THE SELF-DEFINED AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY OF JIM CROW MEMPHIS

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This essay explores the way in which, from roughly 1920 to 1950, African Americans in Memphis, Tennessee, claimed ownership of a vibrant community that did not look outside of itself for definition. Overcoming the injustices of segregation and discrimination, black Memphians created a life where they could, simply, have fun. Historian Earl Lewis writes that southern blacks transformed segregation into "congregation." For Lewis, congregation "symbolized an act of free will, whereas segregation represented the imposition of another's will. . . ."[1] Robin Kelley writes, "In the shadow of 'Whites Only' signs and police officers aggressively monitoring the color line, [African Americans] found pleasure and fellowship, fun and games, in these segregated spaces."[2] This discussion focuses its attention on the congregations of black Memphians around the stores, businesses, political activities, and baseball games of Beale Street, which was the commercial, political, and entertainment center for black Memphians during the time of Jim Crow. In addition to recognizing the importance of the fact that African Americans did in fact laugh, sing, dance, and enjoy baseball games, an understanding of such everyday activities provides insight into how African Americans viewed their communities. In the minds of African Americans in Memphis, they went to Beale Street, not because they might not be allowed to go elsewhere, but simply because they really enjoyed it. Thus, they understood their community in a way that did not look to white Memphis for definition.

Some historians have seen a weakness in a black community that did not constantly fight (at least with overt signs of a "movement") against the oppression experienced under segregation. In this way of thinking, there is a feeling that blacks, by their supposed refusal to challenge the injustices of segregation and discrimination, failed themselves. Acknowledgement of the accomplishments of African Americans is tempered by the opinion that they could or should have done more to initiate what is understood as the Civil Rights Movement earlier. In *Blacks in Tennessee, 1791–1970*, published in 1981, Lester Lamon writes that "accommodation, whether it was conscious

or merely apathetic, molded white attitudes, black expectations, and race relations and decisively influenced the future course of social development in Tennessee." Such a "willingness to accept segregation" "reinforced a practice of discrimination that gave ground ever so slowly."[3] Gayraud Wilmore, in *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (1972), also sees a black community laden with apathy. He writes that most black churches, between the world wars, were "too other-worldly, apathetic, or involved in the business of 'being church'" to fight against "poverty and oppression." Writing with "a note of disappointment and nostalgia," Wilmore quotes historian Liston Pope in concluding that "in relations with the white community (the Negro church) has been for the most part a defensive and accommodating institution."[4]

While some black leaders in Memphis fought for the elevation of African Americans to complete social equality, others confined their efforts to pressuring white office holders for improvements in such areas as sanitation, recreational outlets, or schools without challenging the basic injustices of segregation. Clergymen such as T. O. Fuller and Sutton E. Griggs showed such "accommodationist" tendencies while businessmen like George W. Lee espoused a more militant leadership. It seems that historians have introduced the idea of an apathetic black community when, at least in this author's research, militants like George W. Lee, who denounced the "accommodationists" in the harshest of terms, never accused them of not caring. Rather, black political leaders simply disagreed over the best way to secure a better life for black Memphians.

More recently, scholars have begun to write of a more politically active pre-Civil Rights Movement black community, with "politics" understood as any arena in which society's rules are debated or contested. Some, such as Kenneth Goings and Gerald Smith, have documented the instances when African Americans struck back physically. They note that African Americans in Memphis during the 1910s "were not acting as 'negroes' should have been acting. They talked back. They fought back. They shot back. These were not the submissive and deferential darkies perpetuated by Old South mythology." Goings and Smith conclude that each of the "several major physical attacks against the African American community in Memphis before the 1920s" was "an overt attempt to control an African American community that seemed not to know its 'place.'"[5]

In *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*, Robin Kelley argues that the struggles of African Americans outside of organizations such as the Urban League and the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) must be examined to "recover and explore aspects of black working-class life and politics that have been relegated to the margins."[6] Kelley writes of the subtler ways in which African Americans

resisted the dominant authority of whites and urges a rethinking of what the term "political" means. For Kelley, political struggle in Memphis could even be found in what others might see as only mischief. Kelley quotes Gloria Wade-Gayles's description of throwing popcorn from the "Negroes Only" balcony onto the unsuspecting heads of "white people who sat beneath us in cushioned chairs, secure, they thought, in their power." Gayles wrote, "In the dark, we vented our rage. But in the bright of day and out in the open, we were often well-behaved and cooperative."[7] Kelley suggests that the darkness of the theater from which Gayles voiced her anger is symbolic of the unknown, hidden lives of black Americans; only by investigating the "private world hidden beyond public gaze" can one attain a more complete understanding of African Americans' resistance to segregation.

