

¹¹⁴ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 37.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹¹⁶ Mays, "Our Third Emancipation," in *Mays Papers*, (Washington: Howard University, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, 1917-1918).

¹¹⁷ Carrie M. Dumas and Julie Hunter, *Benjamin Elijah Mays: A Pictorial Life and Times*, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 143. Charles Merrill’s tribute to Mays.

Character Strength	Historical Evidence	Social Setting/Event	Protégés	Virtue
one's mind in light of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly	The selected literature did not reveal additional sources identifying the character strength of judgment.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the tendency to add systematically to what one knows	Attended the Brickhouse School, the Baptist Association School, South Carolina State College, Virginia Union, Bates College, and University of Chicago. Taught at Morehouse. ¹¹⁸	Transitioned from limited access to an education to seemingly unlimited access. Mastered math, Greek, debate, and algebra. Became a student teacher at each school	Samuel Dubois Cook, Michael Lomax, Samuel L. Jackson, and others.	
	Used Sylvia Cook's first cooking experience "as a teaching opportunity." ¹¹⁹ "To challenge the minds of the student body, Dr. Mays lectured at 'Tuesday Morning Chapel,' in historic Sale Hall, where students learned about the Black Church and where he challenged and inspired them to excel in scholarship and in life itself." ¹²⁰			
	Bennett reported how Mays "conceived education broadly, as an instrument of social and personal renewal; and he saw the college as a beacon, lighting the way for the larger society. In pursuance of this high ideal, he championed integrated education and academic excellence." ¹²¹			
Perspective [wisdom]: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people	Morehouse debate team match against Fisk. Teacher at Morehouse. Dean at Howard. President of Morehouse for 27 years. ¹²²	Racial discrimination and limited access to adequate housing.	Andrew Young, Dorothy I. Height, Nathaniel Bonner, and others.	
	"He understood the need for a larger endowment and higher salaries for the faculty. Dr. Mays earned the nickname 'Buck Bennie' because of his strict business mind and financial emphasis." ¹²³			
	"Dr. Mays was a source of inspiration to me. He was like an alter-ego for me, inspiring a sense of self-confidence towards mankind's well-being. Even today I often recall his homilies as a great source of wisdom." ¹²⁴			
	"Dr. Myers remembers most some of the wisdom of Dr. Mays, such as 'Morehouse can prepare you. If you make an 'A' at Morehouse, you can make an 'A' at Harvard. If you make a 'B' at Morehouse, you can make a 'B' at Oxford. I do not dislike Notre Dame—but I love Morehouse because it is mine." ¹²⁵			

¹¹⁸ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 11, 37, 39, 52, 54, 65, 67.

¹¹⁹ Cook, "Dr. and Mrs. Benjamin E. Mays: Personal Memories," 189-94.

¹²⁰ Dumas and Hunter, *Benjamin Elijah Mays: A Pictorial Life and Times*, 33.

¹²¹ Lerone Jr. Bennett, "What Manner of Man: Benjamin Elijah Mays," in *Benjamin E. Mays: His Life, Contribution, and Legacy*, ed. Samuel DuBois Cook, (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 2009), 130-42.

¹²² Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 93, 139.

¹²³ Dumas and Hunter, *Benjamin Elijah Mays: A Pictorial Life and Times*, 35.

¹²⁴ Ira Joe Johnson and William G. Pickens, *Benjamin E. Mays and Margaret Mitchell: A Unique Legacy in Medicine*, (Winter Park, FL: Four-G, 1996), 121. Dr. Benjamin H. Barbour, recipient of the Mitchell Scholarship.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 145. Dr. Sere Myers Sr., recipient of the Mitchell Scholarship.

Character Strength	Historical Evidence	Social Setting/Event	Protégés	Virtue
Bravery [valor]: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it	Lynch mob in Phoenix, South Carolina. Refusal to participate in voluntary segregation. Challenged railroad's interstate dining policy. ¹²⁶	Racial discrimination and treated as a second-class citizen.	Martin Luther King Jr., John Lewis, Maynard Jackson, and Julian Bond.	Courage – Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal
	"He demonstrated a standard of personal wisdom, dedication, and courage that helped to transform the social consciousness of our nation, and served to enhance our country's leadership in the international struggle for human rights. He was an inspiration to all of us who knew him." ¹²⁷			
	The selected literature did not reveal additional sources identifying the character strength of bravery.			
Perseverance [persistence, industriousness]: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks	Pursuit of an education. Graduated from high school at the age of 21 and quest for equality. ¹²⁸	Racial discrimination and segregation.	Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy I. Height, Julian Bond, Andrew Young, and others.	
	"Determination was definitely his style." ¹²⁹			
	"Mays struggled against great adversity to gain an education and to maintain a sense of self-worth while living in a society that at every turn expressed its belief that he was worthless." ¹³⁰			
Honesty [authenticity, integrity]: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions	Work with the World Council of Churches, NAACP, Urban League, and colleges. ¹³¹	Segregation and racism.	Howard Thurman	
	"He practiced what he preached. What an exciting example of utter integrity in action!" ¹³²			
	Described, along with his wife, as "easy and unpretentious guests and had a great capacity for friendship." ¹³³ "I was impressed with Dr. Mays's relationship with others, his ability to solve problems, his honesty and integrity in dealing with people and issues." ¹³⁴			

¹²⁶ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 1, 52-53, 198-200.

¹²⁷ Dumas and Hunter, *Benjamin Elijah Mays: A Pictorial Life and Times*, 144. President Jimmy Carter's tribute to Mays.

¹²⁸ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, xxiii, ix.

¹²⁹ Dumas and Hunter, *Benjamin Elijah Mays: A Pictorial Life and Times*, 145. Margaret Cyrus', former secretary to Dr. Mays, tribute.

¹³⁰ Burton, "Born to Rebel," 33-80.

¹³¹ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, xxix, 105, 94.

¹³² Cook, "Mays and Morehouse (1940-67): The Golden Age Continuation," 55-129.

¹³³ Cook, "Dr. and Mrs. Benjamin E. Mays: Personal Memories," 189-94.

¹³⁴ Dumas and Hunter, *Benjamin Elijah Mays: A Pictorial Life and Times*, 2.

Character Strength	Historical Evidence	Social Setting/Event	Protégés	Virtue
	<p>“Mays pleads with Negro Christians to be wholly honest in their encounters with White persons ‘because we believe that truth is better than lying, that integrity is better than hypocrisy, and that genuine progress in race relations can be made only when all parties concerned are honest.’”¹³⁵</p> <p>Kept promise to Margaret Mitchell that “no publicity of any type would be given to my contribution.”¹³⁶</p>			
Zest [vitality, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated	Negro Church study. ¹³⁷	Segregation	Samuel Dubois Cook	
	Charles H. Wesley, “I knew him as a college instructor, a preacher of the Gospel, a Y.M.C.A. secretary and youth leader, an Urban League secretary, president of the United Negro College Fund, author of books and articles in scholarly magazines, and as a college president; in and throughout all of it, he worked magnificently, and with cheerful will. No wonder all who knew him came to honor him.” ¹³⁸			
	Bennett identified that “Mays helped to lay the foundation for the new world of black and white Americans. Master of a variety of roles (teacher, preacher, scholar, author, newspaper columnist, activist), Mays was tremendously effective in the formative years on the fringes and in the heart of structures of power.” ¹³⁹			
Capacity to Love and Be Loved: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people	Crush on elementary school teacher, Ellen Waller. Marriage to Ellen Harvin. Marriage to Sadie Gray. ¹⁴⁰	Segregation	Martin Luther King Jr.	Humanity - Interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others
	Niece Cordelia Blount observed, “Bennie was very loving and attentive toward Sadie.” ¹⁴¹			
	The selected literature did not reveal additional sources identifying the character strength of love.			

¹³⁵ George D. Kelsey, "Theological Analysis and Criticism of Racism," in *Benjamin E. Mays: His Life, Contribution, and Legacy*, ed. Samuel DuBois Cook, (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 2009), 153-66.

¹³⁶ Johnson and Pickens, *Benjamin E. Mays and Margaret Mitchell: A Unique Legacy in Medicine*, 46-49.

¹³⁷ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 130.

¹³⁸ Charles H. Wesley, "A Glance at the Educational Philosophy of Benjamin Elijah Mays," in *Benjamin E. Mays: His Life, Contribution, and Legacy*, ed. Samuel DuBois Cook, (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 2009), 143-52.

¹³⁹ Bennett, "What Manner of Man: Benjamin Elijah Mays," 130-42.

¹⁴⁰ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 61, 105.

¹⁴¹ Cook, "Dr. and Mrs. Benjamin E. Mays: Personal Memories," 189-94.

Character Strength	Historical Evidence	Social Setting/Event	Protégés	Virtue
Kindness [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, "niceness"]: Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them	Showed kindness to the Saint Petersburg Executive Secretary. ¹⁴²	Segregation, racism, and discrimination.	Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lewis	
	"Dr. Dargan recalled receiving financial assistance as well as spiritual inspiration from the kindness and wisdom of Dr. Mays." ¹⁴³			
	The selected literature did not reveal additional sources identifying the character strength of kindness.			
Social Intelligence [emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick	Knew when to ask for equality. ¹⁴⁴	Segregation and unfair labor practices.	Maynard Jackson	
	Kelsey wrote, "Since Negro ministry is potentially freer than the White ministry, Mays believes that Negro Christians should assume leadership in areas pertaining to social justice." ¹⁴⁵			
	"Dr. Mays encouraged his students to travel beyond their backyards, to look beyond America's racism and segregation, and to prepare for equality and justice." ¹⁴⁶			
Teamwork [citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty]: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share	Advised protégés create a sense of solidarity to achieve equality. ¹⁴⁷	Country transitioning from the one-man spokesman for the Negro American Community, Booker T. Washington.	Martin Luther King Jr.	Justice - Civic strengths that underlie healthy community life
	Kelsey wrote, "Benjamin Mays is one of those religious leaders who calls upon the church to continue and renew its prophetic and social task." ¹⁴⁸			

¹⁴² Benjamin E. Mays, "Benjamin E. Mays submits his first report to Jesse Thomas," in *The National Urban League's Southeastern Office, Benjamin E. Mays' Correspondence 1926-1928*, (Washington: Library of Congress Manuscript Room, September 22, 1926).

¹⁴³ Johnson and Pickens, *Benjamin E. Mays and Margaret Mitchell: A Unique Legacy in Medicine*, 123.

¹⁴⁴ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 308-09.

¹⁴⁵ Kelsey, "Theological Analysis and Criticism of Racism," 153-66.

¹⁴⁶ Dumas and Hunter, *Benjamin Elijah Mays: A Pictorial Life and Times*, 34.

¹⁴⁷ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 308.

¹⁴⁸ Kelsey, "Theological Analysis and Criticism of Racism," 153-66.

Character Strength	Historical Evidence	Social Setting/Event	Protégés	Virtue
	“Mays was a rebel by nature and circumstance as revealed in his <i>Pittsburgh Courier</i> articles. He sought the unity of all Christians in love as one body in Christ, not a disunity based on economics, education, gender, nationality, race, religion, or region.” ¹⁴⁹			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance	Suit against the Southern Railway, case heard by the Interstate Commerce Commission. ¹⁵⁰	Segregated dining in railroad dining cars.	Julian Bond	
	Williams reported that, “Freedom is a kind of potency for Mays. It is the precondition for men achieving what they believe to be good. This makes freedom a necessary condition for achieving good.” Freedom and justice is fairness. ¹⁵¹			
	“Interestingly, Mays made a special effort to recruit white Southerners to the faculty as a means of promoting racial understanding, healing, and reconciliation.” ¹⁵²			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the same time maintain good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.	Served in a leadership capacity from 1924 until 1980. ¹⁵³	Transition from Jim Crow to desegregation.	The Morehouse Men.	
	Wesley identified Mays leadership strength, “The education of Negroes, with which Benjamin E. Mays has been associated across the years of his career, has seen Mays as one of its significant leaders, and not simply as a bystander, or as one who went along with the crowd.” ¹⁵⁴			
	“Was King the greatest leader of Black people? ‘No he wasn’t the greatest leader,’ said Mays, ‘We have had not great leader since Booker T. Washington. And I hope we never need just ONE again. Martin was one of many. He brought them together—the teachers, the doctors, the tradesmen—and inspired them all to rise up. The moment had come.’” ¹⁵⁵			
Forgiveness & Mercy: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of	Asked the country to forgive the assassin of Martin Luther King Jr. ¹⁵⁶	Anarchy. Assassinations of national and local leaders.	Coretta Scott King	Temperance – Strengths that protect against excess

¹⁴⁹ Lawrence E. Carter Sr., "The Life of Benjamin Elijah Mays," 1-32.

¹⁵⁰ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 199.

¹⁵¹ Samuel W. Williams, "The Social Thought of Benjamin E. Mays," in *Benjamin E. Mays: His Life, Contribution, and Legacy*, ed. Samuel DuBois Cook, (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 2009), 167-76.

¹⁵² Cook, "Mays and Morehouse (1940-67): The Golden Age Continuation," 55-129.

¹⁵³ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 66-316.

¹⁵⁴ Wesley, "A Glance at the Educational Philosophy of Benjamin Elijah Mays," 143-52.

¹⁵⁵ Noel E. Burtenshaw, "Seeds of Revolution: Mays in the Morehouse Chapel," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 341-44.

¹⁵⁶ . Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 360.

Character Strength	Historical Evidence	Social Setting/Event	Protégés	Virtue
others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful	<p>“Debate and the competitive success he achieved in it as an undergraduate helped Mays emancipate himself from prevailing notions of racial inferiority.”¹⁵⁷</p> <p>The selected literature did not reveal a third source identifying the character strength of forgiveness and mercy.</p>			
Modesty & Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is	<p>Did not chastise his protégés for using his ideas.¹⁵⁸</p> <p>Cook identified humility as a strength Mays instilled in the image of the Morehouse Man, “The pride in the Morehouse Man, for Mays, is healthy self-appreciation, self-restraint, moderation, balance, sane or rational self-esteem, or, as a dictionary says, ‘reasonable or justifiable self-respect.’ It suggests moderation....Humility is the antidote to excessive pride.”¹⁵⁹</p> <p>The selected literature did not reveal additional sources identifying the character strength of modesty and humility.</p>	Transition from Jim Crow to political power	Martin Luther King Jr., John Lewis, Julian Bond, Maynard Jackson, and Martin Luther King III.	
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted	<p>Chose to receive an ordination from Ellen’s minister. I chose to dismiss this as a true character strength because the literature described this event as economically based versus a sincere election to become a minister.¹⁶⁰</p> <p>The selected literature did not reveal additional sources identifying the character strength of prudence.</p>	Blacks were not properly identified by a title other than Reverend. Segregationists did not address blacks as mister or doctor.	Martin Luther King Jr., Jesse Jackson, Andrew Young, Walter Fauntroy.	
Self-Regulation [self-control]: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions	<p>Mr. Hezekiah Mays’s capitulation to the demands of the lynch mob. Mays decision not to actively participate in the Civil Rights Movement.¹⁶¹</p> <p>“He helped to develop in us the Morehouse mystique, which demands that we be successful in college and in later life, that we rise to the top in our professions, that we serve our fellow man, that we be loyal to each other and to the Alma Mater, that we have self-confidence and self-respect, and that we use Christian and democratic principles in the solution of social and racial problems.”¹⁶²</p>	Segregation, racism, disenfranchisement, and discrimination.	Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lewis	

¹⁵⁷ Branham, "Emancipating Myself: Mays the Debater," 81-110.

¹⁵⁸ Abernathy, *And The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, 309.

¹⁵⁹ Cook, "Mays and Morehouse (1940-67): The Golden Age Continuation," 55-129.

¹⁶⁰ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 97.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1, 270.

¹⁶² Hugh M. Gloster, "Black Male Role Model of the Century: A Funeral Tribute to Dr. Benjamin E. Mays," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 405-14.

Character Strength	Historical Evidence	Social Setting/Event	Protégés	Virtue
	The selected literature did not reveal a third source identifying the character strength of self-regulation.			
Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence [awe, wonder, elevation]: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience	In 1911, Mays decided to attend South Carolina State College’s high school department. In 1916, in response to a challenge to compete with the white students, Mays applied to Holderness School and after his rejection he enrolled first at Virginia Union then at Bates College. ¹⁶³	Jim Crow, separate but equal segregation. Limited access to elementary, secondary, and higher education.	Samuel Dubois Cook, Martin Luther King Jr., and Michael Lomax.	Transcendence - Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning
	“During his first semester at Bates, he was embarrassed and chagrined to receive the first and only ‘D’ in his whole academic career.” ¹⁶⁴			
	“The Fund for Theological Education (FTE) Inc. would be criticized later for what was admittedly an elitist approach, but we felt it important to establish in the mind of everyone the expectations and requirement that African American ministers should be highly able, creative, and well-educated persons. Any way we would never compromise on excellence if Benjamin Mays had anything to do with it. The intention was to establish a network of college and university personnel to inform students about the fellowships and interest them in ministry.” ¹⁶⁵			
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks	Mays showed gratitude towards his teachers for guiding him to attend Bates College and the University of Chicago. ¹⁶⁶	Limited access to higher education.	Samuel Dubois Cook, Howard Thurman, Michael Lomax, Martin Luther King Jr.	
	“With inspiration that he attributes to Dr. Mays, Dr. Edwards has sought to give back to his community throughout his career.” ¹⁶⁷			
	“I am indeed grateful for the admirable deed your wife did and wish to show my appreciation—for such aid came to me when a financial crisis threatened the financial structure of my medical education.” ¹⁶⁸			

¹⁶³ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 37, 50-57.

¹⁶⁴ Charles V Willie, "Educational Leadership Past and Present," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 353-76.

¹⁶⁵ Charles S Rooks, "The Quest for Students: Reshaping African-American Ministry," in *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Lawrence E. Carter Sr., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 377-404.

¹⁶⁶ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 50-57.

¹⁶⁷ Johnson and Pickens, *Benjamin E. Mays and Margaret Mitchell: A Unique Legacy in Medicine*, 128. Dr. M. Delmar Edwards, recipient of the Mitchell Scholarship.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 143. Dr. Clarence G. Littlejohn, recipient of the Mitchell Scholarship.

Character Strength	Historical Evidence	Social Setting/Event	Protégés	Virtue
Hope [optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about	The Negro Study in Tampa and assignment as the Y.M.C.A. Student Secretary to several southern states, and the Negro Church study. ¹⁶⁹	Limited access to higher education and career choices.	Samuel Dubois Cook, Howard Thurman, Michael Lomax, Martin Luther King Jr.	
	Williams reported that, “Mays is basically a man of hope, despite his occasional pessimism.” ¹⁷⁰			
	Wesley wrote “Mays listed five abiding values which had guided Morehouse College graduates for these past years, and he expressed hope for the continuance of these values in the next ninety years.” ¹⁷¹			
Humor [playfulness]: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes	The study did not distinguish between genuine humor and survival tactics.			
	The selected literature did not reveal additional sources identifying the character strength of humor.			
	The literature did not reveal a third source for the character strength of humor.			
Religiousness & Spirituality [faith, purpose]: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort	Admonition from mother that he was only inferior when he allowed himself to be inferior, and he read the Bible to soothe his mother after his father’s drunken tirades. ¹⁷²	Sharecropping or farm rental during Jim Crow placed Negroes in a subservient position and in a cycle of perpetual poverty.	Howard Thurman	
	Mays said, “Anyone who seeks shelter in the Bible for his defense of racial segregation in the church is living in a glass house which is neither rock proof nor bullet proof.” ¹⁷³			
	Mays was firmly rooted in the theology of Protestant liberalism and used it as a critical intellectual framework to examine the religions and social conditions of African Americans—conditions which he believed the African American Church could significantly enhance.” ¹⁷⁴			

¹⁶⁹ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 106-38.

¹⁷⁰ Williams, "The Social Thought of Benjamin E. Mays," 167-76.

¹⁷¹ Wesley, "A Glance at the Educational Philosophy of Benjamin Elijah Mays," 143-52.

¹⁷² Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 2, 11.

¹⁷³ Bennett, "The Last of the Great Schoolmasters," 333-40.

¹⁷⁴ Jelks, "Mays’s Academic Formation, 1917-1936," 111-30.

The evidence of the character strengths identified in the above table was supported by Mays's account in his autobiography. The research verified Mays's self-reported character strengths with autobiographical, biographical writings, reports, and other related literature as well as my observations to add a level of objectivity. Table 3-2 displays the if/then statements:

Table 3-2 IF/THEN Statements¹⁷⁵

Virtue	IF	Literary Evidence to support the simulated self-report	THEN he showed proof of the character strength	VIA-IS Verified Statement
Wisdom and Knowledge	Mays thought of new ways to do things	Mays decided to fight rank discrimination with better preparation. He also decided to conduct a study of the condition of the Negro in Tampa, FL. ¹⁷⁶	Mays exhibited Creativity	Yes
	Mays took an interest in ongoing experience, found new topics and subjects fascinating	Mays did take an interest in ongoing experiences, and he found new topics and subjects fascinating. I initially viewed these acts as acts of survival versus a character strength; however, after further reflection, since the initial interpretation, his actions were genuine. ¹⁷⁷	Mays exhibited Curiosity	Yes.
	Mays thought things through and examined things from all sides, did not jump to conclusions, relied only on solid evidence to make decisions	The rejection from Holderness showed an emergence of open-mindedness. Mays carefully thought things through and chose to go to Virginia Union versus delaying his education, ¹⁷⁸	Mays exhibited Open-Mindedness	Yes
	Mays had a way of looking at the world that makes sense to others, was viewed as wise by others. Many people, and particularly his protégés valued his perspective and asked him for advice	Mays chose to not participate in the planning for subsidized housing in Tampa, FL. He wisely discerned that subsidized housing would facilitate increased acts of police brutality and racial attacks against Negroes. With most Negroes in one location, the harassment would increase because racists and the police could converge on the location swiftly and in full force. ¹⁷⁹	Mays exhibited Perspective	Yes
	Mays loved to learn new things, loved school, reading, opportunities to learn	After a slightly scathing review of his article ¹⁸⁰ , Mays chose to use the review as an opportunity to learn. His subsequent articles and books included diverse populations.	Mays exhibited Love of Learning	Yes
Courage	Mays worked hard to finish what he started	Starting in 1916 Mays used his four insights about segregation to guide him and his protégés to the 1964 and 1965 equality legislation. ¹⁸¹	Mays exhibited Perseverance	Yes
	Mays approached his work with	Mays approached his position as a professor with excitement	Mays exhibited Vitality	Yes

¹⁷⁵ VIA Character.org, "VIA Survey Interpretive Report."

¹⁷⁶ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 93, 107.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁷⁹ R. Maurice Moss, "R. Maurice Moss summarized the Most Perplexing Problems Met by the Urban League," in *The National Urban League Southeastern Office Benjamin E. Mays Papers*, (Washington: Library of Congress Manuscript Room, April 1928).

¹⁸⁰ Edwin E. Aubrey, "Review of *The Negro's God* by Benjamin E. Mays," *Journal of Negro Education* 8, no. 2 (April, 1939): 226-27. Aubrey criticized Mays for not including information about White churches in his book. Aubrey felt that the exclusion of the White Church information placed the findings in an unbalanced position.

¹⁸¹ Mays, *Born to Rebel*.

Virtue	IF	Literary Evidence to support the simulated self-report	THEN he showed proof of the character strength	VIA-IS Verified Statement
	excitement and energy, never did anything half-heartedly, felt that life was an adventure	and energy. He taught the debate team the art of debate. He taught students math and psychology with a vigor that prompted President Hope to offer him a job as dean for a third year. ¹⁸²		
	Mays was a courageous person who did not shrink from a threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain, spoke up for what was right, acted on his convictions	Mays challenged the railroad when he and other Pullman Porters were required to help with a football train. He stood up for the principle and was fired for his position. ¹⁸³	Mays exhibited Bravery	Yes
	Mays lived his life in a genuine and authentic way, was without pretense	After dinner one night Mays took his turn washing dishes with everyone else. The president of a major Negro college abided by the rules at Highlander. ¹⁸⁴	Mays exhibited Integrity	Yes
Justice	Mays excelled as a member of a group, was loyal and dedicated, did his share and worked hard for the success of his group	Mays led the Bates Debate team to victory against their opponents. He also held membership and leadership positions in the Y.M.C.A., the Bates Forum, and the Philhellenic Club. ¹⁸⁵	Mays exhibited Citizenship	Yes
	Mays did a good job at organizing activities and made sure that they happened, excelled at the task of leadership, encouraged a group to get things done, preserved harmony within the group to make everyone feel included	Mays organized the annual community drive in Tampa, FL. The donations went to help finance the Community Chest and the Tampa Urban League's office. ¹⁸⁶	Mays exhibited Leadership	Yes
	Mays gave everyone a chance and treated people fairly regardless of his personal feelings about other people	During his time in Tampa, FL Mays gave the St. Petersburg Executive Secretary a fair chance. Mays also treated Fisk University's President McKenzie fairly after his display of rank discrimination. ¹⁸⁷	Mays exhibited Fairness	Yes
Humanity	Mays was kind and generous to others, enjoyed doing a good deed for others	Mays assisted his sister-in-law to receive a first floor room in the dormitory at the University of Chicago. His sister-in-law was a Negro and Negroes were not assigned a room in the dormitory. Mays petitioned for her room until one was assigned. ¹⁸⁸	Mays exhibited Kindness	Yes

¹⁸² Ibid., 89-98.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 61-64.

¹⁸⁴ Graetz and Graetz, "Letter to the editor 'Dr. Benjamin E. Mays'."

¹⁸⁵ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 54-64.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 106-24.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 93, 106-24.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 135-37.

Virtue	IF	Literary Evidence to support the simulated self-report	THEN he showed proof of the character strength	VIA-IS Verified Statement
	Mays was aware of the motives and feelings of others, knew what to do to put others at ease, knew what to do in different social situations	Mays knew that Bill Mays's objection to education was based on the fact that a teenaged Benjamin could help his father produce more cash crops. Bill Mays's objection was for economic reasons not political or social. ¹⁸⁹	Mays exhibited Social Intelligence	Yes
	Mays valued close relationships	Mays developed a crush on his teacher Ellen Waller and went on to develop a relationship and marriage to Ellen Harvin. Mays was also in love with his second wife, Sadie. ¹⁹⁰	Mays exhibited Love	Yes
Temperance	Mays was a disciplined person, in control of his appetites and emotions, or self consciously regulated what he felt and did	When Mays heard Bill Mays express his belief that Mays's father should keep him on the farm instead of sending him to school, it upset Mays but he did not voice his disagreement to the landowner. ¹⁹¹	Mays exhibited Self-Regulation	Yes
	Mays said and did things that he did not regret later, was careful, and his choices were consistently prudent	The researcher chose not to confirm the character strength of prudence because of the Judeo-Christian connotations ascribed to this virtue. While there is evidence of this virtue in the literature, the researcher believes that only Mays could have confirmed its existence in his life.	Mays exhibited Prudence	Yes
	Mays did not seek the spotlight, let his accomplishments speak for themselves, did not consider himself special	Mays did not consider himself special when his teacher bragged about his intelligence to his parents. ¹⁹²	Mays exhibited Humility and Modesty	Yes
	Mays let bygones be bygones	Mays forgave those who did him wrong. He gave people a second chance. His guiding principle was mercy not revenge. ¹⁹³	Mays exhibited Forgiveness and Mercy	Yes
Transcendence	Mays was thankful	Mays was thankful to his brother Hezekiah for giving him the funds to travel to State College. Mays was also thankful to Professors Jones and Levister for the job cleaning outhouses and the \$17 for the Pullman uniform, respectively. ¹⁹⁴	Mays exhibited Gratitude	Yes
	Mays expected the best in the future and worked to achieve it, felt that the future was something he could control	Mays encouraged the attendees at the Y.W.C.A. meeting to ripen the time for equality. He felt that the time was right to bring about racial equality. ¹⁹⁵	Mays exhibited Hope	Yes
	Mays noticed and appreciated beauty and excellence in nature or art or	Mays passed an examination at State College and was promoted from the 7 th grade into the 8 th grade. Upon arrival to	Mays exhibited Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence	Yes

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 12, 42, 105.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁹² Ibid., 6-12.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 360. The greatest proof of this character strength occurred when Mays eulogized Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 38-45.

¹⁹⁵ Height, *Open Wide The Freedom Gates: A Memoir*, 115.

Virtue	IF	Literary Evidence to support the simulated self-report	THEN he showed proof of the character strength	VIA-IS Verified Statement
	mathematics or science or everyday experiences	Bates College Mays successfully completed 6 weeks of tests to become a full-fledged sophomore. ¹⁹⁶		
	Mays beliefs shaped his actions and were a source of comfort, knew where he fit in the larger scheme, had strong and coherent beliefs about GOD	Mays chose to maintain his faith in God after discovering the pagan influences in Christianity. His belief in Christianity's call for social justice for the oppressed transcended the findings in his thesis. ¹⁹⁷	Mays exhibited Spirituality	Yes
	Mays enjoyed laughing and teasing, thought making others smile, saw the lighter side of all situations	Mays possessed this character strength; however, due to the use of humor as a survival tactic I chose not to recognize humor as a character strength for Mays.	Mays exhibited Humor	No

¹⁹⁶ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 54-64.

¹⁹⁷ Mays, "Pagan Survivals in Christianity" (AM thesis, The University of Chicago, 1925).

Chapter Four – “Bubba” and “Bennie” Mays (1894 through 1920)

Benjamin Elijah Mays’s birth did not stir as much attention as his actions to eliminate legally sanctioned segregation during his lifetime.¹⁹⁸

He often referred to himself as coming out of his mother’s womb kicking.

Even though his mother, born the year before the Emancipation

Proclamation, could not read nor write, she told him he could be anything

he wanted to be. This deeply religious woman brought her children

together every evening and often in the morning for prayer.¹⁹⁹

Benjamin E. Mays revealed on February 10, 1984, forty-six days before his death, that his mother nicknamed him Bubba. His other family members followed suit and called him Bubba at home.²⁰⁰ When a person considers his pedigree, it was not in Mays’s future trajectory to leave the farm to receive an education. He did receive an education and he did depart because he had developed the character strength of *love of learning* by displaying a love for school, reading, and learning new things. It began with his mother, his sister Susie, and his first teacher, Ellen Waller.²⁰¹ Mays’s autobiography does not give an age when Mays started his reading and math lessons at home; he was literate in those areas by age six. When he entered the Brickhouse School his ability to read and perform math functions was very evident to his teacher. Mays remembered reading to his mother and at times reading “consoling passages in the Psalms and sections of the Sermon on the

¹⁹⁸ Mays, *Born to Rebel*. I consciously chose to use Dr. Mays’s autobiography to form a substantial portion of the biographical information in the study. This was necessary because Mays’s view of his actions were essential to revealing his character strengths and virtues.

¹⁹⁹ Dumas and Hunter, *Benjamin Elijah Mays: A Pictorial Life and Times*, 7.

²⁰⁰ Barnett, "Benjamin E. Mays: Failure is not reaching your goal; failure is having no goal to reach for."

²⁰¹ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 3-11.

Mount. How often I read to her the 37th Psalm after one of Father's tirades!"²⁰² By learning how to read and perform math functions at an early age Mays planted not only the seed for an education but also a way to depart the agricultural future that trapped his grandmother, parents, and siblings in a perpetual cycle of poverty.

Although his departure from the farm to further establish his love for learning was against his father's desires, his character strengths of perseverance and perspective led him to become one of the best-known educators in America. In keeping with his desire to receive an education Mays, at age 15, won Pastor Marshall as a champion to persuade Hezekiah Mays to let his son attend the Baptist Association School in McCormick.²⁰³ Mays was still only exposed to four months of education and had to return to help his father with the farm for eight months each year. He was essentially becoming more proficient as a farmer than an educator. With this reality, and the opposition to the furtherance of his education by his father and the landowner, Mays's developing character strength of perspective led him to South Carolina State College to complete grades eight through 12.²⁰⁴

Mays's desire to finish what he started and the way he viewed the value of an education were the foundation for his emerging character strengths of love of learning, perseverance, and perspective. The satisfaction he demonstrated during his educational journey started the development of character strengths to help in his quest for equality and the elimination of legally sanctioned segregation.

Mays chose to end the cycle of labor exploitation to enrich the landowner while the workers and their families lived in poverty. Once he left the arduous work of a cotton

²⁰² Ibid., 3, 11.

²⁰³ Ibid., 37.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 37-39.

farmer he found work as a janitor (he cleaned outhouses at State College) and a Pullman Porter. So instead of paying someone a large portion of his earnings Mays received pay for his labor. He used his compensation to finance his education.²⁰⁵ Mays consciously elected to use his height and strength to receive a fair wage to eliminate his dependence on the funds his father and siblings received from farming. As he received fair and equal treatment he treated everyone fairly and gave others a chance regardless of his personal feelings. After carefully appraising the situation, he applied fair and equitable treatment to all.

Mays identified situations and activities that afforded a glimpse of his early character development. The story of his ancestry describes the obstacles he had to initially overcome. Once he overcame these obstacles, Mays changed his destiny to become an educated, rights-oriented, theologically grounded man of good character. Mays rose above his pedigree which started with his paternal grandmother Julia, who was born into slavery in Virginia then sold to a slave owner in South Carolina. Her children too were born into slavery.²⁰⁶

As children, ages 9 and 3 respectively, his father, Hezekiah, and mother, Louvenia Carter, were freed when Lincoln emancipated slaves living in the states in rebellion with the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, and the end of the Civil War in 1865. Later his mother and father either heard about or read about the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1868 which freed all slaves in the United States. After emancipation, the couple lived under the protection of the federal government during reconstruction (1866-1877). Mays's parents could not receive an

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 38-39.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 1-2.

education because they had to work; they did not have the time or the education necessary to break the cycle of perpetual poverty associated with the life of farm renters/sharecroppers. Without an education, they could not teach or work in a non-agriculture related trade. They lived through the reversal of protective legislation from 1878 to 1896 as sharecroppers or renters of farms to support their growing family. This was the direction Mays's life was heading. His parents and siblings could not escape this path due to a limited access to an education and legal segregation.

His father's rented farm in South Carolina, the place where Benjamin was born, was four miles from the post office in Rambo, later named Epworth. The Mays's farm was six miles from Ninety-Six, the nearest train station, and ten miles from Greenwood the county seat.²⁰⁷ Walking or riding the family mule drawn buggy were the forms of transportation the Mays family used to travel to the post office, train station, or county seat. Mays's parents operated within the familiar boundaries of transitioning from slavery to sharecropping. In South Carolina, the two social conditions for Whites and Blacks were determined by the state's *Black Codes*. The codes subjugated Negroes to slave-like conditions and elevated Whites to positions as masters based solely on race.²⁰⁸

For the same reasons, segregation, racism, and discrimination as well as a lack of an education and access to housing, Hezekiah and Louvenia Mays's children became trapped in the perpetual poverty cycle as sharecroppers. Since the state needed revenue from the landowners in the form of taxes, state law allowed the Mays family to rent a farm and earn a living with little or no interference from the local government or citizens. At the same time, South Carolina disenfranchised the Negro man's vote through tactics

²⁰⁷ Ibid. Mays identified his birthplace in the number of miles from the nearest community. Most communities in rural America revolved around the post office, train station, and the county seat.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 24.

such as legislation, the grandfather clause, poll taxes, and voting tests. The disenfranchisement not only denied Negro men their right to vote but also trapped the community in the perpetual cycle of poverty. Without the right to vote, the community could not elect officials to enact laws to change the *separate but equal* laws. With the denial of the right to vote, the community could not change laws that prohibited Blacks from operating businesses or holding mortgages. Additionally, the denial of the right to vote placed the responsibility for the education of members of the Black community in the hands of the segregationists. The resulting effects of disenfranchisement, segregation, racism, discrimination, lack of access to an adequate education and housing, and inferior-superior relationships shaped the social setting/events associated with Mays's childhood. These actions supported the climate that led to the Phoenix Race Riot of 1898.

With a background such as this, Benjamin "Bubba" Mays was not expected to become anything but a sharecropper, but this environment provided him with many opportunities to observe and develop character strengths. His experience during the Phoenix Race Riot, where he saw his father's character strength of self-regulation, was permanently etched in his mind when Hezekiah Mays consciously regulated his feelings and emotions to protect the life of his young son.²⁰⁹ The encouragement of his mother, early education and high school graduation, and college years were all instances of his character strength of love of learning.²¹⁰ The strengths of his parents and community helped Mays to develop his own virtues of wisdom and knowledge, temperance, and humanity within the overarching social setting/event of Jim Crow.

²⁰⁹ Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 500.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 163.

The 1898 Phoenix Riot

Mays and his father traveled to Phoenix, South Carolina on November 8, 1898.²¹¹ Whatever their mode of transportation, the elder Mays went to town on the day a local White businessman was having Negro American men sign an affidavit stating that they were denied their right to vote by local politicians. The men who signed the petition displayed the character strength of teamwork. The events leading up to the Phoenix Riot were reported by Mays. The only thing Mays remembered as a child was the humiliation his father endured at the hands of the lynch mob to ensure his son's safety—Mays's first recorded exposure to the social setting/event of racism.²¹²

Bubba remembered the lynch mob demand that Mr. Hezekiah Mays remove his hat, turn around, and render a salute to the mob members. Mr. Mays bravely capitulated to the mob's request, which also displayed social intelligence.²¹³ He removed his hat, turned around, and saluted the mob before the mob stopped harassing them. After the display of the character strengths of self-control, bravery, and social intelligence, Hezekiah and Bubba Mays returned home, having been caught up in a social setting/event that was typical of the confused and pathological racial relationships of the Jim Crow South. Hezekiah Mays's obedience to the demands of the mob was appropriate because he had his youngest son with him. Since he was literate he more than likely read the account of Frazer Butler's lynching in February 1898 in Florence, South Carolina.

²¹¹ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 328-35, 70.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 328-35; John Britton, "The Civil Rights Documentation Project, 1527 New Hampshire Ave NW, Washington, DC 20036. A Transcript of a Tape-Recorded Interview With Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, President Emeritus, Morehouse College, Atlanta, GA. John Britton, Interviewer," in *The Civil Rights Documentation Project*, (Washington: Howard University Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, January 26, 1968); Peterson and Seligman, CSVHC, 500. I first read Dr. Mays's account of the riot in *Born to Rebel* (1971), then I read about it in Mays's oral interview, finally I heard Dr. Mays give his account on a video interview conducted 10 days before his death. His account bodes well with Peterson and Seligman's self-regulation character strength.

²¹³ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 214, 337.

The mob in Florence killed Butler and his two year old daughter. Butler's wife and surviving children were shot before their home burned to the ground.²¹⁴ This incident was an indication of what Christian men in South Carolina were capable of doing to deliver their version of justice.

According to Daniel Wilk, the election of 1898 was a precursor to the 1900 Presidential Election.²¹⁵ The 1898 election decided who would represent the state and become a member of the Electoral College that would elect the President of the United States. Equally important was Article II of the U.S. Constitution's establishment of the apportionment for the House of Representatives. If Negro Americans were allowed to vote then the Republican candidate would have easily defeated the Democratic candidate. The population in South Carolina between 1890 and 1900 was 41.6 percent White and 58.4 percent non-White or Negro American. Although amendments abolishing slavery and granting citizenship and equal protection rights to Negroes were ratified by the states in 1865 and 1868, South Carolina adopted an informal disenfranchisement law in 1895 that was not challenged at the National level.²¹⁶ The 1895 law denied Negro American men the right to vote in South Carolina. In an attempt to circumvent the disenfranchisement statute, Thomas P. Tolbert, a White Republican, decided to take affidavits from disenfranchised Negro Americans in the small town of Phoenix. Tolbert placed himself outside the Watson and Lake General Store where local citizens cast their ballots. His motivations were uncertain. He may have been a person trying to protect the

²¹⁴ n.a., "Lynching of Frazer Butler and his daughter in Florence," <http://www.usps.com/postalhistory/pdf/AfricanAmericanWorkers19thc.pdf> .

²¹⁵ Daniel Levinson Wilk, "The Phoenix Riot and the Memories of Greenwood County," *Southern Cultures* 8, no. 4 (2002): 29-55.

²¹⁶ Hine, Hine, and Harrold, *The African American Odyssey*. The U.S. Constitution, Amendments 13, 14, and 15.

rights of Negro Americans, or that of a politician trying to ensure his brother, Robert Red Tolbert, the White Republican candidate for the House of Representatives, had a fair chance of being elected to office. Whatever his reason, J.I. "Bose" Ethridge and Robert Cheatham, both White Democrats, ordered Thomas Tolbert to collect his affidavit box and leave the polling place. Ethridge destroyed the affidavit box after Tolbert refused to move. Tolbert did not budge which resulted in a fight between Tolbert and Ethridge. "Bose" Ethridge used a board to beat Tolbert on his head. Tolbert fought back. Eventually, others joined in the fray and both sides fired gunshots. One bullet struck Bose Ethridge in his forehead killing him instantly.

No one knew who fired the first shot or the fatal bullet that killed Ethridge, but because of shots being fired other White Democrats joined the fight once they heard the gunfire. Thomas Tolbert was seriously wounded, and White men took to the streets to extract revenge against the Tolbert family and the Negro American community. No one was ever charged as the murderer of Bose Ethridge. However, his murder was the start of the Phoenix Race Riot, which lasted from the 8th of November until the 13th of November 1898. The residual effects of the race riot continued for months. During and after the time Mr. Hezekiah Mays and his youngest son, Benjamin, were humiliated by the White mobs, seven Negro men and one Negro woman were lynched in Greenwood County, South Carolina. Although it was illegal to lynch a person in South Carolina, no one was tried or charged with the Phoenix Race Riot lynchings. Table 4-1 shows the recorded lynching victims in Greenwood County, South Carolina from November 8 through the 13th, 1898.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ Wilk, "The Phoenix Riot and the Memories of Greenwood County." Additional information about the Phoenix Riot was compiled from the Wilk article.

Table 4-1: Lynching Victims in Greenwood County, South Carolina November 8-13, 1898.²¹⁸

Name	Race of Victim	Gender	(Alleged) Reason	Date of Lynching
Columbus Jackson	Negro	Male	Murder	November 9, 1898
Wade McKinney	Negro	Male	Murder	November 9, 1898
Drayton Watts	Negro	Male	Murder	November 9, 1898
Jesse Williams	Negro	Male	Murder	November 9, 1898
Benjamin Collins	Negro	Male	Murder	November 10, 1898
Essex Harrison	Negro	Male	Murder	November 10, 1898
Jeff Darling	Negro	Male	Murder	November 10, 1898
Eliza Goode	Negro	Female	Unknown	November 13, 1898

It was not clear if these killings were a result of Ethridge's death. Joe Circuit and Will White were two Negro men on the porch with Tom Tolbert when Ethridge began the fight that resulted in the riot, but neither Tolbert nor Circuit nor White was charged with the crime of murder. Witnesses insisted that either White or Circuit fired their weapons that day. Regardless of the evidence or lack of evidence, the lynch mob lynched whomever they pleased without the benefit of a trial or formal charge. Eight people lost their lives because White racists took the law into their own hands. Realizing their power, racists in South Carolina were able to control the non-White population through segregation, fear, and intimidation. According to Wilk many Negro Americans moved to other states after the riot. After witnessing the humiliation of his father and hearing about the ensuing chaos, Mays learned at an early age the political and economic significance

²¹⁸ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 329-37; Elizabeth Hines and Eliza Steelwater, "Project HAL: Historical American Lynching Data Collection Project," University of North Carolina, <http://users.bestweb.net/~rg/Lynchings.htm>. Source: This table was compiled from information presented in Mays, *Born to Rebel*, and from <http://users.bestweb.net/~rg/Lynchings.htm>, which was developed with data from "Project HAL: Historical American Lynching Data Collection Project", Elizabeth Hines Ph.D. and Eliza Steelwater Ph.D., Principal Investigators. University of North Carolina at Wilmington. NOTE: The Chicago Manual of Style 16th edition requires the table source to be placed in an unnumbered footnote. I chose to take an exception and number the source with the other footnotes.

of segregation. When one looks at the events through a *CSVHC* lens, Hezekiah Mays's actions represented the foundations for virtues and character strengths. His response to the mob displayed bravery (he did not shrink from the threat), self-control (he self-consciously regulated what he did), citizenship/teamwork (as a member of the group of two—father and son—he successfully assured their safety), and social intelligence (Hezekiah was aware of the motives of the mob).²¹⁹ The foundation established by his father helped Benjamin develop the strengths of perspective (he had a way of looking at the world based on this experience), love of learning (he loved opportunities to learn), persistence (he worked hard to finish what he started), and spirituality (his beliefs shaped his actions and were a source of comfort).²²⁰ The character strengths that Mays developed at an early age led him to seek an education and fight against segregation.

The Encouragement of Louvenia Carter Mays

Mays's mother, Louvenia Carter Mays, was only three years old when she was emancipated from slavery, so it makes sense that her view on race relations and the ability for the Black man to rise above his circumstances was different than Hezekiah's. Hezekiah, like Booker T. Washington, was born in 1856 and was nine when the Civil War ended. While it is true that Hezekiah and Louvenia both gained their emancipation on the same day, the six-year difference gave them different memories of their time in slavery. By 1877 when protective legislation was repealed Hezekiah was twenty-one and Louvenia was fifteen, and they were already married with a lease on a farm to support the family as sharecroppers.

²¹⁹ Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 629-30.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

Working the farm to plant agricultural crops to pay for the rent did not leave much time for socializing with the family or neighbors. However, nothing brought the family together faster than the birth of a baby. Mr. Hezekiah and Mrs. Louvenia Carter Mays had seven children, and the addition of little Benjamin was an event that brought the family and the community together to celebrate his birth.²²¹ In addition to Benjamin, the children included Susie, Sarah, Mary, James, Isaiah, John, and Hezekiah.

Mrs. Mays gave Benjamin lessons he would remember for the remainder of his life. She was a woman without a formal education who loved having her “Bubba” read the Bible while she gave him insight into the passages. Her memorized interpretations helped Bubba with his critical thinking skills (open mindedness—he thought things through) and he was an accomplished reader by the age of six (love of learning). In addition to the encouragement from his mother, his sister, Susie, taught him how to read and perform mathematical functions, and his teacher, Ellen Waller, told him how special he was as a person and student. Their influence was the catalyst for his character strength of love of learning.²²² His advanced ability to learn eventually earned him a position as a student teacher in the one room Brickhouse School.