Entering into the active discussion about the nature of the black community in the Jim Crow South, this essay suggests that a bridge exists between the conflicting interpretations of the black community. The question of accommodation/resistance in the African American community during the time of Jim Crow should not be limited to an either/or viewpoint. Those who write of an African American community that did not constantly labor over the injustices of Jim Crow are correct. However, the interpretation that blacks in Memphis gave to their daily lives was one of defiance. Black Memphians, although keenly aware of the injustice of segregation, did not continually dwell on it. Rather, they were able to build, in the words of Benjamin Hooks, "a tremendous life within this closed circle."[8] In claiming this "tremendous life" as their own, blacks resisted the paternalistic racism of whites.

Rather than address the whole of the African American community in Memphis, I have chosen to focus my attention on Beale Street. Although black Memphians claimed Beale as their own, it certainly cannot be understood in isolation of Memphis's segregation and discrimination. The many ways in which white Memphians attempted to exert control over African Americans will provide background for understanding the importance of black Memphians' refusal to accept white definitions of their lives. Beale Street will be outlined as a focal point of black businesses, politics, and places of entertainment. In doing so, the reader will get a taste for life on the blues-rich Beale Street and will see how blacks claimed Beale Street as their own. Throughout this essay, references to "Beale Street" will encompass both the traditional Beale Street and the Memphis Red Sox, a Negro league baseball team that played in Memphis from 1919 to 1959. Although the stadium where the Red Sox played was actually located roughly a mile from "Beale Street," the two were intricately linked.

The Memphis Red Sox will be examined as a case study of Beale Street. The Red Sox have never been included as a real part of Beale Street, but the

many connections between the two allowed the *Chicago Defender* in 1924 to refer to Red Sox fans as "Beale St. folks."[9] In addition to a wide variety of stores, restaurants, and professional business—the many things that make up any colorful community—Beale Street was lined with theaters that provided entertainment such as talent shows, musical bands, and movies. Baseball games served as the same kind of "show" within the "theater" of Martin's Stadium as did the various performances in theaters such as the Palace. We will thus dive more deeply into the colorful life of Beale Street by looking closely at the atmosphere of a baseball game. In concluding comments, the idea of the church as a place where African Americans have enjoyed "complete independence, autonomy, and control" will be questioned so that the importance of black Memphians' claim of ownership in their community is sharpened.[10]

In Memphis, African Americans contested the paternalistic attitude of white segregationists—one that implied "we're in control; we'll let you enjoy Beale Street"—and simply defined Beale Street as their own. This struggle with definitions was part of a larger struggle for autonomy. By claiming such ownership of a self-defined vibrant life, black Memphians exerted control over their community.

"This is White Man's Country"

The importance of black Memphians' claim of ownership in Beale Street is seen most clearly when one understands the ways in which blacks were routinely impacted by the racist attitudes and practices of Jim Crow Memphis. White Memphis treated its African American citizens as second-class members of society—from "Colored" drinking fountains to public lynching, white Memphians attempted to keep African Americans in their "place." From the white perspective, the inferior nature of this "place" helped keep Memphis "white man's country."[11]

The name that dominates Memphis throughout the first half of the twentieth century is Crump. Ed Crump, E. H. Crump, Mister Crump, Boss Crump dominated the Memphis polls from 1909 until his death in 1954 so that the *Washington Post* saw in 1926 Memphis an alarming sign:

> Memphis, Tennessee should be a warning to the whole country. The city is a perfect example of the ease with which Americans with a philosophy of efficiency and materialism can succumb to fascism and like it. The majority of the citizens of Memphis lick the boots of their notorious tyrant, Mr. E. H. Crump, not because they have to. They lick his boots because it pays.[12]