When the conditions of economic enslavement and segregation made young Benjamin feel inferior, his mother gave him a lesson he did not forget. She told him only he could allow someone to make him feel inferior. Astute in the Bible verses she would often ask Benjamin to read to her. Perhaps she cleverly asked him to read the verse most White and Black preachers failed to mention because the Bible bestowed equality and liberty to all Christians. May’s appreciation for scripture such as Galatians 3:26-29 was

²²¹ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 1.

²²² *Ibid.*, 11.

appropriate as a legacy to his mother: “*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise.*” Mrs. Mays used her memorized words from the Bible to convince her son that he was not inferior to anyone, and no one can make him feel inferior without his permission (spirituality, her admonishment showed him where he fit in the larger scheme).²²³

When the conditions of the then-recently freed slaves, the enforcement of the “Black Codes,” the repeal of protective legislation, and the history of race relations in the state of South Carolina are juxtaposed, a picture of the Mays family’s social, political, religious and economic predicament emerges. Restrictions on freedoms for Blacks in South Carolina were severe. This is not surprising—South Carolina was the home state of Fort Sumter, where the Civil War began in 1861, and the state had previously tried to leave the Union in 1856, primarily over issues of slavery and Negro suppression.²²⁴ The state denied Black Americans their equal rights before, during, and after slavery, and the Mays family felt the sting of this discrimination.²²⁵

Spirituality and the developing character strength of citizenship kept Bubba from falling to the vice of inferiority. Instead, the character strengths of love of learning, social

²²³ Ibid., xiii, 2; Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 600.

²²⁴ Tindall and Shi, *America: A Narrative History*.

²²⁵ Bennett, *The Shaping Of Black America: The Struggles and Triumphs of African-Americans, 1619 to The 1990s*. The Black American came to the United States first as an indentured servant, to Jamestown, Virginia, then as a slave, and finally they were kept in slave like conditions after the repeal of the Reconstruction Act of 1867

intelligence and fairness emerged from his mother's admonition, and laid the foundation for the character strength of hope.

Early Education

At the age of six, Mays entered the one room Brickhouse School, named as such because the school was located near a large brick home. The actual construction of the school was of wood and it sat on small stilts. The construction of the building was mainly clapboards that allowed winter rains and cold air to enter while the students were trying to learn their lessons. In the center of the school was a wood-burning stove that separated the boys from the girls. It is not certain how Mays traversed the six to seven miles round trip journey to the school; however, it is evident that he was an unusual student who defied the wishes of Bill Mays, the landowner, and his father.²²⁶

From the onset, he impressed his teacher, Miss Ellen Waller, with his ability to read, write, and perform mathematical functions. Mays admitted that "at six I found myself deeply in love (valued close relationships) with my teacher. I studied as much for her as I did to learn."²²⁷ Miss Waller was so captivated by Bennie, as she called him, that she "bragged on him," and she sought out his parents at church to tell them and others that "Bennie is smart."²²⁸

His ability to perform well in school started with the preparation he received from his sister Susie. She taught Bennie his alphabet, how to read, and how to count to one hundred (love of learning) before Bennie entered the Brickhouse School. As the

²²⁶ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 7. Bill Mays was the owner of the land Hezekiah Mays rented. Bill was not related to Dr. Mays. Although he liked Bill Mays as a person, Dr. Mays objected to Bill Mays 's recommendation to Mr. Hezekiah Mays to keep young Bennie home to work the farm instead of allowing him to go to school.

²²⁷ Mays, "In My Life and Time," in *Benjamin E. Mays: His Life, Contributions, and Legacy*, ed. Samuel DuBois Cook, (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 2009), 5-16.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

youngest child, the family took him under their collective wings and nurtured young Bennie to do his best academically. Without a doubt, the care he received at home from his siblings and parents contributed to the early success he experienced in school. He was indeed loved and respected by his family.

Many evenings before they went to bed the family would gather around their mother's bed for a time of prayer and to read the Bible (spirituality—a strong and coherent belief about GOD). At times Mr. Hezekiah Mays would read the Bible, but this duty normally fell to young Bennie. It did not matter that Mrs. Louvenia Carter Mays could not read; she was very astute in memorizing the scriptures as they were read nightly.²²⁹

Mr. and Mrs. Mays adored their children and tried to expose them to education, but demands of farming in the rural South left little time or opportunity for the classroom. Of necessity, the older Mays children left school when it was time to help work the farm. Young Hezekiah was the only child other than Bennie to finish high school, and the other children had varying levels of education that stopped at grade five.

A fifth grade education was not in Bennie's plan for his life (perspective—a view of the world that made sense to him and eventually made sense to others).²³⁰ He attended the Brickhouse School from age six until he was fifteen years old. At that time, he transferred to the Baptist Association School in McCormick, South Carolina which was a twenty-five mile train ride from the Mays home. The Reverend James F. Marshall convinced Mr. Mays to allow Bennie to attend the school.²³¹

²²⁹ Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 629-30; Mays, "In My Life and Time," 11.

²³⁰ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 37.

²³¹ Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 182.

Pastor Marshall was one of the local Negro leaders in the community that people respected because he was a man of impeccable character. The only gossip that circulated about him was that he left a parishioner's home in the middle of the night when his hostess tried to have intimate relations with him. He was a man of integrity who Mays fondly called a "fifth grade scholar who knew the scriptures."²³²

After he completed two years of studies at the McCormick school, Bennie Mays wanted to leave the school and become a railway mail clerk. Pastor Marshall wanted him to return for a third year and become a student teacher. Even though Pastor Marshall was a person of influence in his life Bennie did not have the same desire because he became disenchanted with the constant cycle of four months of schooling then returning home to work the farm (love of learning and fairness—eleven years to achieve a sixth grade education).²³³ Therefore, at the age of 17 he parted ways with Pastor Marshall, weighing whether he should pursue a position with the railway or attend the high school department at Benedict College or State College in South Carolina. Attending the high school department at either school would give Bennie an opportunity to "remain in school for the full term."²³⁴

South Carolina State College

He chose South Carolina State College because the tuition was \$6.00 per month and the train fare was \$3.05—which were within his limited means. Also, State College was less expensive than Benedict College. Initially he received his tuition and train fare

²³² Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 14. Reverend Marshall was a traveling minister and had to stay overnight at parishioners' homes. When he visited Mount Zion the parishioners would insure that their homes were "spic and span" before he conducted services every second Sunday.

²³³ Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 163, 392.

²³⁴ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 38.

from his father and oldest brother John. His father “angrily threw a ten-dollar bill at” Mays, and his brother John promised to send three dollars a month for two months.²³⁵

The initial assistance made State College the best choice for high school. Bennie was confident that he could earn this amount if his father was unwilling to assist him with his tuition and fees (leadership—organized activities and made sure they happened). South Carolina State College was founded in 1896 as South Carolina’s only public institution of higher learning for Negroes under the pretense of being a *separate but equal* public education facility for the Negro community.²³⁶

In South Carolina, Negroes outnumbered White Americans from the 1700s until 1930.²³⁷ The state wanted to prevent the co-mingling of the races regardless of the disproportionate population ratios. By funding a college for Negroes, albeit for a limited number, the state assured segregation would continue to be the way of life in South Carolina. As one of the fortunate few who could access post-elementary schooling, Bennie Mays could start satisfying his appetite for an education at an established high school. He knew that farming was not the career he desired to pursue after graduation (hope—Mays expected the best from the future and pursued it).²³⁸

Upon his arrival at South Carolina State College in Orangeburg, Bennie Mays took an examination proctored by the seventh grade teacher, Miss Julia Mae Williams. After tallying the results, Miss Williams took young Mays to Professor Nelson C. Nix to have Mays placed in the eighth grade (appreciation of beauty and excellence—Mays

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.; Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 414.

²³⁷ Julian J. Petty, "Twentieth Century Changes in South Carolina Population (1790-1890); (1900-1960) US. Bureau of the Census, General Population Characteristics, South Carolina; (1970-1980) General Population Characteristics," ed. U.S. Bureau of the Census (Washington).

²³⁸ Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 570, 629-30.

excelled in mathematics and science as well as everyday experiences). Professor Nix became an advocate for Mays while he attended State College. Other professors helped Mays earn his tuition or loaned him the funds he needed to purchase his first Pullman Porter's uniform for his first paid job.²³⁹

Professor "Big Time" Jones hired Mays to clean the school's outhouses after midnight when everyone was asleep. Professor Bollie Levister loaned Mays the seventeen dollars he needed to buy a cap and a uniform to work as a Pullman Porter for the summer. With the support and influence of Miss Williams, Professor Nix, Professor Jones, and Professor Levister, Mays realized his dream of graduating from high school at age 21.²⁴⁰

As expected, Mays learned his lessons so well in the high school department at State College that when faced with the challenge of outperforming the math students (vitality) at the University of South Carolina, he knew segregation would prevent him from meeting the goal.²⁴¹ Instead, he decided to compete with the Northern White man—specifically the New Englander—because, based on the South's adherence to Jim Crow and the North's desegregated venues, he believed that the Northern White man was

²³⁹ Ibid., 538; Pierre Walter, "The Restructuring of Academia, Review of 'The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism, by Richard Sennett, 1998. New York: Norton 176 pp'," *Adult Education Quarterly* 52, no. 70 (2001): 70-77. Mays noticed that excellence at performing mathematical functions was one of his strongest skills. He always performed above the expected level.

²⁴⁰ Mays, *Born to Rebel*. State College required their graduates to have thirteen years of education before they graduated from high school. The Negro colleges had a high school department as well as a college department. By Mays's calculations he was on track to graduate at the age of fourteen, however legal segregation denied him that opportunity. He regretted the lost seven years (instead of graduating at age 14 he graduated high school at age 21).

²⁴¹ Ibid., 38. Professor N.C. Nix issued this challenge after promoting Mays to the next level math class. In hindsight the challenge could have been a rouse to get Mays to attend college at State.

superior to the Southern White man. Once he successfully competed against New Englanders, his success meant he exceeded the math challenge issued by his professor.²⁴²

Virginia Union (Wayland Seminary)

Mays's first application to attend a college in New England was rejected because of his race. Mays appreciated the honest tone of his rejection letter from the Reverend Lorin Webster, the Rector for Holderness School in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.²⁴³ Webster's rejection letter motivated Mays to pursue his dream. Even as a young man, Mays searched for ways around obstacles that would have stymied a less adamant person. Professor F. Marcellus Staley recommended that Mays attend Virginia Union in place of a school in New England, so he temporarily shifted his sights to Virginia Union in Richmond, Virginia.²⁴⁴

On September 16, 1916, Mays became a freshman at Virginia Union at the age of 22. Virginia Union was and still is a private four-year liberal arts college affiliated with the American Baptist Church, USA. Virginia Union was originally established when Richmond Theological Institute and Wayland Seminary in Washington, DC merged in 1899. Subsequent mergers with Hartshorn Memorial College of Richmond and Storer College of Harper's Ferry, West Virginia completed the union.²⁴⁵

Shortly after arriving in Richmond, Mays consciously took his first public stance against segregation when he distinguished between voluntary segregation and

²⁴² Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 273.

²⁴³ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 51.

²⁴⁴ Ibid. When I read the original letter in Dr. Mays's papers at Howard University it was hard to accept that Holderness rejected his application because he was Black.

²⁴⁵ Virginia Union University, "Virginia Union University.edu 'History'," http://www.vuu.edu/about_vuu.aspx .

compulsory segregation (self-regulation—Mays self-consciously regulated what he felt and what he did—; and citizenship; Mays was loyal and dedicated).²⁴⁶

I went to a segregated theater just once during my school year at Virginia Union, and I decided then, in the academic year 1916-17, that never again would I go to a segregated theater. I have kept that vow. I held then, as I do now, that there is a difference between voluntary segregation and compulsory segregation. One has to accept compulsory segregation or pay a penalty; but one does not have to accept voluntary segregation. I had to accept Richmond's segregation on the streetcars if I wanted to get where I had to go. But it was in no way necessary for me voluntarily to accept an embarrassing seat in a Jim Crow theater.²⁴⁷

His stance and academic prowess removed anyone's perception that he was inferior to someone else. Mays performed well in his English, German, Latin, and Mathematics classes. He did so well in his Mathematics class that he received a job as a student teacher to help the members of the freshmen class who failed algebra during the first semester. Although he worked the summer as a Pullman Porter, he did not have sufficient funds to pay for his tuition, so he found work in the dining hall. His pay from his student-teacher position gave him enough funds to pay for his first year at Virginia Union.²⁴⁸

With a year of significant collegiate academic achievement behind him, Mays still wanted to realize his dream of competing with the Northern White man, specifically the New Englander. With support from Professor Roland A. Wingfield and Professor

²⁴⁶ Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 370, 629-30.

²⁴⁷ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 52-53.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Charles Hadley, both graduates of Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, and letters of recommendation written on his behalf by his math and chemistry professors, respectively, to Bates President George Colby Chase, Mays made another attempt to gain admissions to a New England college and this time he was accepted.²⁴⁹

This was an important juncture in his academic career because he had to make a decision about whether to attend the Negro Officer Training Camp in Des Moines, Iowa or go to Bates. He registered for military service but did not attend the segregated Officer Training Camp in Des Moines, but went to Bates and waited to be drafted.²⁵⁰ Mays recalled that when the draft forms came he was classified as 4-D because the way he answered the question, “Do you claim exemption for any reason?” His response was, “No, except that I am a student of the ministry.” With his deferral, he was free to attend Bates College.²⁵¹

Bates College: Living the Dream

In 1917, his trip to Maine was unusual for him due to the friendliness he encountered on the train. He was the only Negro on the train and he rode with the White passengers. One of the passengers was a Bates student returning to school. The student introduced himself to Mays and offered to help him find housing once they arrived at the campus. After arriving in Lewiston, Mays met Julian Coleman, a Negro senior classman, from Pawtucket, Rhode Island who remained a close friend until Coleman’s death.²⁵²

Mays entered Bates College as a probationary sophomore. His admission as a sophomore

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 53-55.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

was on the condition that he passed his first six weeks of tests, which he successfully completed (appreciation of beauty and excellence)

Surprisingly, for the first time in his life, he was not only in the minority but he also had an opportunity to be exposed to social intercourse with White Americans as an equal versus an erroneously labeled inferior. Mays was surrounded by people who wanted to encourage and augment his educational pursuits instead of limiting his opportunities. The faculty and staff as well as the student body created an atmosphere where he became Benjamin Elijah Mays, the student, friend, and equal. Undeniably, he had found a competitive environment where he could learn his lessons without being recalled to the farm to work and where, when he did encounter racism or discrimination, it was negligible.

Segregation was not an issue in Lewiston nor were there limitations on employment, travel, or association. Mays could talk to whomever he wanted to in whatever manner he chose. He reveled in freedoms he could not experience in Greenwood, South Carolina, or at State College, or at Virginia Union in Richmond, Virginia. As usual, he had financial problems, which were resolved by working as a student library helper, working in the dining hall, washing dishes in a restaurant in Lewiston, painting at a shipyard in Boston, and working as a Pullman Porter during summer and holiday breaks. Mays also borrowed money from the college's loan fund—an opportunity unavailable to him at his previous institutions of higher education. The ability to find employment in non-agricultural occupations was also rare or unheard of in the South. With his financial requirements met, Mays had more time to devote to his studies and his competition against the New Englander.

Mays won his first declamation contest after being at Bates for only eight weeks. His first six weeks were consumed with tests to elevate him into the sophomore class as a full-fledged member. During this time, he removed the stigma of probation and prepared to win first prize in the declamation contest.²⁵³ There were five White students in the competition but Mays came out on top. The three judges' unanimous decision gave him recognition on the campus by both faculty and students.

Professor Grosvenor May Robinson, Mrs. Fred Pomeroy, and Professor Fred Pomeroy coached Mays for his declamation contest. Professor A. Craig Baird, English professor and Debating Coach, was so impressed with Mays's victory that he visited him in his room to invite Mays to become a member of the debating team, which he eventually captained during his senior year at Bates.²⁵⁴

After his first win, Mays wrote a subsequent thesis that became his battle cry for the next thirty-three years. Professor Grosvenor May Robinson signed the back page of Mays's thesis, *Our Third Emancipation*.²⁵⁵ With the approval of his debating coach, Mays articulated a policy statement that eventually became a key tenet of the Civil Rights Movement. In an oratorical contest between academic years sometime between 1918 and 1920, Mays said:

By night and by day the cries of an oppressed people pierced the celestial sphere. In the fields and in the swamps their arms were lifted to the most High and their voices were heard on the galaxies of Heaven. Such is the

²⁵³ Ibid., 55-57. The stigma of race did not affect him at Bates because race was a non-issue at Bates College and for most of the town of Lewiston, Maine.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Mays, "Our Third Emancipation." Upon reading the premise of his declamation speech, I was moved because this speech definitively punctuated his life's desire. His life's desire was to end legally sanctioned segregation and give everyone an equal opportunity to compete equally. Mays identified the first emancipation as the acceptance of Christianity for the Africans who came to America as slaves. The second was the Emancipation Proclamation. The third would be the end of legally sanctioned segregation.

story of our **first emancipation** from ignorance and vice to semi-civilization—a sordid and pitiful cruel tale.... for four hundred years Ethiopia stretched forth her hands unto God—in order that our **second emancipation** from servile servitude to citizenship might be obtained and finally the second emancipation became a reality in 1863 under the leadership of the immortal Lincoln. But slavery is not all evil. Every picture has a bright side, so has slavery. The training, which the Negro got in the University of Slavery, was essential to him in the struggle for existence and self-maintenance, which followed the emancipation. Apart from this, the history of the Negro since 1863 may have been one of stagnation and finally, extinction. The end of the second emancipation marks the beginning of the fight for the **third emancipation**, the reality of which is still unknown. The third emancipation will accord to the Negro in practice that which is granted in theory under the constitution of the U.S. It will spell freedom of mob violence, lynch law, disfranchisement and discrimination. But in seeking the third stage of our freedom we are brought face to face with what is commonly called the race problem, a problem which we have, for the past fifty years, offered no definite plan for its solution. But, on the other hand we have taken a passive attitude, hoping that we would wake up some fine morning and find a Utopian world, a world in which all racial differences would be settled in perfect peace and harmony.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

In a sense, Mays experienced the Third Emancipation while he attended college in Maine. This was evident when Mays refused to compete for a spot on the Debate Team (persistence). Three team members also refused to try out for the team and were accepted without audition. Mays's contention was that he was on the same level as his teammates and if they were not required to try out, he too would not try out. Mays won this battle and Coach Baird placed him on the team without audition. For the three years while Mays was a member, the Bates College debating team competed against Cornell, Harvard, Tufts, and other New England colleges. Although these were larger institutions, Bates defeated each one.

While Mays was a strong communicator and had a command of proper English, he struggled in his first semester with spoken and written Greek. After winning over a heckler, Paul Tilden, and receiving extra help, he overcame his deficiency and earned top grades in the subject. Tilden's action influenced Mays to seek excellence in Greek. Mays also accredited his turn around to "consistently diligent work" which earned him the grades of "B" for one semester and "A's" for the remaining five semesters. His classmates were so impressed with his ability in Greek they elected him President of the Philhellenic Club.²⁵⁷

The impression Mays made at Bates College also won him the admiration of his classmates. Mays was a leader at Bates; his classmates elected him to be the President of the Bates Forum and the Class Day Orator. As a member of the Y.M.C.A. Cabinet, he represented Bates at the Northfield Y.M.C.A. Conference in 1919.²⁵⁸ Finally, he was one

²⁵⁷ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 59.

²⁵⁸ James E. Katz and Lana D. Muraskin, "The Assimilation of Jewish Young Adults through the New York City Young Men's Hebrew Association," *Adult Education Quarterly* 26, no. 226 (1976):226-234. The

of fifteen students to graduate with honors in 1920 (appreciation of beauty and excellence).

Mays continued his moral training at Bates. While in attendance he strove for and achieved excellence, intellectually and morally. Mays started at Bates as a probationary student. He struggled with his Greek classes. He won a spot on the debate team without trying out; he strove for excellence and he achieved excellence. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* stated that virtues or excellences can be developed and once a person received moral training they are at the starting point for a noble act or action. "The virtues or excellences of the mind or soul, ... we divided into two classes, and called one moral and the other intellectual. Now, moral virtue is a habit or formed faculty of choice or purpose, and purpose is desire following upon deliberation."²⁵⁹ As a result, Mays found pleasure and pain in his pursuit of an education during his competition against New Englanders.²⁶⁰

Mays graduated with his class after three years at Bates College. He pondered the direction his career should take after graduation and chose to pursue graduate divinity degree as his first option. The first option was to study at Newton Theological Seminary. The second option was to pursue a graduate degree at the University of Chicago. Newton was a natural choice because Mays was a self-taught student of the Bible and Professor Herbert Howard Purinton was ready to recommend him for admission.

Mays was also well prepared for graduate school. Professor Halbert Haine Britan was supportive and ready to obtain a fellowship for Mays in the University of Chicago's Department of Philosophy. Mays also wanted to increase his math skills and he desired

Y.M.C.A. and the YMHA helped mold the character of its participants in a similar fashion as the 19th century college molded the character of its students.

²⁵⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 4, 125-26.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

to do graduate work in mathematics at the university. However, after the Newton recruiter made it clear that Newton did not want Negro students, his third social setting/event of racism materialized. Although the Newton recruiter suggested that Mays seek a divinity degree from Virginia Union, Mays chose to attend the University of Chicago for his graduate degree instead and accepted Professor Britan's assistance to obtain a fellowship.

Along with his rejection by Holderness and Newton's refusal to accept him as a student, Mays experienced only two other significant racial incidents while he attended Bates College. The one worth mentioning was at the viewing of Thomas Dixon's motion picture, "*The Birth of a Nation*."²⁶¹ Mays recalled how the picture "aroused violent emotions and stirred up racial prejudice." The picture elicited from the audience in Lewiston, "violent words and threats." For the first time, Mays felt unsure that he could make it back to the campus without being molested by members from the audience—his fourth social setting/event, the power of media to invoke negative, and positive, emotions (self-regulation—in control of his emotions).²⁶²

With the four overarching social setting/events identified it is necessary to place them together to show their effect on Mays's emerging and developing character strengths. The first social setting/event was living with the terrors of Jim Crow as shown by the humiliation his father endured at the hands of the mob during the Phoenix Riot. The second social setting/event was his refusal to participate in voluntary segregation as demonstrated while attending a segregated theater when Mays attended Virginia Union in Richmond, VA. The third social setting/event was rejection because of race by White

²⁶¹ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 60.

²⁶² Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 462.

Institutes of higher learning, by the Rector at Holderness and the recruiter from Newton Theological Seminary. These actions alone constituted the rejection of an inferior superior relationship in the continuing environment of racism, discrimination, and limited access to education. Also at Bates, he encountered his fourth social setting/event of the power of media, cinematic portrayals which resulted in negative emotions towards Negroes from a normally racially tolerant society. I believe his conscious objection to conditions that placed him under the shadow of inferiority and, moral and intellectual virtues were turning points in Mays's quest for equality.

In retrospect, Mays determined that Bates College did not emancipate him but rather his experience at Bates empowered him to emancipate himself.²⁶³ The experience gave him the power to "accept with dignity my own worth as a free man,"²⁶⁴ and allowed him to muster the internal strength to overcome the four social settings/events in his life.

Challenges of a Pullman Porter: 1917-1920

Character strengths, virtues, and social setting/events helped shape Mays's philosophies and life. He believed in the value of education and he pursued an education aggressively, despite the financial burdens it created.

His hard and nauseating work as an outhouse cleaner led him to develop a plan to work as a Pullman Porter during the summer break in 1917.²⁶⁵ He had the height and strength required of an applicant. The only obstacle in his path was the lack of funds to purchase the cap and uniform of the Pullman Porter—how would he obtain the necessary \$17 dollars once he received a position with the railway?

²⁶³ Branham, "Emancipating Myself: Mays the Debater," 81-110.

²⁶⁴ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 60.

²⁶⁵ Cowan and Maguire, *Timelines of African –American History: 500 Years of Black Achievement*, 166. This was eight years before A. Philip Randolph organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Mays dealt with the injustices of employment on the railroad without the support of a union.

He chose to ask his professors for a loan instead of burdening his family with the request for the money. He wisely predicted that his father wanted him to work the family farm during his breaks and would object to his plan to work the railways during summer breaks. His brothers and sisters had their families to care for, and although they would have responded to a request from him, their financial assistance would have placed a strain on their families. Therefore, he concluded that his best hope for the loan would have to come from his professors. After five rejections, Professor Levister loaned him the funds needed to purchase the cap and uniform.

Mays repaid Levister in full when he received his first paycheck from the railway (honesty—conducted himself in a genuine and authentic manner). Not surprisingly, Mays had sought the loan before he had the job. He believed in what he was doing and he did what he believed. When he started working as a Pullman Porter, he not only gained the ability to pay for his schooling, but he also started the learning process on what his rights were as a passenger and how to conduct himself in a dignified manner while purchasing tickets, being served in the dining train, and being seated as a passenger—all lessons which helped him in his struggle for equality.

The racial climate of early 20th century America kept Mays on the Pullman cars as a porter instead of as a conductor, and continued to shape him under the first social setting/event of Jim Crow. The climate of racism, even in the North, made it difficult for Mays to arrive in Chicago the day before the January 3rd deadline to register for graduate school, it prevented him from successfully arguing his case to keep his job as a Pullman Porter, and it played a role in limiting contact between Negro American students and their professors outside of the classroom or off campus while Mays was a student at the

University of Chicago. The racial climate almost derailed Mays's natural rhythm of making things happen regardless of the obstacles in his way.

Myles Horton, a friend and contemporary of Mays, discussed how the hobos had to match their rhythm with the motion of the train. If the rhythm was off then the person missed the train, or even worse they were mangled under the train.²⁶⁶ From the point of view of the social setting/event and character strengths, Mays faced a similar challenge of being in rhythm with an unthinking and uncaring racially insensitive society. If Mays did not possess the right cap and uniform, the correct demeanor, or the stamina to work long hours for the railroad with little or no rest, he would have missed his opportunity to study at the University of Chicago. Additionally, he would have missed the opportunity to live his dream of competing against the educated New England White man. Without his Pullman job, there would have been no State College high school graduation, no preparation at Virginia Union, no Bates, and no master or doctoral degrees from the University of Chicago—so Mays kept his moral outrage in check, maintained his principles and rhythm, and did what he needed to do to survive economically and socially in his environment until December 1920.

Before he departed for Chicago, Mays lost his position as a Pullman Porter. He was fired because he organized a movement to request pay for assisting with the crowd for a "Harvard-Yale football game," and for exchanging heated words with a conductor.²⁶⁷ His loss of a position did not stunt the development of his virtues and character strengths. By developing the behaviors necessary to be a successful Pullman Porter, Mays strengthened the virtue of wisdom and knowledge (perspective) associated

²⁶⁶ Myles Horton, Judith Kohl, and Herbert Kohl, *The Long Haul: An Autobiography* (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1998).

²⁶⁷ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 62.

with his good character. This virtue earned him assistance from his former co-workers to ride the train to Chicago and he arrived in time to register at the University of Chicago in January, 1921. His honesty, vitality, integrity, persistence, and perseverance marked him as a man worthy of receiving the assistance of his friends.

Mrs. Ellen Harvin Mays

Benjamin E. Mays and Ellen Harvin were married (love) in Newport News, Virginia in August 1920, after he graduated from Bates College.²⁶⁸ Mays met Ellen while they were high school students at State College. When he decided to continue his education in the North, they promised each other not to marry during their four-year separation.²⁶⁹ They became engaged and upon graduation Mays married (integrity—genuine and authentic) the “only girl who could understand a boy like me.”²⁷⁰ During their marriage, out of economic necessity and lack of adequate housing, they lived and worked apart. Mays had to leave shortly after their wedding to go back to work as a Pullman Porter and Ellen returned to South Carolina. The couple did not see each other again until December 1920.²⁷¹

Despite living in different locations, Ellen and Benjamin’s love remained strong until her death in 1923. During their marriage, she was a Jeanes teacher in Clarendon County, South Carolina and taught Home Economics at Morris College in Sumter, South Carolina. She died after an operation in an Atlanta hospital. It was difficult to discern any

²⁶⁸ Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 304.

²⁶⁹ Dorothea Bye, Dolores Pushkar, and Michael Conway, "Motivation, Interest, and Positive Affect in Traditional and Nontraditional Undergraduate Students," *Adult Education Quarterly* 57, no. 141 (2007): 141-158. After reading this article, some researchers could label the marriage as interest versus love. However, I chose to identify it as love.

²⁷⁰ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 249.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.* Adult Negroes generally had the choice of either renting a farm or working as a sharecropper. The existence of housing for non-agricultural workers was limited to homes owned by a family member.

information, however, as to the actual cause of her death or insights as to how her death may have affected Mays.

On the Edge of His Lifelong Struggle

Mays's character strengths and virtues that emerged during his social setting/events showed him that racism and discrimination existed in non-segregated societies, and cinematic images crafted to invoke emotions were effective even in placid communities. The overarching social setting/event of Jim Crow and those of racism and discrimination in life as well as through media-driven emotions gave Mays a clearer picture of society-at-large.

His educational experience and observations prepared Mays to mentor future education, political, social, and economic leaders in the Negro American community. Mays's education and the lessons he learned through observing passengers on the train equipped him to fight for equality and the elimination of legally sanctioned segregation. By equipping himself with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to wage the fight, Mays also developed the virtues, character strengths, and behaviors needed to use his employment mobility to lay the foundation for others to follow.

Chapter Five - Graduate Education and Employment: A Life's Work 1920-1984

Mays successfully completed three academic quarters of graduate study before he received an offer to teach college mathematics and high school algebra from John Hope, president of Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, for the school year starting in September, 1921.²⁷² For Mays this was his first job offer after graduating from Bates. The offer gave Mays a salary of \$1200.00 for eight months and resolved his cash flow problem. This was ten times more than the \$112.00 teaching salary offer he had to teach in Greenwood County after graduating high school, and 14 times greater than the amount he received for “chopping cotton from sun to sun.”²⁷³ Mays was also able to visit Ellen once or twice per month.

While teaching mathematics and psychology, Mays also organized the debate team at Morehouse. His two lead debaters were James Nabrit, future President of Howard University and co-counsel with Thurgood Marshall in *Brown v. Board of Education Topeka, Kansas*, and Howard Thurman, future Dean of Howard University's Divinity School and Martin Luther King Jr.'s professor at Boston University.²⁷⁴ Morehouse at the time was a seedbed for future Civil Rights leaders—Martin Luther King Sr. was an evening student during this time.²⁷⁵

The Morehouse Debate Team

Mays chose to relive his experience with the Bates College debate team by coaching the Morehouse College debate team. With Nabrit and Thurman on the team,

²⁷² Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 66.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁷⁵ Martin L. King Sr., *Daddy King: An Autobiography*, (New York: William Morrow & Co, 1980).

Mays encouraged them to victory. Fisk University's White President Fayette Avery McKenzie's had decided to eliminate the names of all Negro Americans on a list of potential judges.²⁷⁶ In response to a "display of rank discrimination"²⁷⁷ during a debate at Fisk University, Mays told Nabrit and Thurman "that they had no choice either: they had to win that debate!" (a display of appreciation of beauty and excellence).²⁷⁸ In spite of the all-White judging corps, after tallying the scores, the judges chose Morehouse as the winner of the debate. Although Mays initially protested the decision by McKenzie, he did not allow the act of discrimination to derail his team's opportunity to win the debate. His encouragement gave Nabrit and Thurman the support they needed to do their best. This win established Mays as a successful mentor of his first protégés.

Pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church

Once he was settled in to his new position as professor of mathematics, Mays was nominated for the position of Pastor at Shiloh Baptist Church in Atlanta. However, before he could accept the position Mays had to be ordained as a minister.²⁷⁹ He arranged to receive his ordination while he spent the 1921 Christmas holiday with his wife, Ellen. Her pastor, Reverend J.P. Garrick, and Mays's colleague, Dr. C.D. Hubert, ordained Mays at Garrick's church, in Sumter, South Carolina.²⁸⁰

After Hubert and Garrick ordained Mays, Mays became the pastor of Shiloh. Mays described the congregation at Shiloh as "unschooled –common laborers and domestic workers. Oddly enough, I had no difficulty preaching to these people who,

²⁷⁶ Time.com, "Education: President Jones," *Time.com*, March 1, 1926. McKenzie was a White American. In 1925 he was forced to resign under a cloud of charges of racism and oppression.

²⁷⁷ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 93.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 66. Ellen and Benjamin had decided that he should pursue a career in religion.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

though untrained, were highly intelligent.”²⁸¹ The acceptance and the ordination were beneficial to Mays and the members of his congregation (emergence of the character strength of social intelligence—he knew what to do to put his congregation at ease). The congregation had a pastor to lead them spiritually, and Mays not only had a congregation that corrected him when he made a procedural mistake, but also he attracted students from Morehouse and Spelman to attend Shiloh.

As pastor of a local congregation and professor at the college, Mays now had the income necessary to help support his wife in South Carolina. However, fate had a different plan for the couple when Mrs. Ellen Mays died in an Atlanta hospital in 1923. Mays completed another year at the college (evidence of integrity—genuineness) and in his pastorate at Shiloh before returning to complete his graduate studies at the University of Chicago (evidence of spirituality—his beliefs shaped his actions and were a source of comfort).

Master of Arts and Mrs. Sadie Mays

Mays worked diligently from 1924 to 1925 on his graduate studies to complete his Master of Arts degree.²⁸² In his master’s thesis, *Pagan Survivals in Christianity*, Mays painstakingly detailed the compromises to which leaders in the early Christian church acquiesced in order to convert people to Christianity. He traced the deification of heroes, kings, emperors, and wise men in Assyrian, Babylonian, Grecian, Roman, and Egyptian civilizations. Mays discussed how early Christian leaders “saw the need” to

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² May, "AAT TM15078."

deify Jesus, justified because Jesus was “divine by His miracles, resurrection, birth and heavenly approval.”²⁸³

By acknowledging the divinity of Jesus, the leaders desired to devalue emperor worship. Mays said that when the leaders deified Jesus based on his miracles, resurrection, birth, and heavenly approval, the leaders did not calculate the value people placed on gods and deities with similar attributes as Jesus. In order to appease the people, the leaders allowed some pagan practices to exist within Christianity, but only pagan practices developed along Christian lines.²⁸⁴ One significant practice was the celebration of Jesus’ birth on December 25th. Many historians identified dates in March, November or February as the possible date of Jesus’ birth; however, Christian leaders chose to use December 25 as the date of birth because that was the date Pagans worshiped their Sun God. Therefore, according to Mays’s findings, early Christian leaders adjusted Jesus’ date of birth to appease Roman Sun God worshippers.

Mays concluded that although, “Christian rites and doctrines have their origins in heathenism [that] does not destroy their value for Christian usages.”²⁸⁵ Mays also discussed how Christians were set apart from society and considered dangerous to society. With this dire view of Christianity the faith still attracted “imperial recognition and drew into its ranks the intellectuals of the age.” Mays felt that Christianity’s true character (kindness—he was generous in his assessment) and worth was in its ability to “absorb into its own system the vital elements of a Pagan environment.” With this

²⁸³ Ibid., 25-30.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 41.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 89.

insight, Mays (open mindedness—he thought things through and examined things from all sides) received his degree in 1925.²⁸⁶

In the same year, he received an offer from the president of his high school, State College, to teach English in the college department. Honored by the offer to return to his former high school, Mays accepted the position (gratitude—he was thankful) and began his doctoral studies at the University of Chicago during his summer breaks. It was during the summer of 1925 that he met and fell in love with his future wife, Sadie Gray. Miss Gray would also become a colleague of Mays at State College. They married on August 19, 1926.²⁸⁷

Becoming aware of the need for his participation in the nascent civil rights movement, Mays marveled at the militancy of Mrs. Marion Birnie Wilkinson and the respect she received from the local White merchants who paid her “the unusual tribute of calling her Mrs. Wilkinson.”²⁸⁸ She recognized Mays’s qualities and passion for civil rights, and invited him to attend the State’s Commission on Interracial Cooperation meeting. At the meeting Mrs. Jessie Daniel Ames from the Atlanta branch spoke about how to advance the Negro child. According to Mays, he was “shocked and saddened to hear Mrs. Ames say that the only way to advance the Negro child one step was to advance the White child two steps. She assured her listeners that this formula must be accepted if there were to be any better educational opportunities for Negroes.” Clearly,

²⁸⁶ Lawrence C Little, "Toward a Philosophy of Christian Education," *Adult Education Quarterly* 8, no. 175 (1958); Mays, "AAT TM15078," 89. Little reported that, “Christian education is the effort to enable persons to become faithful members of the family of God, expressing in all their relationships the attitudes and way of life exemplified by Jesus of Nazareth.” With the exception of Howard University, all HBCUs were established as Christian colleges and were responsible for educating their students about Christian values and character. Mays graduated with stronger Christian values.

²⁸⁷ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 101-05.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

there were differences of opinion within the movement, and Mays was unable to accept the inherent inequality in her statement.²⁸⁹

Unfortunately, before Mays could address his objection to the Ames statement he was forced to leave State College. His marriage to Sadie caused them to lose their positions at the school. President Wilkinson had a policy that married couples could not work together at the college, and wanted either Mr. Mays or Mrs. Mays to resign so the other could continue to work for the college. Mrs. Mays could not resign because her salary and her sister's salary were necessary to support their father and to pay his mortgage. Mays himself could not resign as his lack of employment would place a financial strain on the couple. After neither tendered their resignations, based on economic necessity, and Wilkinson did not relent (fairness—Mays gave everyone a chance and treated everyone fairly—Wilkinson chose not to respond in kind), Mays and his wife chose to accept positions with the Tampa Urban League, Tampa, Florida.²⁹⁰

Tampa Urban League

Mays and his wife signed a contract to go to Tampa, Florida with Mays accepting the position as the Executive Secretary of the Tampa Urban League and Sadie accepted a position as a caseworker with the Family Service Association. Although Tampa was not the “city of their dreams,” they chose to serve regardless of the problems they encountered there.²⁹¹ As the Executive Secretary of the Tampa Urban League, Mays was the de facto leader of the Negro American Community in Tampa. He also served as the on-site supervisor for the Jacksonville and Saint Petersburg branches of the National

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 41, 102. Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 251. Mays was shocked and saddened because the Ames remedy was inauthentic and it required a further separation of the races.

²⁹⁰ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 105.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 106.

Urban League. In these leadership roles, Mays was in a position to affect policy concerning White-Negro American relations for the three municipalities.²⁹²

The Negro American Community had inadequate educational facilities, high unemployment, no recreational facilities, and juvenile delinquency. The multiple social setting/events affecting the Negro American Community (i.e., Jim Crow, lack of access to an education, poverty, etc.) almost made it impossible for a Negro man to become an equal to a White man in Tampa. Underpayment for performing the same jobs as Whites and police brutality against Negro Americans further exacerbated the problems within the community. The relations between Whites and Negro Americans were built on the practices of segregation and intimidation. When Whites and Negro Americans cooperated, both were intimidated and berated for not adhering to the traditions associated with segregation.²⁹³

In an attempt to get a better understanding of White-Negro relations in Tampa, Mays conducted a field study (creativity—thought of new ways to do things) of Negro American life in Tampa with the aid of a White Southerner, Arthur Raper, from the Commission on Interracial Cooperation located in Atlanta. On one field trip when Raper was driving and Mays was the passenger, a policeman observed the researchers and stopped their car. After ripping the license plate from the vehicle, the officer berated Raper for acting as a chauffeur for a Negro American. The men were intimidated and attacked for not upholding segregationist traditions. Mays remembered the story of a time when Booker T. Washington was rushing to make a train and a White taxi driver

²⁹² Ibid.; Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 251. After his experiences in Atlanta and Chicago Mays found a canvass to start developing a brighter future for himself and for members of the African American Community. Peterson and Seligman noted that in the theoretical tradition “the self must overcome social strictures and internal inhibitions in order to find itself and also find personal fulfillment.”

²⁹³ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 107.

refused to drive him. Washington traded places with the driver and made it to the train station in time to catch his train. Mays realized that if he were the driver then the harassment from the policeman would not have happened during their field study.²⁹⁴

Opposition to Segregation and the Reward

The Mays family stayed in Tampa from 1926 until 1928. Along the way, they made lifelong friends and attempted to extract dignity and respect from the White citizens while denouncing the perpetuation of legally sanctioned segregation. The Tampa position was Mays's first position of leadership where he vocally objected to the practice of segregation.

By 1927, his objection to segregation surpassed any fear of consequences. Mays objected to hosting a segregated reception in his home. The tone of an October 17, 1927 letter from Mays to Mr. J.O. Thomas was militant in nature considering the traditions of the South. Mays was defiant about providing special provisions for an interracial luncheon at his house. He vehemently objected to perpetuating a segregated system.²⁹⁵

In an apparent response, Thomas' letter to Mays dated October 17, 1927 advised Mays that he was no longer the point person for the executive director's Florida visit.²⁹⁶ Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune was elevated to the position and would serve as chair for the state reception for the Executive Director of the National Urban League (Mr. Eugene Knickle Jones). In the same letter Thomas requested Mays to prepare a list of attendees from Tampa and send the original to Mrs. Bethune with a copy to him. Thomas ended the letter expressing an interest in reading Mays's annual report. Mays responded to Thomas

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 107-08.

²⁹⁵ Mays, "Mays Collection Library of Congress."

²⁹⁶ Jesse O. Thomas, "Thomas letter to Mays," in *The National Urban League Southeastern Office Benjamin E. Mays Papers*, (Washington, DC: Library of Congress Manuscript Room, October 17, 1927).

on October 20, 1927 and sent the copy of the list to Thomas. It appeared that Mays's persistence drove a slight wedge between Thomas's and Mays's formerly cordial relationship.²⁹⁷

Y.M.C.A. and the Negro Church Study

In September 1928, Mr. and Mrs. Mays left their positions in Tampa and journeyed to Atlanta where he accepted a position as Student Secretary for the National Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.) serving the Negro American colleges in Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, Florida, and Alabama.

After two years with the Y.C.M.A., Mays went to work for the General Education Board's Institute of Social and Religious Research. He and Joseph Nicholson conducted and directed the study of the Negro Church from 1930 until 1932 (vitality—he never did anything half-heartedly). The co-researchers published their findings from 691 Negro churches in twelve cities, and 185 Negro churches in four rural counties in 1933.²⁹⁸

Mays and Nicholson described how the Negro adjusted to social proscription, economic limitations, and spiritual domination. The researchers found that the Negro slave had no control over his/her life and the Negro church supported the slave, the freed Negro, the Negro living during and after reconstruction, and the Negro living during second reconstruction. It also gave the Negro American Community a social institution controlled by the Negro American.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁷ Benjamin E. Mays, "Mays responded to Thomas and sent the list and the copy to Thomas," in *The National Urban League's Southeastern Office, Benjamin E. Mays' Correspondence 1926-1928*, (Washington, DC: Library of Congress Manuscript Room, October 20, 1927).

²⁹⁸ Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 274; Robert L Sutherland, "Review of *The Negro's Church*, by Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson," *Journal of Religion* 13, no. 3 (July 1933): 363-64

²⁹⁹ DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*.

The researchers noted how the Negro developed survival tactics that allowed him/her to release suppressed emotions through a keen sense of humor and dance. The ability to vent emotionally through humor and dance crossed into the worship arena and the singing of Negro spirituals—songs of the soil and from the soul. These songs helped the Negro release their suppressed emotions. Once emotions were released, the Negro had an opportunity to develop their leadership skills. Mays and Nicholson stressed that the freedom the Negro American realized in the church opened different venues to freedom in other fields and areas of their life. This was the type of freedom Mays realized while conducting the study that eventually gave him the freedom to express his ideas with White audiences (hope—he expected the best in the future and worked to achieve it).³⁰⁰

Robert L. Sutherland reviewed Mays and Nicholson's *The Negro's Church*.³⁰¹ Sutherland said that the Negro church was one of the greatest channels where the Negro could receive adult education. He also said the study was considered one of the best attempts to identify the facts about the “greatest social institution” for the Negro race. Sutherland concluded that the study was an “ambitious investigation” (appreciation of beauty and excellence—Mays noticed and appreciated beauty and excellence in the church research experience). Another review by V.E. Daniel of Mays and Nicholson's *The Negro Church* noted how the “work was carefully done” (prudence—Mays was careful). Daniel closed the review with, “The work gives tactful criticisms and suggestions for improvements. This is expected from writers who are trained ministers as

³⁰⁰ Mays and Nicholson., *The Negro's Church*.

³⁰¹ Sutherland, "Review of *The Negro's Church*, by Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson," 363-64.

well as investigators.” The reviews support Mays’s virtues of temperance and transcendence.³⁰²

While conducting the study in 1930, Mays took a break and returned to Tampa. The business leaders invited Mays to speak and answer a question for 800 businessmen-- what does the Negro want? He answered and said that the Negro wants the same opportunities as those available to the White man (fairness). Mays explained that if a person was qualified for a particular position or entitlement then such people should receive access to their desire without regard to the individual’s race. Racial justice according to Mays was the fair and equal treatment of one race by another race. Fair and equal treatment was not only a goal—Mays wanted it to be a way of life for all Americans.³⁰³

God in Contemporary Negro Literature

Mays continued his doctoral studies at the University of Chicago and completed his degree work in 1934; his degree was conferred in 1935. The title of his dissertation was *The Idea of God in Contemporary Negro Literature*.³⁰⁴

Mays intentionally chose to use the works of Paul Laurence Dunbar as the exemplar for Negro American literature. His thesis was “to be developed against the social, economic, and political trends that developed in Negro life during the time span of the thesis.”³⁰⁵ With this design, Mays wrote his dissertation to reveal how God was viewed as compensatory and as a means for social rehabilitation for the Negro American.

³⁰² V. E. Daniel, "Review of 'The Negro's Church.' by Benjamin Elijah Mays and Joseph William Nicholson," *American Journal of Sociology* 39, no. 2 (September 1933): 273.

³⁰³ Mays, "800 Whites Hear Mr. Mays in Auditorium Monday, January 30."

³⁰⁴ Mays, "The Idea of God in Contemporary Negro Literature" (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 1935).

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, ii.

The choice of Dunbar over other Negro writers was possibly best summed up in Woodson's and Wesley's description of Dunbar as, " a man endowed with the unusual gift of interpreting the lowly life of the Negro...Dunbar's contemporaries proclaimed him to the world as a poet worthy of the consideration given Whittier, Lowell, and Longfellow. Dunbar had fortunately reached that unusual stage in the development of a belated people of having his education react upon his environment." ³⁰⁶

Dunbar was a former slave and began his writing career in 1892. He met Frederick Douglass in 1893 who proclaimed him "the most promising young colored man in America." ³⁰⁷ As a former slave, Dunbar tacitly knew how to touch the hearts of the American Negro with his poems, which used the vernacular of the people. He also knew what the community wanted God to do on their behalf. Mays summed this up on page 13 of his dissertation, "It is the belief of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History that the Negro will never be an upstanding respectable people as long as Negroes despise their history and look upon themselves with eyes of inferiority." ³⁰⁸

This statement and his mother's admonition about inferiority indicated the impetus for Mays's choice to do what was necessary to remove the Negro from under the restriction of segregation, which stunted the development of the people socially, educationally, economically, and politically. Mays felt that "*There is a departure from the mere compensatory toward social rehabilitation*" idea of God. ³⁰⁹

With his Ph.D. about to be conferred, Mays reached back to his time at Bates and as the Negro Secretary to the Y.M.C.A. when he reviewed "The Negro Frontier" by

³⁰⁶ Woodson and Wesley, *The Negro in Our History*, 469-70.

³⁰⁷ Dunbar Site.org, "Biography: The Life of Paul Laurence Dunbar," University of Dayton, <http://www.dunbarsite.org/biopltd.asp> .

³⁰⁸ Mays, "AAT T-09263."

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

George R. Arthur.³¹⁰ In his 1935 review of Arthur's work, Mays gave a reasoned assessment of the findings. As a former Y.M.C.A. employee and member, Mays used his background to correct Arthur's statistical errors. Although the book had errors, Mays did not condemn the work (fairness). Mays slightly commended the author for confirming that Negro youth received "moral, religious, and recreational" assistance through the Negro Y.M.C.A. at "25 Rosenwald Y.M.C.A. buildings; 50 Y.M.C.A. branches, not aided by Rosenwald, 105 student associations in the United States and 40 student associations in South Africa." Mays reminded the reader that the Negro Y.M.C.A. gave Negroes access to a "decent meal and lodgings." A person must remember that public lodging, rest rooms, and restaurants were restricted to "Whites Only." Mays pointed to the reality that "young," "men," and "association" were emphasized more than "Christian." It was based on this emphasis that Rosenwald and others built the Negro Y.M.C.A. as a way to lessen the effect of discrimination.³¹¹

Mays did not condone reverse discrimination because it was not fair and equal. Also, Mays did not desire to have a person denied opportunities to compete for positions or entitlements they did not qualify for. Fair and equal according to Mays was different from fair or equal. In the latter, if one receives either fair treatment or equality then one could say they received justice, but fair does not connote equal and vice versa. Racial justice constitutes both fair and equal treatment from one race to another race. This was

³¹⁰ Mays, "Review of *Life on the Negro Frontier* by George R. Arthur," *Journal of Negro Education* 4, no. 2 (April 1935): 259-61.

³¹¹ Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901-1915*, 140-41. Julius Rosenwald was a Jewish American philanthropist and president of Sears, Roebuck, and Company. In addition to the Rosenwald Schools he built in Negro communities, Rosenwald also financed Y.M.C.A. buildings for Negroes.

one of the issues the Y.M.C.A. addressed during their World Conference every five years.

In November 1936, Mays began a journey to Mysore, India for the January 1937 Y.M.C.A. conference aboard the *Queen Mary*. The trip produced an article based on “observations, experiences, and my interpretation” which were the “chief source” for the findings.³¹²

Mays started his article with a disclaimer about the non-scientific nature of the information. The conference tackled complex issues such as, “international relations, race relations, the relationships between those of different religious faiths, youth and the claims of state and nation, the need for building a new social order, youth and the church, personal decisions and actions.” While traveling to India, Mays met and socialized with four Russians returning to their homeland on the *Queen Mary*. The English and American passengers did not socialize with Negroes. In keeping with the English and American practice of racial prejudice, the steward seated Mays alone at a table for two for dinner. The Russians invited Mays to dine with them. Mays and the Russians ate all of their dinner meals and one breakfast together as they crossed the Atlantic. As he traveled to the different ports, Mays met and conversed with many people from different nationalities and races. His experiences and observations during his trip to Mysore and eventual trip around the world led him to the interpretation that the “colored people” of the world could not understand the discrimination against Blacks in America and South Africa.³¹³ After reading the article I identified the character strengths of open mindedness (Mays did not jump to conclusions and used the opportunity to eat meals with the Russians to

³¹² Benjamin E. Mays, "The Color Line Around the World," *Journal of Negro Education* 6, no. 2 (April 1937): 134-43.

³¹³ Ibid.

broaden his perspective), gratitude (he was thankful for being a representative of the Y.M.C.A.), humility/modesty (he did not consider himself special and he did not protest about the original seating arrangement in the dining room), social intelligence (appreciated his experience with people from other cultures), persistence (he worked hard to finish his travels on the Queen Mary although he was warned that the English were just as racist as some White Americans) , citizenship (he was loyal and dedicated as he represented the United States branch of the Y.M.C.A.), and perspective (he had a way of looking at the world that made sense to others because he predicted the difficulty in other people of color understanding the discrimination in the forms of segregation and apartheid).

Academic Life, 1934-1967

Prior to his trip to India Mays reentered academia as the Dean of the School of Religion at Howard University in Washington, DC. The Howard offer came after Mays had accepted an offer to teach at Fisk University.³¹⁴ Mays felt “morally obligated to go to Fisk,” however, he “was strongly drawn to Howard.”³¹⁵ After “President Thomas E. Jones graciously granted” Mays a release from his obligation at Fisk, Mays joined his friend and mentor Mordecai Johnson at Howard.³¹⁶ Once he arrived he started the actions necessary to improve the faculty, increase enrollment, and upgrade the library. These actions brought the school national attention and a Class A rating by the American Association of Theological Schools (a definitive affirmation of the character strengths of appreciation of beauty and excellence).

³¹⁴ Mays, *Born to Rebel*. It is important to note that since graduating from Bates College Mays always received multiple career offers. This was a testament to his employment mobility based on his education.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

While at Howard, Mays reviewed and wrote articles about Negro life. He took exception to John LaFarge's "A Catholic's View of Race Relations" for his "lack of insight" to the perceived Negro immorality versus the dominant group's morality. The use of Christianity as an opiate and compensatory religion that justified segregation as well as inferiority and superiority between the races was determined to be a "tainted Christianity." Mays made the following interpretation about the author's section on interracial marriage, "I must not be decent to Negroes and give them equal opportunity to perform in American society because if I do, white men will marry Negro women and white women will marry Negro men. So in order to protect ourselves from falling in love with and marrying Negroes we must restrict them and keep them down." This interpretation was one-sided and unnecessary because the Negro was not seeking equality as a way to increase interracial marriage. Mays concluded that the overall treatment of the Negro in the book was one-sided and paternalistic because the church treats the "Negro as a thing apart from the church, an object from whom something is to be done." In an apparent response to the LaFarge article, Mays called for Christian teachers to gain the moral courage necessary to change the way the Church conducts itself in America. He asked preachers to move out of their comfort zone and address the ills in society at the peril of losing their Church. He called for social justice (social intelligence).³¹⁷

Mays was not without critics. Edwin E. Aubrey critiqued Mays for not including information about White churches in his book, *The Negro's God*. Aubrey felt that the exclusion of the White Church information placed the findings in an unbalanced

³¹⁷ Mays, "The American Negro and the Christian Religion," *Journal of Negro Education* 8, no. 3 (July 1939): 530-38.

position.³¹⁸ Carter G. Woodson dismissed most of the same book by Mays for its omission of opinion from the majority of Negroes. Woodson felt that Mays's book should be considered the first volume of a work yet to be written.³¹⁹ In a review of the same book Vergilius Ferm commended Mays for writing an inclusive book that included atheists.³²⁰ Mays learned from his previous exclusions and included in this study, "The Religious Life and Needs of Negro Students," information from white colleges as well as Negro colleges (love of learning).³²¹

The observation included the tendency of students to become more "scientific and modern" in their attitudes. This movement translated into the students feeling that the role of the church was to bring about social reform. While students were also ambivalent toward religion and their social life, they saw no conflict between enjoying the traditional evil triad of "dancing, card playing and theater going" and attending church. Mays said, "Radicalism should be based on knowledge. If a person is radical about that which he knows nothing, he makes himself ridiculous." He acknowledged the decline in parental authority and the need for proper religious education to develop "inner authority." Mays additionally recommended that the student build a system of "ethics and mores" which for the student is the final authority. He finally suggested that the colleges offer their students a faith in God that guarantees security in the midst of insecurity.³²²

His faith gave him the security to speak out against injustices because rectification of an injustice Mays experienced 15 years earlier was about to happen. Dr. Mays was at

³¹⁸ Aubrey, "Review of *The Negro's God* by Benjamin E. Mays," 226-27.

³¹⁹ Carter G Woodson, "Review of *The Negro's God* by Benjamin E. Mays," *Journal of Negro History* 24, no. 1 (1939): 118-19.

³²⁰ Vergilius Ferm, "Review of *The Negro's God* by Benjamin E. Mays," *Journal of Religion* 20, no. 1 (January, 1940): 106.

³²¹ Mays, "The Religious Life and Needs of Negro Students: The Negro Adolescent and his Education."

³²² Ibid.

Howard when he was elected as a member of Phi Beta Kappa and Delta Sigma Rho, both from Bates College. The honor was awarded because Mays graduated at the top of his class and, although the climate at Bates was inclusive, membership in Phi Beta Kappa was exclusive which did not take into consideration Mays's grades at Virginia Union.³²³

The new inductee to Phi Beta Kappa remained at Howard until 1940 when he received an offer, after an impromptu interview, to become the next president of Morehouse College in Atlanta. With the responsibility for the quality of academic instruction and the financial survivability of the college, Benjamin Elijah Mays, Ph.D., was installed as president of Morehouse College in 1940. Over the next forty-four years, twenty-seven as president of Morehouse and seventeen as president emeritus, Mays mentored students at the college. His protégés became affectionately known as *Morehouse Men*. This assemblage included Martin Luther King, Jr., Horace Julian Bond, Jr., William Lee, Maynard Holbrook Jackson, Jr., and Shelton "Spike" Jackson Lee. Mays also wrote articles and books as well as reviewing books and articles by others. His writings and reviews revealed his character virtues and strengths during the social setting/events that accentuated his life. The next section will identify selected literature from this era which showed Mays's character. The highlights of Dr. Mays's tenure as the president of Morehouse are described in his autobiography and in Derrick Rovaris' dissertation.³²⁴

³²³ Mays, *Born to Rebel*. 58.

³²⁴ Rovaris, "Developer of an Institution: Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, Morehouse College President, 1940-1967."

Additional Contributions to Civil Rights and Religious Discourse

In an article, "*The Role of the Negro Liberal Arts College in Post-War Reconstruction: Negro Higher Education in the War and Post-War Reconstruction*," Mays renewed his call for a liberal education for the Negro (perspective—he was viewed as wise by others). He reminded the reader that in order to stress leadership, Negro liberal arts colleges must continue to prepare “men and women to become teachers, ministers, physicians, dentists, lawyers, business men, social workers, expert chemists, physicists, bankers, and the like.” Mays mentioned that World War II reminds the Negro that life is hard and one cannot be ordinary—one must be exceptional. Mays used Gandhi’s call to abolish untouchability as a rallying cry for American Negroes to transform into justly deserved democracy (persistence—he worked hard to finish what he started). He suggested that the Negro liberal colleges act as experimental stations for democracy, and believed that democracy would remove the Negro from their subordinate position (hope—he continued to expect the best in the future and worked to achieve it).³²⁵

Moving back to his spiritual roots Mays commended Dr. Carter G. Woodson’s book, *Works of Francis James Grimke*, for making “the Negro people proud of its history and its people.”³²⁶ Dr. Grimke was the pastor of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC for more than 50 years. Woodson compiled letters Dr. Grimke wrote/received from 1884 to 1937. Mays felt the letters painted a “true picture of the race problem from 1890 to 1930 (social intelligence—he knew what to do in different social situations).” Woodson encouraged Negro American ministers to “prepare sermons and

³²⁵ Benjamin E. Mays, "The Role of the Negro Liberal Arts College in Post-War Reconstruction: Negro Higher Education in the War and Post-War Reconstruction," *Journal of Negro Education* 11, no. 3 (July 1942): 400-11.

³²⁶ Mays, "Review of *Works of Francis James Grimke* by Carter G. Woodson," *Journal of Negro Education* 12, no. 4 (Autumn, 1943): 661-62.

addresses in forms fit for publication,” as well as help Negro American youth to be proud of Dr. Grimke’s ministry and to emulate the “men of character and courage.” Mays said the four volumes revealed Dr. Grimke’s four outstanding character strengths: he practiced what he preached, he lived without fear, he hated selfishness, and he possessed genuine sincerity. Mays went as far as to compare Woodson’s effect on the Negro to Gandhi’s work in India. Woodson’s recording of the *Works of Francis James Grimke* gave the Negro sermons worthy of publishing and Negro youth someone they could be proud of and emulate. Woodson captured Grimke’s thoughts about Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and John Brown. Grimke considered these men as men of character and courage. Prophetically, Mays predicted that 100 years from the date of publication, a person could read the volumes and comprehend the race problems that existed during Grimke’s life and ministry (spirituality—he knew where he fit in the larger scheme). Mays felt that Woodson captured Grimke’s desire to inspire the reader and listener of his words to achieve greatness.

The question Mays addressed in 1930—what does the Negro want?—continually remained an unanswered curiosity in American society as a whole.³²⁷ Mays said, the question is ably and adequately answered by each of the 14 writers in the compilation, *“Review of Minority Mandates: What the Negro Wants edited by Rayford W. Logan.”* Each approached the subject from his own point of view. The following quotes suffice to show that the writers were essentially in agreement on most of the issues discussed. Rayford Logan, the editor, said: “The Negro wants: (1) equality of opportunity; (2) equal pay for equal work; (3) equal protection of the laws; (4) equality of suffrage; (5) equal

³²⁷ Mays, “Review of *Minority Mandates: What the Negro Wants* edited by Rayford W. Logan,” *Phylon* 5, no. 4 (4th Quarter 1944): 387-89.

recognition of the dignity of the human being; and, (6) abolition of public segregation.³²⁸ Doxey Wilkerson wrote: "The Negro wants to be free. He wants freedom from every form of discrimination on account of race or color. He wants complete economic, political and social equality in short, full democratic rights." Frederick Patterson argued that "The American Negro wants to become a fully participating citizen in every sense of the word. He wants this participation not only or merely for the sake of himself but also because he believes in democracy as a way of life for this nation and because his concept of democracy leads him to feel that this citizenship status is essential to the complete realization of our national destiny." Sterling Brown expressed similar sentiments: "Negroes want to be counted in. They want to belong. They want what other men have wanted deeply enough to fight and suffer for. They want democracy. Wanting it so much, they disregard more and more the warnings: 'This is not the time.' 'The time isn't ripe.' 'Take your time, take your time'."³²⁹ Summarizing sixty years of "purposive endeavor," W. E. B. DuBois stated: "By 'Freedom' for Negroes, I meant and still mean, full economic, political, and social equality with American citizens, in thought, expression and action, with no discrimination based on race or color."³³⁰ Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune said: "The Negro wants to break out into the free realm of democratic citizenship. We can have only one of two responses. Either we must let him out wholly and completely in keeping with our ideals, or we must mimic Hitler and shove him back."³³¹ A. Philip Randolph stated clearly the aims of the Negro including those of the oppressed darker races:

³²⁸ Ibid., 388.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid.

The oppressed darker races want something more. They want much more. They want the cause of true democracy to march forward. They want the brotherhood of man to triumph. They want a durable and just peace. They want security and plenty with freedom. They want to put an end to the vile and sinister doctrine of the Master Race. They want ethnic equality. They want to abolish the racism and colonialism of the Anglo-American empire systems.³³²

Mays said in his review,

Although too much significance cannot be attached to labels, it is perfectly clear that these fourteen Negroes, whether "conservatives," "liberals," or "radicals," are on speaking terms with each other (humility/modesty—he did not seek the spotlight). It is the opinion of the reviewer that they are ninety per cent in agreement as to what the Negro wants. If fourteen more Negroes, equally distinguished, should be chosen to answer this question, they would end up just about where these fourteen ended. There seem to be differences on the part of the writers as to how the Negro is to get what he wants and differences as to the time it will take him to get it. But fundamentally they move towards the same goals. The book is representative of Negro thought on the subject and no American should be left in doubt any longer. Finally, it appears to the writer that the publisher's introductory statement is much too long. It seems to be quite out of place. The publisher uses fifteen pages to set forth his own views on race. I believe it is an apology for his publishing the book. He seems to be afraid to let the sentiments expressed in the volume stand on their own merits. It would have

³³² Ibid.

been quite enough if Mr. Couch had simply stated that the University of North Carolina Press reserves the right to agree or disagree with any or all of the contributors and that their opinions do not necessarily express the point of view of the publisher.³³³

The always present question had Mays and the Negro community almost on the same page. However, Mays' review of *Black Gods of the Metropolis* said that it

“...is a study of five Negro religious cults operating in the city of Philadelphia that shows the spiritual/religious divide within the community. In Philadelphia Negroes are members of: (1) the Mount Sinai Holy Church of America; (2) the United House of Prayer for All People; (3) the Church of God (Black Jews); (4) the Moorish Science Temple of America; and (5) Father Divine's Peace Mission Movement. From the five places of worship the author begins the study with a verbatim testimony from a convert, followed by an objective appraisal based on attendance at cult meetings, interviews with cult leaders, and research into texts and periodicals. The author gave an account of their origin, organization, membership, finance, sacred text, beliefs, ritual, and practice. After presenting data on all five, the author makes a valuable comparative study of the cults with one another and with evangelical Christian denominations. The author's chapters on "Why the Cults Attract" and "The Cult as a Functioning Institution" are exceptionally well done. In the chapter "The Negro and His Religion" he displays penetrating insight. Anyone who studies the Negro religious cults in the future or the church

³³³ Ibid., 389.

life of Negroes will be compelled to make reference to *Black Gods of the Metropolis*. The work is free of bias or prejudice. The author writes with respectable restraint (integrity—genuineness). He does not claim too much for the study, and his interpretations impress the reviewer as sound. The book should be read by every student of religion, psychology, sociology, and anthropology.”³³⁴

The well-rounded Mays reviewed other articles and books as well as wrote articles and books about spiritual/religious, education, and veteran affairs.

Mays’s article “Veterans: It Need Not Happen Again” opened with the chilly reminder that presidents will say anything to unite the country to fight a war. In this case it was President Wilson’s rallying the country to fight the “War to End all Wars.” After World War I, Negro veterans were lynched, relegated to second class citizenry, and denied pensions and benefits. Mays wrote this article to avoid the mistreatment of returning Negro veterans of World War II: “Non-violence is suggested for returning World War II veterans, Poise and restraint.” Governors and mayors were requested to start supporting an easing of racial tensions. Police chiefs were asked to enforce a policy of fair play for all regardless of race. Mays also requested that local governments take the step toward hiring Negro policemen to ease racial tensions (social intelligence—he was aware of the motives and feelings of others). The appeal fell on deaf ears because the returning World War II veterans received the same treatment as the World War I veterans.³³⁵

³³⁴ Mays, "Review of *Black Gods of the Metropolis* by Arthur Huff," *Journal of Religion* 25, no. 1 (January 1945): 72.

³³⁵ Mays, "Veterans: It Need Not Happen Again," 205-11.

Mays wrote “Democratizing and Christianizing America in This Generation” to inform the reader that “If a person can change to the worse then a person can change for the better.” It does not take 1,000 years to bring about social change. Mays used the parallels of Hitler’s rise to power, Russia’s conversion to socialism, and the disenfranchisement of the Negro in America. These events happened within 7 years, 23 years, and 28 years respectively (hope—continued to expect the best in the future and worked to achieve it).³³⁶

The hope Mays conveyed in the previous article transcended to his review of Bishop William Jacob Wall’s book, *Joseph Charles Price, Educator and Race Leader*. Mays commended Bishop Walls for writing a biography on a man Mays felt was just as great as Booker T. Washington and Frederick Douglass. Mays felt that if Price had not died at the young age of 39, his philosophy, character, genius, and contributions would have been widely known by the Negro community. Mays recommended that Bishop Walls write a book for the Negro youth that would consist of Price’s philosophy, character, genius, and contributions.³³⁷

Mays wrote an article, “*Financing of Private Negro Colleges*,” that reported the U.S. Office of Education reported in 1940 that there were 118 private and public Negro schools that offered one to four years of college. Of the 118, only 82 were private schools and all were not adequately endowed. One third of the endowment for Harvard University was greater than the combined total of all Negro schools. The private church sponsored schools suffered from low endowment as well. Howard University was the

³³⁶ Mays, “Democratizing and Christianizing America in This Generation,” *Journal of Negro Education* 14, no. 4 (Autumn, 1945): 527-34.

³³⁷ Mays, “Review of *Joseph Charles Price, Educator and Race Leader* by William Jacob Walls,” *Journal of Religion* 25, no. 1 (January 1945): 75-76.

only Negro college or university not sponsored by a church. Mays reported that the cost for Negro schools be standardized and rated which resulted in the rise in costs for Negro education. The denominations which supported the church sponsored schools were not prepared to raise their annual contributions as a result of this rise in cost (perspective—he had a way of looking at the world that made sense to others). Also the desire of the philanthropists interested in educating Negroes did not transfer to their heirs. Although Mays did not name the philanthropists their philanthropy started prior to and continued in the Booker T. Washington Era. Andrew Carnegie, William Baldwin, Julius Rosenwald, Jacob Schiff, Paul Warburg, Isaac Seligman, the Goldman family, the Sachs family, and the Lehman family were some of the philanthropists contributing to Negro education “prior to 1900 and in the first quarter of the twentieth century.” Mays discussed how the recently formed United Negro College Fund (UNCF) supported 32 Negro colleges financially through an annual fund raising campaign. The campaign raised almost \$1 million and if the donations were distributed to the colleges, and distributed equally each college would have received \$31,250. The UNCF was established to promote and support each member school financially.³³⁸

Shifting back to religion Mays reviewed Frank Loescher’s book, *The Protestant Church and the Negro*, and recommended it as a must-read for every Christian. Loescher reported that of the eight million Negro Protestants, only 8,000 belonged to an integrated Protestant church (perspective). Although segregation was denounced by the Federal Council of Churches in Christ in 1946, Protestant denominations started to show discomfort with racial discrimination in industries, economics, politics, and civic affairs

³³⁸ Mays, "Financing of Private Negro Colleges," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 19, no. 8 (April 1946): 466-70.

before World War II. After the war, the Protestant denominations began to see “the heart of problem of Negro-White relations is segregation—in employment, in education, in housing, and in the Church” (social intelligence).³³⁹

“I do not like segregation,” Mays said in an article “Segregation in Higher Education.” He went on to say “Segregation says always that the person segregated is unfit to move normally among those who do the segregating. It says almost always that the segregated must have inferior goods and services. It says, too, to the members of the segregating group that the members of the group segregated can be ‘kicked’ around pretty much at will. It says one race is ‘superior’ and the other ‘inferior’ (citizenship).”³⁴⁰ Mays acknowledged that the abolishment of segregation will not solve all racial ills. He was adamant when he repeated his decade’s old battle cry (leadership). Starting in 1917, he consistently voiced his dislike for segregation. Mays said the community was “a poverty ridden people in education, economics, and politics.” He strongly felt that integration would occur when white teachers and students attended Negro colleges, and Negro students and teachers attended White colleges (fairness, social intelligence). Mays felt that this would create stronger institutions of higher education.³⁴¹

According to Mays “character and ability” were important to create stronger educational facilities, “The chief cause of the relatively low morale of Negro children is the circumscription imposed upon them by the legal segregation of the Negro in the South and the traditional segregation of the Negro in the North.”³⁴² Fighting back

³³⁹ Mays, "Review of *The Protestant Church and the Negro* by Frank Loescher," *Journal of Religion* 28, no. 4 (October 1948): 299.

³⁴⁰ Mays, "Segregation in Higher Education," *Phylon* 10, no. 4 (4th Quarter 1949): 401-06.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

³⁴² Mays, "Improving the Morale of Negro Children and Youth: The Negro Child in the American Social Order," *Journal of Negro Education* 19, no. 3 (Summer, 1950): 420-25.

improves the morale of a person (citizenship). When the morale of adults is improved then the morale of youth will improve (hope). Mays fought against segregation to brighten the futures of Negro youth, and the elimination of segregation would improve the morale of Negro children (fairness). Mays reminded the reader to tell their children, “You are as good as anybody. Character and ability are the important things.” His parents told him that when he was a child and he strongly felt that it would help improve the morale of Negro youth. Mays summed up his article with, “...you have the right to aim for the stars and make your mark in the world.”³⁴³

The results of a Mays initiated questionnaire sent to 222 colleges in 17 segregated states and the District of Columbia were reported in his article, “The Present Status of and Future Outlook for Racial Integration in the Church Related White Colleges in the South.” With a total of 117 colleges responding, six white colleges had Negroes enrolled and 3 Negro colleges had white students enrolled. Surprisingly, the colleges were church related schools. Mays concluded that the college would be judged on its ability to provide a quality education to all people. After writing the article, Mays edited a book of selected sermons and articles by Walter Rauschenbusch to combine the Old Testament appeal for social justice with the New Testament focus on forgiveness and love.³⁴⁴

Writing in a similar tone in Mays’s section on the “Life and Work of Trevor Arnett,” Mays reflected on his definition of integrity in the tribute to Arnett, a White philanthropist and a friend of the American Negro. Mays’s definition of integrity was

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Mays, "A Gospel for the Social Awakening. Selections from the Writings of Walter Rauschenbusch," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 20, no. 2 (April 1952): 141.

soundness, moral soundness, purity, uprightness, honesty, state or quality of being complete, an unimpaired state. He believed that people are born with integrity.³⁴⁵

Mays took issue with the domination of one group over another group in the article "The Moral Aspects of Segregation Decisions."³⁴⁶ He declared such domination as immoral. Mays also said that to segregate a person because of the color of his skin was immoral (citizenship):

Negroes want segregation abolished because they want the legal stigma of inferiority removed and because they do not believe that equality of educational opportunities can be completely achieved in a society where the law brands a group as inferior. When a Negro rides in a Pullman unsegregated he does it not because he wants to ride with white people. He may or may not engage in conversation with a white person. He wants good accommodations. When he eats in an unsegregated diner on the train, he goes in because he is hungry and not because he wants to eat with white people. He goes to the diner not even to mingle with Negroes but to get something to eat. But as he eats and rides he wants no badge of inferiority on his back. He wants to eat and ride with dignity.³⁴⁷

In addition to segregation, Mays identified social, educational, economical, and cultural conditions as the cause for delinquency among Negro youth. Mays believed that the courts, welfare, and character building agencies were not responsible for solving delinquency. He said the "community leaders were responsible for resolving the

³⁴⁵ David H. Stevens et al., "Life and Work of Trevor Arnett," *Phylon* 16, no. 2 (1955): 127-40.

³⁴⁶ Benjamin E. Mays, "The Moral Aspects of Segregation Decisions," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 29, no. 9 (May 1956).

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

problem,” Mays concluded that “complacency was a major cause of the problem and the lack of involvement by the community leaders was a direct result of complacent community and church leaders who were working against the proper education of Negro youth. The significance, therefore, of the Negro private and church-related colleges lie in their freedom to experiment, explore, inquire, and develop leadership of spiritual power to become centers to overcome the dangers that permeate secular society. The Christian spirit is convinced that wealthy men should build the Kingdom of God in the church as well as colleges to educate their youth.”³⁴⁸

While the themes of most of his books and articles were about theology, education, and equal rights, Mays finally told his story in his 1971 autobiography, *Born to Rebel*. Lester B. Baltimore’s review, however, identified key indicators that were missing. Mays gave no insight to his interactions with his family and friends. Also, although he identified several lifelong friends he did not talk about the substance of those relationships. Baltimore said he could not discern how the civil rights movement “developed in relation to” Mays’s life. The reviewer also faults Mays for not mentioning “Little Rock, the Jackson Freedom rides, and the founding of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.”³⁴⁹

A review by Richard Bardolph makes a strong salient statement:

It is clear beyond all mistaking that Mays and his kind were, after all, never truly humiliated. Inconveniences and hurts there were, to be sure;

³⁴⁸ Mays, "The Role of the 'Negro Community' in Delinquency Prevention Among Negro Youth: Juvenile Delinquency Among Negroes in the United States," *Journal of Negro Education* 28, no. 3 (Summer, 1959): 366-70; Mays, "The Significance of the Negro Private and Church-Related College: The Negro Private and Church-Related College," *Journal of Negro Education* 29, no. 3 (Summer, 1960): 245-51.

³⁴⁹ Lester B. Baltimore, "Review of *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography* by Benjamin E. Mays," *Journal of Southern History* 37, no. 4 (November, 1971): 672-74.

but the segregator never penetrated to the hearts and minds of great and good men like Mays. Dr. Mays is still under no illusion about the unfinished business that stands between us now and the day of full equality for all Americans. But let none underestimate either the contributions toward a better day that were made by men like Mays and the three generations of blacks who labored in the heat of the day to bring the target of victory within closer range for the sharpshooters who would follow them.³⁵⁰

Within these words lie the character strengths of persistence, bravery, forgiveness and mercy, hope, self-control, integrity, and perspective.

Andrew Buni wrote a review of Mays's autobiography and concluded that Mays's role as an administrator overshadowed his roles as a theologian, scholar, and educator.

Mays's title *Born to Rebel* should add 'and Born to Build.' Acting upon a steadfast, continuous refusal to admit as inevitable or right which is ugly and mean, stupid and cruel. Mays chose to combat this racist segregation by building. He built excellence for himself as he strove toward the Ph.D. at the University of Chicago's Divinity School. He shaped institutions of excellence for other blacks as dean of the School of Religion at Howard University and especially as president of Morehouse College where his greatest concern was for the establishment of high standards for faculty

³⁵⁰ Richard Bardolph, "Review of *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography* by Benjamin E. Mays," *Journal of Negro History*, 57, no. 2 (April 1972): 196-97.

and students as well as the expansion of library and other necessary facilities.³⁵¹

Mays's *Lord, the People Have Driven Me on*, according to Bobby Joe Saucer's review was,

...the enigmatic pilgrimage of a preacher, prophet and priest who has for 87 years proclaimed, predicted and prescribed worldwide, but especially in the enclaves of hopelessness and despair, the motifs of hope and possibility. A clue and insight into the life of this amazing octogenarian is *Born to Rebel*.³⁵²

In his review of Mays's last autobiography written 10 years after *Born to Rebel*, Saucer focused on the indebtedness Mays expressed towards his family, friends, corporations, and mentors.

Education is imperative for the black man, and his only way out of bondage is to develop his mind so that he will be able to hold his own in a competitive society.... Without religion and a firm belief and faith in God, the black slaves would hardly have survived.³⁵³

This quote permeated Mays's life and his quest for equality, and revealed that he retained a love of learning as a character strength.

Other Significant Events from 1967-1984

Little did anyone realize that a horrendous act against the American people would occur the year after Dr. Mays relinquished the presidency of Morehouse College. On

³⁵¹ Andrew Buni, "Review of *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography* by Benjamin E. Mays," *American Historical Review* 79, no. 3 (June 1974): 909.

³⁵² Bobby Joe Saucer, "Review of *Lord, the People Have Driven Me On* by Benjamin Elijah Mays," *Phylon* 42, no. 3 (3rd Quarter, 1981): 284-86.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

April 4, 1968, the most visible leader of the Civil Rights Movement, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. When Dr. Mays delivered the eulogy at Dr. King's funeral, the world discovered that Mays was the spiritual mentor of the slain civil rights leader. Mays was called again in 1971 to eulogize Whitney M. Young, the Executive Director of the National Urban League.³⁵⁴

Closing the Eyes of a Dreamer while Continuing to Strive for the Dream

Dr. Mays was admitted into the formerly segregated Hughes Spalding Hospital on Sunday, March 25, 1984, for respiratory problems. After a time of declining health, one of the people who was a breath of life in the Civil Rights Movement breathed his last in a hospital that the movement had desegregated. Mays's death was announced on the front page of the Atlanta Journal on March 28, 1984, the morning of his death and in the obituary sections of the New York Times and the Washington Post the day after his death.

Past, Present, Future: The Role of Character

Mays's virtues grew with each of his accumulated life experiences. Each gave him exposure to people who would mentor him or whom he would mentor. The role of character from a historical perspective gave Mays the determination to graduate with honors from Bates College and to earn his master's and doctorate's degrees from the University of Chicago. His education gave him the employment mobility to move within

³⁵⁴ Simeon Booker, "Nixon 1st U.S. President to Deliver Eulogy for Black Leader," *Jet*, April 1, 1971, 58; Gates, *America Behind The Color Line: Dialogues with African Americans*, 31. President Richard Nixon was present at Young's funeral and became the first sitting president to eulogize a Black leader. Young drowned while swimming in Lagos, Nigeria with Ramsey Clark. Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld accompanied Air Force General Daniel 'Chappie' James who flew the plane that brought Young's body back to the United States. The leadership of the Urban League respected Mays and Mays influenced a young Vernon Jordan, a future Executive Director of the National Urban League, by his "erect walking."

the circles of influence and power of his day and establish the relationships he needed to achieve his goals. His marriages, degrees, and work experience gave him the knowledge, skills, and abilities to become the spiritual, education, and political leader of civil rights leaders of the past, present, and future. They also gave him the ability to maneuver through the social setting/events necessary to develop the behaviors that became the character strengths to support his virtues of wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. He far surpassed the minimum requirement to be a man of good character as defined by the *CSVHC*.

When a person reviews his accomplishments and the accomplishments of those he mentored and the accomplishments of the people his protégés mentored, it is evident that his virtues enabled Mays to be a man of good character whose influence was, is, and will be effective in the lives of his protégés and his protégés' protégés.

Looking at Segregation from Mays's Perspective – What did God have to do with it?

The 1898 Phoenix Riot was the incident indelibly etched on Mays's mind's eye. This event not only motivated him early in life to fight against social injustice but the event planted the seeds for his character virtues. Mays witnessed what he described as the humiliation his father had to endure at the hands of the lynch mob. Unfortunately he did not see that the bowing, saluting, and tipping of hat were possible precursors to his good character.³⁵⁵ I believe the event showed Mays that the wisdom and knowledge, courage, and temperance virtues his father displayed while being humiliated by fellow Christian men were necessary survival techniques. The elder Mays possibly recalled the Frazer

³⁵⁵ Barnett, "Benjamin E. Mays: Failure is not reaching your goal; failure is having no goal to reach for"; Britton, "Mays Papers Howard University"; Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 2-4. While reviewing the literature and hearing Mays tell the story of the Phoenix Riot, it appears that Mays was not proud of his father's actions.

Butler lynching by a Christian mob in Lake City, South Carolina and bravely, wisely, and through self-regulation complied with the demands of the mob.³⁵⁶ The mob had the option of using violence to quell any visceral response as well as to punish any half-hearted compliance to their requests because it was evident from the records that they were not ready to practice the Christian art of forgiveness. Mays knew from experience that half-hearted capitulation to injustice would only prolong the injustice.

Later in life his meeting with Gandhi in 1937 reinforced his childhood lesson about social injustice. Mays's social setting/event revealed that Gandhi's success in India was rooted in his beliefs about God and the fundamental violation of God's laws that are implicit in the caste system—justifying and supporting Mays's initial approach of not participating in voluntary segregation. Using his notes from his meeting with Gandhi, Mays made the following observation,

Bad as Indian untouchability was in 1937, I predicted that it would be legally abolished before segregation was legally abolished in the United States. I was right. Untouchability was abolished when India became constitutionally independent in 1947. Segregation in the public schools of the United States was not struck down by the Supreme Court until 1954; and Congress did not legislate against segregation until ten years later.³⁵⁷

Gandhi apparently displayed virtues and character strengths during India's freedom struggle with Britain, Gandhi's social setting/event. It was Gandhi's virtues and

³⁵⁶ n.a., "Lynching of Frazer Butler and his daughter in Florence." On February 22, 1898 in Lake City, South Carolina Frazer B. Butler and his child were killed by a mob. Butler's wife and other children were wounded when the mob attacked the family. The mob attacked the family because Butler was a "colored federally appointed postmaster."

³⁵⁷ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 157.

character strengths which supported his non-violence philosophy that Mays introduced to his protégés.

As Mays pointed out in his autobiography, the White Church did not voice any opposition to the Phoenix Riot. The church did not mention the resulting bloodshed and other atrocities committed by the mob. It appeared that the churches gave a nod of approval by not condemning the acts of violence against the Negro American community. Acts such as shootings, dragging a person behind a horse or car, hangings, rapes, and burning at the stake were also acts of social injustice employed by lynch mobs to intimidate members of the Negro American community.

While White churches did not speak out against civil disobedience, the Black church was just as guilty because they did not voice their opposition to mob violence from the pulpit. If White employers heard that a message condemning the Southern way of life was voiced in a Black church, the financial support for the church would disappear and the minister would become a candidate for mob violence. Fear and terror were successful techniques employed by the White minority and eventually the White majority in South Carolina. It was clear that God was not the driving force behind either church. It was also clear that Mays had to take a stand against the perpetuation of segregation.

He did this through education and employment opportunities. The opportunities gave Mays the ability to occupy positions where members of the White and Black communities respected him. With his character strengths developed or developing, his virtues identified Mays as a man of good character equipped to fight against segregation in society as well as in the church.

Summation: Four Insights on Segregation and Racism

Virtue led Mays down the path toward equality and gave him the courage to establish the four insights described in this research. In the first insight, Dr. Mays distinguished between voluntary segregation and compulsory segregation.³⁵⁸ While studying at Virginia Union, Mays decided to accept compulsory segregation such as riding the streetcars because it was necessary. However, he refused to participate in events that required a person to pay to practice segregation. The latter was in response to Mays's experience at the theater in Richmond, Virginia.

The second insight, the power of the media, after the viewing of the motion picture version of Thomas Dixon's novel *The Klansman*, made Dr. Mays experience physical fear almost similar to the fear he experienced when he was four years old in Phoenix. The novel was released under the title *The Birth of a Nation*.³⁵⁹

In his third insight, Mays objected to hosting a segregated reception in his home. By 1927, he had developed a strong dislike for segregation regardless of the consequences.³⁶⁰

In the fourth and final insight, for this research, Dr. Mays identified a maintainer of segregation although the officials did not condone the maintainer's actions.

Both Mrs. Mays and I were in residence in August 1931, when she received her A.M. degree from the university's School of Social Service. Tickets for the Convocation were then being issued: white tickets for seats on the main floor of Rockefeller Chapel; colored tickets for balcony seats. The usher was giving white people the white tickets and Negroes

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 52-53.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 60.

³⁶⁰ Mays, "Mays Collection Library of Congress." Letters 17 and 20 October, 1927.

the colored. Sadie, her sister Emma, and I got in line for tickets for friends and us. When we were handed colored tickets and we promptly asked for white ones, we were told that there were no more. Accepting the colored tickets, we stepped aside to watch. The white person just behind us was given a white ticket, a Negro following him a colored ticket. We got in line again and told the ticket lady that we were going directly to President Hutchins's office to report her discriminatory practices. She gave us white tickets, pleaded with us not to report her, and tried to justify her position by saying that in the past gallery seats had been reserved for Negroes. Her instant capitulation was proof that she was not following a university policy but rather the dictate of some subordinate, self-appointed to maintain segregation.³⁶¹

The four insights identified a progression from segregation to voluntarily not complying with voluntary segregation, to the power of the media through motion pictures to stir up normally well managed emotions, to the willingness to suffer grave consequences for not complying with Southern traditions, finally to challenging the system after gathering the facts and confronting the offender with the facts to achieve equal treatment. The four insights were closely related to the four social settings/events which acted as the catalysts for Mays to develop his character strengths from the behaviors that emerged within the social settings/events. It should be noted that two of the social settings/events became two of the insights. Dr. Mays never asked someone to do something that he himself was unprepared to do. Preparation was the key and by

³⁶¹ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 135.

1931, Dr. Mays was ready to challenge the status quo and pay the consequences for his challenge against an archaic Southern tradition.

Chapter Six - Selected Protégés of Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays

Andrew Young, Martin Luther King Jr.'s trusted lieutenant, U.S. Congressman, Ambassador to the United Nations, and mayor of Atlanta, said "probably most of the black elected officials owe where they are to Dr. Mays."³⁶² Mays was a mentor to many of the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. Although he did not mentor many of the leaders' lieutenants, he gained their respect and admiration because his good character successfully guided him through the separate but equal era. He influenced Julian Bond, Andrew Young, Maynard Jackson, Michael Lomax, Dorothy I. Height, and Martin Luther King, Jr. along with many leaders of the equality movement. The remaining leaders and the lieutenants continued to seek Mays's dream of equal opportunity years after they left the tutelage of their mentor. The lieutenants of the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement consisted of King's lieutenants—Ralph Abernathy, Jesse Jackson, Andrew Young, Walter Fauntroy, John Lewis, and Coretta Scott King. Julian Bond's former lieutenants—Kweisi Mfume and Bruce Gordon, former Chief Executive Officers of the NAACP—were in positions to influence affirmative action policies. I selected these protégés because they occupy a position to create change or they have a relationship with decision makers who can create change.

With six virtues as the cornerstones of Mays's life, the focus of this chapter is to determine if his protégés or his protégés' lieutenants displayed one or more of the *CSVHC* virtues. As an uncompromising advocate for justice, specifically social justice,

³⁶² Wilkins, "As the 'Schoolmaster of the Movement,' He Shaped Generations of Men: Benjamin Mays," 26-30.

Mays mobilized his protégés in the fight to change the status quo of acceptance and compliance with legally sanctioned segregation.³⁶³

Starting in 1921 with James Nabrit and Howard Thurman, Mays mentored *Morehouse Men* who made significant contributions to the equality movement. Nabrit and Thurman were members of the Morehouse College debate team. James M. Nabrit Jr. argued the *Bolling v. Sharpe* case, one of the cases heard in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision that overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Nabrit, as a member of the legal team of the NAACP led by Thurgood Marshall, displayed perspective, bravery, citizenship, fairness, self-regulation, and hope. Nabrit became the second Negro American to serve as president of Howard University, 1960-1969. While on a leave of absence, Dr. Nabrit served as the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, 1965-1967. Dr. James M. Nabrit Jr. and Dr. Howard Thurman were the first *Morehouse Men* mentored by Mays to achieve the quest for equal opportunity.³⁶⁴

Dr. Howard Thurman achieved equality as a theologian. He was a Baptist minister who worked his way through Morehouse College. His ex-slave grandmother raised Thurman and he completed high school while staying with relatives who gave him one meal a day. Despite his meager start in life, Thurman graduated from Morehouse in 1923. After following his mentor to Howard University, he served as the Dean of the Chapel from 1934-1944 and later ministered in San Francisco. In 1953, he accepted the position as Dean of Marsh Chapel at Boston University. Dr. Thurman was a member of the faculty when Martin Luther King Jr. completed his doctorate degree at Boston University. The relationship, forged by Mays, between Thurman and King was very strong; Thurman was the first person King asked to see after King was stabbed in New York City. As a spiritual advisor to King, Thurman was in a position to promote King's

³⁶³ Mays, *Born to Rebel*. I concluded that affirmative action was the end to Mays' noble act of standing against legally sanctioned segregation.

³⁶⁴ Martin Weil, "Civil Rights Advocate James M. Nabrit Jr.; Dies at 97; President of Howard U. in '60s," *Washington Post*, December 28, 1997.

graduation from Boston University. The character strengths of spirituality, forgiveness and mercy, leadership, fairness, love, kindness, social intelligence, persistence, and perspective were evident in Thurman's actions. This assessment was based on my interpretation of selected writings about Thurman.³⁶⁵

Roger Wilkins described Mays as a devout Christian and an uncompromising advocate for justice. Wilkins description touched on two virtues, courage and transcendence, used to identify Mays as a man of good character, as well as being a description most of his students would freely ascribe to their mentor.³⁶⁶

Arguably, Mays's greatest and certainly best known protégé was Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King and the Philosophy of Non-Violence

“Although Dr. Mays was brilliant, he was not removed from the heart of the people. In the pulpit he talked a great deal about social justice; you might say he preached a social gospel.” – Coretta Scott King.³⁶⁷

Mays's social gospel eventually influenced the ideas and actions of Martin Luther King, Jr., a protégé who received direct tutelage from Dr. Mays at Morehouse College. Mays first met King when the former decided for fiscal reasons to allow early admittance of eleventh grade students.³⁶⁸ King's father and grandfather, Reverend A.D. Williams, were Morehouse graduates, so he continued a family tradition at the school. While at Morehouse, the younger King developed a philosophy on education summarized in a 1947 article for the *Maroon Tiger* where he wrote,

³⁶⁵ Wright L. Jr. Lassiter, "Floridian Theologian Counseled Civil Rights Leaders; Howard Thurman was one of the Greatest and Most Creative Minds of the 20th Century," *Miami Times*, December 16, 2003; Virgie W. Murray, "Dr. Howard Thurman: Noted Author, Theologian," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 15, 1995.

³⁶⁶ Wilkins, "As the 'Schoolmaster of the Movement,' He Shaped Generations of Men: Benjamin Mays."

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 26. Coretta Scott King's quote from the Wilkins article about Mays..

³⁶⁸ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 265. Mays implemented an Early Admissions Program to ward off the financial effects of World War II on enrollment. Since Morehouse students were being drafted in record numbers Mays elected to admit into the September 1944 freshman class students who had completed the eleventh grade. Martin Luther King Jr. was one of those students.

The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals.³⁶⁹

On October 27, 1947, King requested an application for admission to Chester Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania. Edwin E. Aubrey, Mays's former professor at the University of Chicago, was the president at Chester Crozer. King submitted the application in February 1948 and he listed Benjamin E. Mays as a character reference. Mays endorsed King's application with a letter, February 28, 1948, to Mr. Charles E. Batten at Chester Crozer Theological Seminary. In the letter Mays said, "They are men of good integrity, they adjust well, and I believe, that they would do a good job at Crozer. You will see from their records that they are not brilliant students, but they both have goods minds."³⁷⁰

Mays attributed visits to King's home, chats on campus, and the time King spent approving, questioning, or disagreeing with points Mays made in chapel as the reason he began a friendship with King, who was known for cornering Mays after chapel to discuss specific points of his sermon. These exchanges as well as his grandfather's and father's ministry resulted in King choosing the ministry as his vocation. With a strong trusting relationship established, Mays shared his personal philosophy with King.

As his mentor, Mays exposed King to the non-violent philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. After spending ninety minutes with Gandhi in person and many hours studying his writings, Mays recommended a study of Gandhi and the philosophy of non-violence

³⁶⁹ Stanford University.edu, "The Purpose of Education Maroon Tiger Morehouse College. January-February 1947," in *The Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute* (2011).

³⁷⁰ Stanford University.edu, "Application for Admissions 1948," in *The Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute* (2011); Stanford University.edu, "Letter of Recommendation from Benjamin E. Mays 1948," in *The Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute* (2011); Stanford University.edu, "The Purpose of Education. Maroon Tiger Morehouse College. January-February 1947," in *The Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute* (2011); Stanford University.edu, "Application to Chester Crozer Seminary 1948," in *The Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute* (2011).

to his students. Gandhi explained the philosophy of non-violence to Mays. Mays admitted that it was Gandhi's insight that gave him a complete understanding of King's response to unjust laws and nonviolence.³⁷¹

When I questioned Gandhi on the charge that the nonviolent man who violates the law has no respect for it, Gandhi's response was that the nonviolent man is law-abiding in that he is willing to pay the price when he disobeys unjust laws. Later, this part of my experience with Gandhi was to give me a deeper understanding than most persons of the program of Martin Luther King Jr.³⁷²

The lessons Mays taught King and the lesson Mays learned from Gandhi showed King how to develop virtues that placed him on the path to being a man of good character. This path gave King the strategic foundation to counter legally sanctioned segregation with a strategy based on absolute love. King went to jail because he knew that was the consequence of his breaking the law, even if it was an unjust law. He and his followers responded to violence with love. King was also the target of the United States government's COINTELPRO, which subjected King and his family to mental violence; his response was not hate, not violence, not cowardice, but love. Finally, King taught his followers to denounce violence to become true believers in the philosophy of nonviolence.³⁷³

³⁷¹ Horton, Kohl, and Kohl, *The Long Haul: An Autobiography*. Horton, an acquaintance of Mays and King, said violence takes on many different forms. The violence of poverty destroys the family, twists minds, and hurts in many ways beyond the pain of hunger. Violence permeates the laws of our society. Horton believed that if you are trying to change something you must acknowledge that violence may be used against you.

³⁷² Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 156. Gandhi said nonviolence must never be practiced as a technique or strategy because one is too weak to use violence. It must be practiced in absolute love and without hate.

³⁷³ Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*, 414. The authors listed Martin Luther King Jr. as an influential individual who possessed leadership as a personal quality.

The philosophy of nonviolence and virtues helped King and the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement to usher in legislation to guarantee equal opportunity and the right to vote for Negro Americans and other minorities. Mays was so impressed by the accomplishments of his protégé that he “believed that offensive nonviolence actions such as the Gandhi-King type are the best way to improve Negro -White relations; I am convinced that any offensive, violent programs instigated by Negroes will profit little.”³⁷⁴

King’s nonviolent activities and his lifestyle made him an enemy of then FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover. Hoover directed FBI Special Agents in Charge to monitor King electronically and with physical surveillance from September 1963 until his assassination in 1968. Robert Kennedy approved the surveillance to help prove that King was not a communist nor influenced by communist associates. Hoover called King the “most dangerous and effective Negro leader in the country” after the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The surveillance proved that King was not a communist and that the Communist Party of the United States of America did not control the Civil Rights Movement. However, Hoover kept King under surveillance to discredit King and to disrupt the Civil Rights Movement. The King wiretap transcripts were sealed and will be released in 2027. Of the 200 pages of transcripts available at the FBI Freedom of Information Act website, a person can read a detailed report about King’s assassination and the activities of his assassin, James Earl Ray.³⁷⁵

For his civil rights accomplishments, King received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, the Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously in 1977, and a national holiday signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1983 that became effective in 1986. King faithfully met and exceeded the expectations of his mentor. It was not surprising that when Mrs. Sadie Mays complained that King was using her husband's material without

³⁷⁴ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 320. This view along with other race related views is the focus of Chapter 7.

³⁷⁵ Jen Christensen, "FBI tracked King’s every move," *CNN* (April 7, 2008); Talal Al-Khatib, "MLK FBI Files May Soon See Daylight," <http://news.discovery.com/history/mlks-fbi-files-may-soon-see-daylight.html?print=true> .

giving Dr. Mays's credit as being the creator of the idea, Mays responded that he did not care as long as the material helped further the goals of the Civil Rights Movement.³⁷⁶

King had many lieutenants who supported him even after his assassination on April 4, 1968. Ralph David Abernathy took over the reins of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and completed the Poor People's March on Washington. Jesse Jackson stayed in Chicago and started organizations for social change. Jackson also ran for the office of President of the United States in 1984 and 1988. Jackson participated in the Presidential Debate in New York on the evening of March 28, 1984. Mays died on the morning of March 28, 1984. Jackson's son, Jesse Jackson Jr., is a Congressman from Illinois. Former congressman Walter Fauntroy, the director of the Washington, D.C. SCLC office, organized the 1963 March on Washington and the 1983 March on Washington for King's widow, Coretta Scott King. He currently serves as a pastor in the nation's capital. A member of congress since 1966, John Lewis, a true disciple of King's philosophy of nonviolence, led the voting rights marches in Alabama in 1965 and called for both Dr. King and Dr. Mays to be awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Although his initial effort for Mays, along with help from Senator Wyche Fowler, was not successful in 1983, Lewis used his seat in congress to renew the effort in 2001. Lewis became a 2010 Presidential Medal of Freedom award recipient on February 15, 2011.

Finally, the lieutenant not normally mentioned as a lieutenant because she was his wife, Coretta Scott King, stepped in to see that his dream came into fruition while their children were still alive. King said in 1963 during his *I have a dream* speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, "I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."³⁷⁷ She created the King Center to maintain her husband's legacy. She did it all in the name of her slain husband. After all, he met a violent death, she lost a husband, and

³⁷⁶ Abernathy, *And The Walls Came Tumbling Down*.

³⁷⁷ King Sr., *Daddy King: An Autobiography*.

their children lost a father, a father who spent most of his time proclaiming the need for social, political, academic, and economic change—just one of his legacies associated with his mentor Benjamin Elijah Mays.³⁷⁸

Maynard Jackson

Mays noted that, “it is not by accident that Maynard Holbrook Jackson, Jr., a young Atlanta Negro attorney, polled more than 200,000 votes in his race for the Senate against Herman Talmadge in 1968, and that many White people voted for the courageous young Negro.”³⁷⁹ It was Senators Richard Russell and Herman Talmadge who opposed President John Kennedy's planned appointment of Mays to become a member of the Civil Rights Commission in 1961. Their opposition was based on Mays's opposition to legally sanctioned segregation, his work for civil rights legislation, and claims that Mays was a communist. The battle to keep Mays off the commission had Talmadge renewing unconfirmed reports that Mays was a member of an organization connected to the Communist Party. The smear campaign was successful and Mays was denied appointment to the commission.³⁸⁰

Maynard Jackson, as a student of Mays at Morehouse College, knew that the charges against his mentor were not true because he had heard Mays proclaim the existence of God during chapel services. How was it possible for a United States senator to accuse a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ of being a Communist? Communism's basic tenet proclaims there is no god. The tradition of segregation, not anti-Communism, was the reason for Russell's and Talmadge's opposition to Mays's appointment. Political and economic power extraction was the basis for Jackson's campaign against Talmadge.³⁸¹

³⁷⁸ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 357-60.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 315.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, xxix, 227.

³⁸¹ Georgia Encyclopedia.org, "Richard B. Russell Jr.,"

<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-1391> ; Georgia Encyclopedia.org, "Herman E.

Mays viewed Maynard Jackson as the embodiment of the term *Black Power*. As a desegregationist and the mentor of a desegregationist—Jackson— Mays saw the political arena as the ultimate battlefield for desegregation, and as a means to end legally sanctioned segregation. After being defeated by Talmadge in the race for the senate, Jackson successfully ran for the office of vice mayor of Atlanta in 1969. Winning the race with "90 percent of the black vote and a sizable White vote made him an easy winner in the race for vice mayor."³⁸²

The desires of the voters in Atlanta were for inclusion in affirmative action programs for Black contractors. Shortly after being elected mayor of Atlanta in 1973, Jackson took a tough stance (fairness) against the White contractors who tried to limit or eliminate Black participation in the \$400 million construction of the then-new terminal at Hartsfield International Airport. In 1975, he threatened to shut down construction operations if Black contractors were not included in the project. Black inclusion would reduce the level of poverty in the Black American community in Atlanta.

Congressman John Lewis eulogized Jackson as "one of the founding fathers of the New Atlanta, the New South, and the New America"³⁸³ and for his uncompromising stance against the exclusion of Black contractors in the airport project. Jackson was quoted in life as saying, "If you don't like affirmative action, what is your plan to guarantee a level playing field of opportunity?" Jackson, like President Johnson, wanted to use his political clout to level the playing field. His successful campaign to try and unseat a tormentor of his mentor as well as his subsequent victories in the race for vice mayor and mayor were just a few of the reasons why Mays used Maynard Jackson as an

Talmadge," <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-590> . Richard B. Russell Jr. was a former state legislator, governor of Georgia, and U.S. senator. He was also a staunch segregationist who opposed civil rights. Herman E. Talmadge was a former governor of Georgia, U.S. senator, and the son of a former governor of Georgia. He was a staunch segregationist who opposed civil rights. In the 1970s, he changed his position and started to reach out to black voters.

³⁸² Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 315.

³⁸³ Christopher Benson, "Hail and Farewell: Maynard Holbrook Jackson Jr. 1938-2003," *Ebony*, September 2003.

example of *Black Power*. Maynard Jackson displayed open-mindedness, persistence, kindness, fairness, self-regulations, and gratitude as evidence of his virtues—mostly influenced by Mays, his mentor.³⁸⁴

Horace Julian Bond

We, the students of the six affiliated institutions forming the Atlanta University Center—Clark, Morehouse, Morris Brown, and Spelman Colleges, Atlanta University, and the International Theological Center—have joined our hearts, minds, and bodies in the cause of gaining those rights which are inherently ours as members of the human race and as citizens of these United States.³⁸⁵

With this proclamation, Julian Bond displayed his character strengths of leadership and citizenship.

Between February 1 and February 20, 1960, Lonnie King, Joe Pierce, and Julian Bond met to devise a way for Morehouse students to participate in the Civil Rights Movement. They expanded their circle to include students from the other five institutions that were a part of the Atlanta University Center. The students met with the presidents of the colleges to have their participation sanctioned by the institutions. In what could be viewed as a delaying tactic by some, Albert Manley, one of the college presidents, asked the students from the six campuses to "draw up a statement making it clear why they are protesting." Julian Bond, James Felder, Lonnie King, Willie Mays, Roslyn Pope, Mary Ann Smith, and Marian Wright wrote the statement and titled it "An Appeal for Human Rights."³⁸⁶

The group led by Lonnie King and Julian Bond demonstrated their boldness in the opening paragraph of their manifesto. They demanded their inherent rights as human

³⁸⁴ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 315.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 289.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 288.

beings and as citizens of the United States. According to Mays, he supported the manifesto (open mindedness) and only made minor changes to strengthen their argument, an argument that strengthened the militancy of an already militant Quaker-educated Bond.

Bond entered Morehouse in 1957. His militancy would delay his graduation until 1971. Over the 14 years between his entrance and ultimate graduation from Morehouse, Bond was a co-founder of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a reporter, and eventually the managing editor of the *Atlanta Inquirer* newspaper, and won three elections to the Georgia House of Representatives. He was barred from taking his seat because of his opposition to the Vietnam War. After being denied his rightful place in the Georgia House, Bond decided to maintain his conviction and, integrity; he accepted the consequences for being militant and going against popular opinion. Finally, the United States Supreme Court ruled in December 1966 that the Georgia House had violated Bond's rights. Afterwards the State of Georgia allowed Bond to take his seat. Bond eventually served four terms in the Georgia House and six terms in the state Senate.

Bond's convictions led him to being nominated as the vice-presidential candidate at the 1968 Democratic Convention; he withdrew his name because he was too young to serve as Vice-President of the United States. He served on the Board of Directors for Highlander Research and Education Center, and finally in 1998 he was selected to be the chairman of the Board for the NAACP where he had the opportunity to mold the militancy of a generation of members as well as influence the positions held by former presidents and chief executive officers, Ben Chavis, Kweisi Mfume, and Bruce Gordon, and the current president/chief executive officer, Benjamin Jealous.

Mays's reach extended indirectly into yet another generation of civil rights leaders. Chavis resigned in 1995 amidst allegations of sexual harassment. His resignation led to the unanimous selection, by the Board of Directors of the NAACP, of former Congressman Kweisi Mfume to become the new president and chief executive officer of

the organization. Mfume was born in Baltimore, Maryland and educated in the Baltimore School System, Morgan State University, and Johns Hopkins University, all located in Baltimore. Mfume changed his name from Frizzell Gray to Kweisi Mfume, which translates into "*conquering son of kings*."³⁸⁷ His militancy was honed through his community involvement and election to the city council of Baltimore. After his service on the city council, Mfume ran for congress and served in congress from 1987 until 1996 when he accepted the position at the NAACP. Over the next two years, Mfume ran a very politically correct organization looking to rebound from the previous scandal and a dramatic drop in contributions. In 1998, Julian Bond became Mfume's boss.

Bond's ascension to the chairman of the Board of the NAACP could have been influenced by Mays, although future research would need to better discern such a claim. Mays was a member of the NAACP board of directors that authorized the legal action that eventually became known as *Brown v. Board of Education*. Although militant by choice, Bond's display of the character strengths of hope, citizenship, leadership, social intelligence, and perspective honored the legacy of his mentor.

Andrew Jackson Young Jr.

Ambassador Andrew Young included himself in his tribute to Mays in Roy Wilkins's article for *Nation*.³⁸⁸ As a Black politician in Atlanta, the home base for the SCLC, Young benefited from Mays's techniques that were honed at Highlander Research and Educational Center in Tennessee under Martin Luther King Jr.'s SCLC.³⁸⁹ He was elected to the United States Congress and served from 1973 until 1977 when he resigned to become the United States Ambassador to the United Nations. As an adopted, *Morehouse Man*, Young chose to serve in the Carter administration although he had

³⁸⁷ n.a., "Kweisi Mfume Biography," <http://www.notablebiographies.com/Ma-Mo/Mfume-Kweisi.html>
<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=M000687>

³⁸⁸ Wilkins, "As the 'Schoolmaster of the Movement,' He Shaped Generations of Men: Benjamin Mays."

³⁸⁹ Horton, Kohl, and Kohl, *The Long Haul: An Autobiography*.

recently been re-elected to congress for a third term. Jimmy Carter was an honorary *Morehouse Man*. Mays finally had a *Morehouse Man* in the White House and a *Morehouse Man* representing the United States as the chief diplomat to the United Nations.³⁹⁰

After resigning his post with the United Nations on September 23, 1979, amid charges of violating United States protocol by talking to Palestine Liberation Organization officials, Young was elected mayor of Atlanta and served in that capacity from 1982 until 1990. Young ended his political career after he ran an unsuccessful campaign for the nomination to become the governor of Georgia.

A faithful lieutenant to Martin Luther King Jr., Andrew Young announced the passing of King's widow on January 31, 2006. Throughout his career, Young displayed the strengths of spirituality, appreciation of beauty and excellence, forgiveness and mercy, fairness, social intelligence, vitality, and perspective. The Andrew Young story continues to unfold and would constitute a separate study to gain a full appreciation of his role as King's lieutenant, a civil rights leader, and politician.

Michael Lomax

On January 6, 1968, the Morehouse College chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, Delta of Georgia, was established, thus rewarding 14 years of effort by Dr. Mays. Phi Beta Kappa members from other chapters in Georgia, the presidents of the other five institutions in the Atlanta University Center, the trustees of Morehouse College, and some of the outstanding high school students from the public schools of Atlanta were present. On Friday, May 17, 1968, Delta of Georgia was proud to initiate the first Morehouse students to qualify for membership into Phi Beta Kappa: Benjamin Ward, Michael Lomax, Frederic Ransom, and Willie Vann.³⁹¹

³⁹⁰ Wilkins, "As the 'Schoolmaster of the Movement,' He Shaped Generations of Men: Benjamin Mays."

³⁹¹ Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 187.

Michael Lomax is currently serving as president and chief executive officer of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). Mays was among the twenty-seven original members to respond to Dr. Frederick Douglass Patterson's invitation to unite and form the UNCF in 1943 after Patterson issued an appeal to the private Black colleges to pool their resources and form a union to benefit their survival. As one of the founding institutions, Morehouse College helped raise funds for students to attend an institution of higher education whether that institution was Morehouse or another member institution.³⁹²

The current president and chief executive officer of the UNCF not only enjoys the unique distinction of being a *Morehouse Man* but was also a protégé under Dr. Mays as well as a lieutenant under Mays's protégés Dr. Samuel DuBois Cook, president emeritus of Dillard University, and Maynard Jackson, the first Black mayor of Atlanta. As the head of the UNCF, Dr. Lomax has access to the President of the United States, members of congress, and members of the boards of directors of the major companies.³⁹³ The review of literature on Mays and writings about Lomax showed that Lomax displayed the character strengths of integrity, perspective, hope, and persistence.

William "Bill" Lee and Spike Lee

William Lee was a classmate of Martin Luther King, Jr. at Morehouse College. As a 1948 graduate of his father's alma mater, Bill Lee sent his son Shelton Jackson (Spike) Lee to Morehouse. Spike Lee graduated from Morehouse in 1979 and was a sponsor for the Dillard University-produced 1984 video interview with Mays on February 10, 1984. The interview was taped 47 days before Dr. Mays died in Hughes Spaulding Hospital. Spike Lee has continued to be a crusader for civil rights using modern media,

³⁹² United Negro College Fund.org, "President and CEO: Biography Dr. Michael L. Lomax " <http://www.uncf.org/ceo/bio.asp> . Lomax was the President of Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana shortly before joining UNCF.

³⁹³ Ibid. President George W. Bush appointed Lomax to the President's Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

and has often incorporated the spirit of Mays in his films. While Lee's work reflects Mays's philosophy this study revealed only a strong character strength of social intelligence.³⁹⁴

Dorothy I. Height

One of the nation's greatest activists, Dorothy Height, the President Emerita of the National Negro Council of Women and the "seventh" Civil Rights leader who participated in the 1963 March on Washington, recalled that,

It was great to be in the care of Dr. Mays, who included me in some very special moments on that trip. I especially remember being part of a small group that visited Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, who was living in exile in Bath. Great teacher that he was, Dr. Mays not only talked with us about the meeting itself, and its many ramifications, but gave all of us a lesson in the etiquette of meeting royalty.³⁹⁵

Mays met Height while he and Mrs. Mays were at Howard University. They were selected by the United Christian Youth Movement of North America to chaperone Ms. Height to attend a conference at Oxford University in England for the United Christian Youth Movement of North America, and mentored her in etiquette and social decorum that she has used throughout her life.³⁹⁶

In 1946, a few years after Dr. Mays assumed the presidency of Morehouse College, Ms. Height heard his passionate plea to *ripen the time if the time was not ripe* to confront the institution of segregation. Mays wanted the attendees at the 17th National Convention of the Young Women's Christian Association in Atlantic City, New Jersey to

³⁹⁴ Barnett, "Benjamin E. Mays: Failure is not reaching your goal; failure is having no goal to reach for."

³⁹⁵ Height, *Open Wide The Freedom Gates: A Memoir*, 72.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

mobilize to end the evils of segregation because Mays believed segregation "diminished both Black and White alike."³⁹⁷ Mays encouraged Height to accelerate the ripening of the time to end segregation because of promises broken over the years culminated with the *Double V* concept popularized by the Pittsburgh Courier and supported by the NAACP Board of Directors. The *Double V* concept rallied Negro Americans to support the war effort during World War II with the goals of a victory against fascism aboard and victory against racism at home. After the successful war against fascism aboard, the victory against racism at home was denied.³⁹⁸

In 1958, the National Council of Negro Women elected Height as their president. Both Mary McLeod Bethune and Dr. Mays mentored Height. They introduced her to royalty and presidents. They also instilled in her the duty to fight injustice. She used the wisdom and knowledge obtained to ensure that the National Council of Negro Women maintained their position of influence in the country. Height displayed courage when she was almost denied an active role in the 1963 March on Washington. She was the surviving March on Washington leader and her virtue of justice guided her not to seek retribution against the organizations that tried to deny her a place on the rostrum. Dr. Height died in 2010 and was the Chair and President Emerita of the National Council of Negro Women.

Conclusion

Mays's reach and importance across generations of civil rights leaders was unparalleled, and was founded on the character strengths and virtues that he demonstrated

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 114-15.

³⁹⁸ Osur, *Blacks in the Army Air Forces during World War II*, 11.

throughout his life. He planted the seed for equality in 1921 when he mentored Nabrit and Thurman for the Morehouse Debate Team, and did not allow injustice to interfere with his team's performance. Mays showed his first protégés how to attack the injustice by showing their opponent the power of character. A college education was the way for some members of the Negro American Community to advance to the next level of equality, and students could often rise above their beginnings. Mays described Martin Luther King Jr. as a "C" or "B" student when King went to Crozer Theological Seminary, but King demonstrated his absolute mastery of both Mays's mission and his nonviolent techniques. In support of her husband's legacy, Mrs. Coretta Scott King used the 1983 March on Washington as a precursor to gain support for the Martin Luther King Jr. National Holiday.

Mays's belief in nonviolence was also the basis for his views on Black Power. He believed that the political achievements of his protégés Maynard Jackson, Julian Bond, and Andrew Jackson were the way to earn equality for the Black American Community.

Currently his protégé Michael Lomax remains in a position to influence equality policy. Dorothy I. Height was another direct recipient of Mays's influence—along with dozens of other leaders over the years. Height earned a position where she could affect the economic and political power base in the African American community. Ironically, Maynard Jackson fulfilled Mays's political, and President Nixon's economic, views of *Black Power* by issuing a call for economic and political revolution, not a revolution that resulted in violence. Each of these people was a direct or an indirect recipient of Mays's virtues and character strengths.

Chapter Seven - Benjamin Elijah Mays: A Life Worth Living

Born into the worst form of American poverty, Mays rose above that to become a great leader in our society. He worked his way through school and college. He did not look down on anyone or any job. He developed his virtues using the Christian foundation established by reading the Bible to his mother and nurtured in his religious studies. On this foundation and using his own character strengths, he built one of the finest institutions of higher education in the country, empowered his students to be people of good character, and created cooperative friendships with decision makers who could advance the cause of civil rights.

Dr. Mays established the foundations for his convictions in 1916 and lived those convictions until his death in 1984. He dreamed the impossible and reached for the unreachable.³⁹⁹ His character strength and his protégés made his dream possible and reachable in his lifetime. Mays mobilized men and women to become leaders of Americans to end legally sanctioned segregation. His strategy was based on the philosophy of non-violence he observed Gandhi use to break the British oppression of India, and he taught that philosophy to his protégés.

Mays did not desire to see a wall of segregation rebuilt around the Negro American community to keep the White community out, nor did he want the marginalization of any minority or socioeconomic group. He wanted all people who were qualified to have access to the same opportunities, and he spent his life in pursuit of fair and equal treatment for all Americans.

³⁹⁹ Joe Darion and Mitch Leigh, *The Impossible Dream (The Quest). Man of La Mancha*, (1965).

Mays and the *Morehouse Men* played fundamental roles in the Civil Rights Movement even while denied the full rights of citizenship, and they successfully ushered in a time of *de jure* equality for all Americans. His importance in the passage of civil rights and voting rights legislation was not public knowledge because he believed in allowing credit to go to the movement's leaders who used many of his thoughts, philosophies, words and actions to achieve their goal. Modesty in life was an endearing trademark of the man, and accentuated Mays's belief in working within the system to create change. His inflexible stance against legally sanctioned segregation combined with the depth and breadth of his positive character traits gave Dr. Mays the power to breathe life into the Civil Rights movement. His *Morehouse Men* were prepared for the opportunities made available by affirmative action. He formed strategic alliances to send students to medical and dental school; worked with military leaders to ease racial tensions during the Vietnam War; negotiated with decision makers to open the doors of opportunity to deserving people; and collaborated with diverse people to assure success in the equal rights struggle. People who knew Dr. Mays remember an energetic man who kept his word, and a man people could depend on.

Although nominated, Mays did not receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1984 or in 2002—an honor that he did not seek—but always retained his dream of an America where everyone had the same opportunities and where equal opportunity was a way of life.⁴⁰⁰ He devoted more than forty-four years of his life to the fight to eliminate legally sanctioned segregation. His devotion to this cause spoke volumes about his character. The research showed how his character supported his fight against segregation; helped him to instill in the hearts, minds, and souls of the *Morehouse Men* a

⁴⁰⁰ Mays, "800 Whites Hear Mr. Mays in Auditorium Monday, January 30."

desire to end segregation through legal means; and influenced the leaders of the Civil Rights movement to embrace non-violence.

Study Questions

Mays's importance to the struggle for civil rights in America is undeniable, and his character strength is inseparable from the man. This study investigated how Mays's virtues and character strengths that emerged during the social setting/event of Jim Crow challenged his protégés and the American public, and how such strengths were identifiable using the *CSVHC* as an analytical tool. The following questions guided the study:

1. From a historical perspective, what was the role of character in Benjamin Elijah Mays's quest for equal opportunity? How did his character correspond to the Peterson and Seligman classifications on the three conceptual levels (character strengths, virtues, and social setting/events)?

2. What role did his protégés' play in dismantling legally sanctioned segregation? What role did character play in his protégés' efforts to prevent the dismantling of affirmative action, the culmination of Mays's quest for equal opportunity?

Framed by the concept of character, as defined by the Peterson and Seligman handbook (using the virtue, character strength, and social setting/event continuum), this study examined Dr. Mays's character and the role it played in Mays's quest for equal opportunity.⁴⁰¹ The primary social setting/event was legally sanctioned segregation during the Jim Crow era from 1896 to 1964, supported by three additional sub-themes. After applying the Peterson and Seligman's virtue, character strength, and social

⁴⁰¹ Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*.

setting/event framework to Mays's life and accomplishments, Mays emerged as a man of good character as defined in the *CSVHC*. Perhaps more importantly, his good character was a primary support for his role a champion for civil rights.⁴⁰²

Along with the observation of character forming and demonstrating events throughout Mays's life, his four insights on segregation found in his autobiography provide an important clarification into his personal qualities and character. They are also representative of his character traits, and particularly of his dedication to a morality-based view of American society that simply could not accommodate racism and segregation.

His first insight is simply summed up as *one must accept compulsory segregation or pay a penalty, but one does not have to accept voluntary segregation*. Through self-militancy, Mays determined what was compulsory and what was not compulsory. In 1916, segregation was deeply entrenched in Southern life and one had to accept conditions they could not change. Conversely, one did not have to accept segregated conditions that were not necessary for life-sustaining activities. His insights to voluntary segregation empowered him to reject a self-imposed inferior status.

His second insight revealed the power of the media through cinematic portrayals such as *The Birth of a Nation*. The viewer bestowed power to cinematic portrayals once they either identified with the message or believed the message without verifying the facts. This insight was significant because images could evoke violent words and threats from the audience. Mays presciently recognized the power of the media to influence the masses.

The third insight was Mays's vehement opposition to perpetuating a segregated system under his own roof when he denounced the special arrangements for White people at a luncheon in his home. Mays understood the importance of not being complicit in the preservation of segregation, and acted on that understanding.

⁴⁰² Stevens et al., "Life and Work of Trevor Arnett." Mays's definition of integrity encompasses the *CSVHC*'s six virtues and some of the character strengths.

Finally, in his fourth insight, Mays rejected the concept of a self-appointed subordinate maintaining segregation, as occurred in many Christian Churches, homogeneous economic organizations, social clubs, and unions, and political parties.

The four insights were not only indicative of Mays's resolve to end legally sanctioned segregation they provide a logical methodology he used to encourage his protégés. The methodology showed that a person can disagree with a condition and remain civil in their relations with those who agree with the condition. By boldly reminding his family, friends, colleagues, and employers that he would not yield to the injustice of legally sanctioned segregation Mays gave his protégés and others a model to emulate. The insights also identified the character strengths and virtues Mays developed during his encounters with the social setting/events of his day (see Appendix B).

Epilogue

Mays's accomplishments as a theologian, human and civil rights leader, and an educator earned him a second opportunity to receive a nomination to be a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. On November 8, 2001, the United States Senate unanimously passed Senate Resolution (S. Res.) 23. Senators Max Cleland (D-GA); Zell Miller (D-GA); Barbara A. Mikulski (D-MD); Fritz Hollings (D-SC); and Dick Durbin (D-IL) submitted S. Res. 23 on February 14, 2001.⁴⁰³ Their action was in response to House Resolution (H. Res.) 49 submitted and resolved on the same day, February 14, 2001. Representatives John Lewis (D-GA); Sanford D. Bishop Jr. (D-GA); Johnny Isakson (D-GA); and Cynthia A. McKinney (D-GA) were the authors of H. Res. 49.

⁴⁰³ 107th U.S. Congress, "Senate Resolution. Presidential Medal of Freedom Posthumously to Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays, SR 23"; 107th U.S. Congress, "House Resolution. Presidential Medal of Freedom Posthumously to Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays, HR 49" This was 103 years after the humiliation in the South Carolina Phoenix Riot.

Both the House and Senate resolutions nominated Mays to receive a posthumous award of the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President George W. Bush.

The Senate completed their vote on S. Res. 23. Republican Senators Strom Thurmond (R-SC), and Jesse Helms, (R-NC) (two of the Southern Democrats who accepted President Nixon's invitation to join the Republican Party) joined with other senators voting to give unanimous consent to the resolution and its preamble. The preamble read:⁴⁰⁴

Expressing the sense of the Senate that the President should award the Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously to Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays in honor of his distinguished career as an educator, civil and human rights leader, and public theologian⁴⁰⁵

The United States Senate chose to give Mays a second chance at this honor after he was denied by the Reagan administration in 1984, two days before his death. It appeared that finally Mays would receive an honor acknowledging his selfless pursuit of equal opportunity for oppressed people.⁴⁰⁶ The second resolution was denied by President George W. Bush.

Recommendations for Further Research

After identifying Mays's character using the *CSVHC* classification system I discovered that there are many issues that remain unanswered. To resolve this I am

⁴⁰⁴ George E. Curry, ed. *The Affirmative Action Debate*, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co. Inc., 1996).

⁴⁰⁵ 107th U.S. Congress, "Senate Resolution. Presidential Medal of Freedom Posthumously to Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays, SR 23."; 107th U.S. Congress, "House Resolution. Presidential Medal of Freedom Posthumously to Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays, HR 49."

⁴⁰⁶ Gregg Jones, "Community Leaders Mourning Dr. Mays, 'Intellectual Giant'," *Atlanta Journal*, March 28, 1984. Gregg Jones reported that Mays, "was a pioneer in civil rights and a champion of the cause of equal rights for all people."

proposing additional research questions for further research. The recommendations are listed based on curiosity versus importance. Further research will help people to better understand the patterns in Mays's character development and interaction with decision makers in order to create a model for future generations of egalitarians to emulate, and will also expand the use of the *CSVHC* as a tool for historical inquiry.⁴⁰⁷ Further research into the historical context of Mays's struggle and into the employment of the *CSVHC* in a historical context would be useful. Some additional questions for future research are:

1. Mays's four insights into resistance to segregation provide a working model for those who are attempting to gain freedom from oppression. Are these insights specific to the American experience, or do they have broader applicability around the world?
2. What was Sadie Mays's role in her husband's equality work?
3. What are the implications of the similarities between Mays's and Nixon's definition of *Black Power*? Should the empowerment of oppressed minorities be limited to economic venues, to political freedom, to social relationships, or a combination of all three? Is there any order of precedence in the venue where freedom should be sought?
4. How did Mays impact later generations of civil rights advocates? Even though he is not a well-known person today, does the profound influence that he had on his direct protégés reach into later generations of civil rights leadership that have grown up since his death?

⁴⁰⁷ William H. McDowell, *Historical Research: A Guide* (London: Longman, 2002).

5. Why did Mays and Reagan, in the same political party, oppose each other's position with regard to Martin Luther King Jr., particularly if Mays and Reagan shared virtues that indicated that each was a man of good character?
6. What were the dynamics surrounding the denials of the Presidential Medal of Freedom? Reagan and the George W. Bush denied Mays the medal – what was their motivation?
7. Why was the nomination for the Presidential Medal of Freedom not submitted to the Carter and Clinton Administrations? Why did Mays supporters wait until 1983 to make the first nomination?
8. What was the effect of the Christian Right's rallying of support from voters in Alabama in 2004 to retain segregationist language in the state constitution? Is the *CSVHC* an appropriate tool for looking at groups such as the Christian Right who claim good character but act oppressively?
9. To what extent is the U.S. encountering a reemergence of segregated "Jim Crow" public schools, and how would Mays have countered this trend?
10. How Mays would have interpreted the legislative elimination of affirmative action in California (1996), Washington (1998), and Michigan, (2006); and would this have caused him to revise his four insights?
11. How does the Supreme Court ruling to limit a school district's ability to manage the racial makeup of the student body (i.e., busing) fit into Mays's vision for cooperative race relations in the U.S.?

Conclusion

Peterson and Seligman defined character as consisting of character strengths and virtues displayed or developed during a situational theme. As previously mentioned, I used the concept of social setting/events in lieu of situational theme for this study. Under Peterson and Seligman's objective approach to character, a person was of good character if they reported at least one of the character strengths associated with each of the six virtues of wisdom and knowledge, transcendence, courage, justice, humanity, and temperance. This study showed through historical analysis that Mays displayed or developed 21 of the 24 character strengths consistent with all the six virtues. By adapting the Peterson and Seligman model to *if/then* statements, the *CSVHC* points to Mays as a man of good character and as a role model whose struggle for equal opportunity continues to encourage more Americans to shed the cloak of inferiority by making equal opportunity a right for all citizens.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Glossary⁴⁰⁸

affirmative action	Action to correct past discrimination in employment, education, and housing.
appreciation of beauty and excellence	Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience.
Bravery	Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.
ceaseless agitation	The process of advocating your goals/demands consistently until you achieve your goal/demand.
Character	The positive behavior developed during social setting/events to allow character strengths to develop/emerge.
character strength	The psychological ingredients that define the virtues (processes or mechanisms).
Citizenship	Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.
COINTELPRO	A secret FBI program designed to monitor and "neutralize" domestic groups deemed by the FBI to be a danger to national security.
Courage	The state or quality of mind or spirit that enables one to face danger, fear, or vicissitudes with self-possession and resolution.
Creativity	Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.
Curiosity	Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.
Desegregation	To open schools, workplaces, and housing to members of all races or ethnic groups.

⁴⁰⁸ Dictionary.com; Peterson and Seligman, *CSVHC*. Definitions are from the *CSVHC* or the dictionary or research and personal experience.

Disenfranchised	Denial of the right to citizenship or right to vote.
Fairness	Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.
first emancipation	African captives enslaved and sent to South and North America.
forgiveness and mercy	Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.
Gratitude	Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.
Hope	Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.
Humanity	The quality of being humane or benevolent.
humility/modesty	Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.
Humor	Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes.
Integration	The free election of people from different racial and ethnic groups into unrestricted equal association.
Integrity	Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions.
Jim Crow	The era of legally sanctioned segregation, separate but equal, 1896-1964.
Justice	Conformity to moral rightness in action or attitude; righteousness.
Kindness	Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.
Knowledge	Familiarity, awareness, or understanding gained through experience or study.
Leadership	Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the same time maintain good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.

legally sanctioned segregation	An attempt to provide separate but equal accommodations to Whites, Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asians. NOTE: Violations were crimes against society.
Love	Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.
love of learning	Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the tendency to add systematically to what one knows.
Lynch	Any physical act that causes bodily harm, from maiming to death, generally against a person of another racial group or different ethnic background.
Millennials	The children of the Baby Boomer generation and their children.
open mindedness	Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.
Persistence	Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; “getting it out the door”; taking pleasure in completing tasks.
Perspective	Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people.
Prudence	Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.
second emancipation	Lincoln's 1863 proclamation which freed slaves living in the rebellion states.
Segregation	Racial disparity which allowed Negro Americans to be treated as inferiors and less than full citizens.
self-regulation	Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.
social intelligence	Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.
social settings/events	Interaction with individuals, groups, institutions, and society-at-large.

Spirituality	Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.
Temperance	Moderation and self-restraint of behavior.
third emancipation	The end of legally sanctioned segregation.
Transcendence	The act of rising above internal or external circumstances and connecting to a larger universe that provides meaning.
Virtues	Core characteristics valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence.
Vitality	Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activate.
Wisdom	Understanding of what is true , right, or lasting; insight.

APPENDIX B: Events in the Life of Benjamin E. Mays⁴⁰⁹

Virtues and Character Strengths Displayed	Year	Age	Event	Education	Employment
<p>CSVHC foundation established by father's actions. Hezekiah Mays's actions on November 8, 1898 were the virtues of temperance, justice, and humanity. His restraint and compliance to the mobs' demands were either the manifestation of the character strengths of self-control, prudence. Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted, citizenship, and social intelligence.</p>	1894	Birth	Born on August 1 st in Greenwood County, South Carolina	Father and siblings could read	Father and mother were ex-slaves and sharecroppers
	1895	1	South Carolina's Constitution disfranchised Negro American Men		
	1898	4	<p>Lynching of Frazer Butler and his daughter in Florence http://www.usps.com/postalhistory/pdf/AfricanAmericanWorkers19thc.pdf Phoenix Riot</p> <p>Lynching of 8 Negro Americans</p>	Young Mays learns to read the Bible	<p>Butler was the federally appointed postmaster</p> <p>Young Mays worked the farm with his family</p>
<p>Wisdom and knowledge (Love of learning) Courage (Persistence, integrity, vitality) Humanity (kindness, love) Justice (citizenship, fairness, leadership)</p>	1900	6	Mays starts school at the Brickhouse School	Entered first grade at age 6 "Bennie is smart"	Worked the farm with family.
	1909	15	<p>Mays transferred to the Baptist Association School in McCormick South Carolina</p> <p>Decided to attend South Carolina State College's high school</p>	Attended for two years	<p>Declined offer to return for third year as a student teacher. Returned to work the farm with family. Cleaned outhouses and worked the summer of 1915 as a Pullman Porter. He was also a student teacher. At the beginning of his third year, he rebelled against his father's demands to return home to help</p>

⁴⁰⁹ Mays, *Born to Rebel*.

Virtues and Character Strengths Displayed	Year	Age	Event	Education	Employment
Temperance (prudence, self-control) Transcendence (hope, spirituality, gratitude) Justice (fairness, leadership) Courage (bravery)	1911	17	department at age 17	First access to uninterrupted education in eleven years. However, he returned to the farm for his first two years.	on the farm.
	1916	21-22	Graduated high school at age 21. Entered Virginia Union after being rejected for Holderness School in New Hampshire. Applied for admissions to Bates College in Lewiston, Maine.	Entered his freshman year of college in Richmond, Virginia.	Worked as a Pullman Porter in the summer and as a student teacher, dining room assistant, etc., to pay for college. Continued to work as a Pullman Porter in the summer and he worked in the dining hall, library, as a janitor, washed dishes in a local restaurant, and painted floats for one summer. He was on scholarship for his junior and senior years.
	1917	22-23	Won declamation contest. Presented his oratorical titled "Our Third Emancipation."	Entered Bates College in September as a provisional student.	
	1920	26	Graduated from Bates with honors. Married Ellen Harvin in Newport News, Virginia.	Rejected for Newton Theological Seminary. Applied for admissions to the University of Chicago's Graduate	Lost his position as a Pullman Porter. Worked as a dishwasher for meals.
	1921	27			

Virtues and Character Strengths Displayed	Year	Age	Event	Education	Employment
				School. Took a break from graduate school after three quarters to accept teaching position.	
	1921 to 1924	27-30	Accepted offer from John Hope to teach Mathematics and Psychology at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. Mrs. Ellen Mays died in 1923.	First experience as a full time professor and acting dean.	Elected to the pastorate of Shiloh Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia.
	1925	31	Graduated from University of Chicago with his Master of Arts degree.	Completed graduate school twenty-five years after entering the Brickhouse School.	Received offer from President Wilkinson at State College to teach English.
	1925 to 1926	31-32	Met and married Sadie Gray.	Started work on his doctoral degree.	Received and accepted offer to lead the Tampa Urban League Office in Tampa, Florida.
	1926 to 1928	32-34	Executive Secretary of the Tampa Urban League.	Took proactive actions to stem the perpetual acceptance of legally sanctioned segregation.	De facto leader of the Tampa, Florida Negro American Community.
	1928 to 1930	34-36	Student Secretary of the National Y.M.C.A. serving Tennessee,		Encouraged students to achieve the unattainable goals and to aim high.

Virtues and Character Strengths Displayed	Year	Age	Event	Education	Employment
			Georgia, South Carolina, Florida, and Alabama.		
	1930 to 1933	36-39	Study on 691 Negro Churches in twelve cities, and 185 Negro Churches in four areas.	Returned to University of Chicago in 1931 to complete doctoral work.	Executive Director of the Institute of Social and Religious Research's study about the Negro Church.
	1933 to 1935	39-41	Received his Ph.D.	Completed the Ph.D.	Received an offer to become the Dean of the School of Religion at Howard University in Washington, the District of Columbia as well as an offer to work at Fisk in Tennessee.
(open mindedness, gratitude, humility/modesty, social intelligence, persistence, citizenship, and perspective)	1935 to 1940	41-47	School of Religion received accreditation from the American Association of Theological Schools. World Conference of the Y.M.C.A. in 1936-1937.	Improved enrollment, library, and faculty. During a trip to Mysore, India met people of different races and religions.	Dean of the School of Religion.
Wisdom and Knowledge (Perspective, open mindedness) Humanity (social intelligence)	1940 to 1967	46-73	President of Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. Enlisted Margaret Mitchell to support scholarships for Morehouse Men desiring to attend medical or dental school at Meharry or Howard.	Responsible for the quality of academic instruction and the financial survivability to the college.	Mentored Morehouse Men for more than twenty-seven years.
Temperance (forgiveness and mercy, humility)	1967 to 1980	73-86	Continued to work in the Civil Rights Movement. Eulogized Martin Luther King Jr. and Whitney M. Young.		President of the Atlanta Board of Education, January 1970.
	1983	89	Reagan denied award of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.		
	1984	89	Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays's lifeless body was discovered in Hughes Spalding Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia, on March 28th.		

APPENDIX C: Mays's Character Strengths and Virtues

Character Virtue → Character Strength	Wisdom and Knowledge	Courage	Humanity	Justice	Temperance	Transcendence	Literature Reference	Social setting/event
Creativity	X						Autobiography	Segregated research
Curiosity	X							Not applicable
Judgment & Open-Mindedness	X						Thesis	Discrimination
Love of Learning	X						Autobiography	Segregated education
Perspective	X						Autobiography	Segregated education
Honesty (Integrity)		X					Autobiography	Segregated employment
Bravery		X					Autobiography	Denial of voting rights
Perseverance (Persistence)		X					Autobiography	Segregated education
Zest (Vitality)		X					Autobiography	Segregated education
Capacity to Love and Be Loved			X				Autobiography	Segregated education
Kindness			X				Thesis	Discrimination
Social Intelligence			X				Autobiography	Denial of voting rights
Citizenship				X			Autobiography	Segregated living conditions.
Fairness				X			Autobiography	Segregated education
Leadership				X			Autobiography	Segregated education
Forgiveness & Mercy					X		Dissertation	Unfair and unequal treatment
Modesty & Humility					X		Autobiography	Racism portrayed via the cinema
Prudence							Autobiography	Segregated worship (I am reluctant to classify the strength of prudence)
Self-Regulation (Self-control)					X		Autobiography	Denial of voting rights
Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence						X	Autobiography	Segregated education
Gratitude						X	Autobiography	Segregated employment
Hope						X	Autobiography	Segregated education
Humor								Not observed
Religiousness & Spirituality						X	Autobiography	Denial of voting rights

APPENDIX D: Influences on Mays's Character

Influences	Family	Historical Situation/position	Legal Environment	Religion	Protégés	Comments
Hezekiah Mays	X	Phoenix Riot/father	Segregation	X	B.E. Mays	Expressed belief that “God would give a person the words to speak”
Susie Mays	X	Farmer/sister	Segregation	X	B.E. Mays	America’s first head start teacher
Louvenia Carter Mays	X	Mother	Segregation	X	B.E. Mays	Strong encouragement
Ellen Waller		Teacher	Segregation	X	B.E. Mays	First love
Pastor James F. Marshall		Pastor	Segregation	X	B.E. Mays	Spiritual role model
Miss Julia Mae Williams		Professor	Segregation		B.E. Mays	Education support
Professor Nelson C. Nix		Professor	Segregation		B.E. Mays	Education support
Professor “Big Time” Jones		Professor	Segregation		B.E. Mays	Financial and Education support
Professor Bollie Levister		Professor	Segregation		B.E. Mays	Financial and Education support
Reverend Lorin Webster		Rejected application because of race	Discrimination	X	Not applicable	Motivated Mays to pursue his dream.
Professor F. Marcellus Staley		Professor	Segregation		B.E. Mays	Education support
Roland A. Wingfield and Charles Hadley		Professors	Segregation		B.E. Mays	Education support
Professor Grosvenor May Robinson, Mrs. Fred Pomeroy, and Professor Fred Pomeroy		Professors	Integration		B.E. Mays	Education support
Professor A. Craig Baird		Professor	Integration		B.E. Mays	Education support
Paul Tilden		Fellow Student	Integration		Not applicable	Motivated Mays to get help for Greek studies
Professor Herbert Howard Purinton		Professor	Integration		B.E. Mays	Education support
Professor Halbert Haine Britan		Professor	Integration		B.E. Mays	Education support
Ellen Harvin	X	Wife	Segregation	X	Not applicable	Love and financial support

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