By 1905 a desire for a more efficient, centralized local government had

gained momentum in Memphis. Promoting himself as a candidate of "reform" in that he aimed to run the city government in a more business-like manner, Crump won the race for mayor in 1909. He claimed that his "chief reason for making this race is my profound interest in the success of the commission form of government" that was to become effective on 1 January 1910.[13] Such commission government divided the city's administration into six departments: public affairs and health; police; streets; bridges and sewers; accounts and finances; and public utilities, grounds, and buildings. The mayor would oversee the commissioners and would be responsible for the department of public health.[14] The commission form of government, which governed Memphis until 1937, directly elected all city officials except the city tax assessor and city tax receiver, and thus helped remove the possibility of black officeholders. [15]

While Crump promised to rid the city of vice, protection money of up to eighty thousand dollars a year was paid by the those in the "underworld" of gambling, prostitution, and illegal alcohol.[16] Crump used this money to purchase the poll taxes of blacks and instruct them how to vote. Although African Americans in Memphis were awarded the vote unlike African Americans in much of the rest of the South, this prospect offered little hope for change since blacks could only vote for Democratic candidates in a single party city.[17]

Crump manipulated the black vote to maintain his power, which he in turn used to keep African Americans second-class citizens. By providing welfare, health care, public housing, schools, playgrounds, and personal favors, he enjoyed a large share of the legitimate black vote as well as those fraudulent votes produced by his machine.[18] However, it was paternalism, not equality, which Crump offered. Although Crump helped bring about improvements in the everyday lives of black Memphians, he was still a strict segregationist. Crump once called the editor of the black *Memphis World* and said:

> You have a bunch of niggers teaching social equality, stirring up social hatred. I am not going to stand for it. I've dealt with niggers all my life and I know how to treat them. That darn paper is using communistic propaganda—we are not going to put up with Pittsburgh stuff here. This is Memphis. We will deal with them in no uncertain terms and it won't be in the dark. . . . You be sure to tell them I said so. We are not going to tolerate a bunch of niggers spreading racial hatred and running things their way. Tell them Mr. Crump said so. You understand me?[19]

The question of providing a public park for blacks in Memphis speaks of the absurdity to which a paternalistic vision of segregation could reach. With as much as a fourth of the total votes, black Memphians secured the promise for a black public park during the mayoral campaigns of 1909 and 1911.[20] The location of the park, however, produced a debate between

Crump and Jacob Galloway, a member of the city commission. Galloway wanted to place the park on Mud Island, situated in the middle of the Mississippi River. Although he acknowledged that the island occasionally experienced flooding in the spring, he considered this a positive because the flood waters left "a rich alluvial deposit . . . which accounts for the rich luxuriant growth that covers the island. . . . The negro ought to be in his glory among all that tropical growth."[21] Crump rejected this plan and eventually secured land for the future Douglas Park several miles outside of the eastern city limits.

In dedicating the park, Judge J. M. Greer said to the black audience, "Having been born a slave holder, I knew the Negro intimately throughout the whole of my childhood." He then continued to speak of his support of the advancement of black Memphians, but noted that social advancement must not lead to "social equality in this white man's country."[22] In Greer's mind, black Memphians were "advancing" because they could now enjoy a park that whites had provided and he had dedicated. The city of Memphis had kindly given its black citizens Douglas Park. Black Memphians could celebrate the opening of Douglas Park, but the city commission warned them that the park would close if blacks rode the city's streetcar system to the park.[23] The irony of the situation is striking. The Crump administration patted itself on the back for its altruistic creation of Douglas Park. At the same time, it held segregation in such high regard that the park was placed outside of the city's limits, and blacks were not even allowed to ride the city's streetcar system out to the park.

White Memphis was so bent on maintaining segregation that the musical *Annie Get Your Gun* was banned in 1947 by Censor Board Chairman Lloyd T. Binford, who took issue with a black man playing the part of a railroad conductor and with blacks and whites dancing together. "Of course, it can't show here," noted Binford to the *Press-Scimitar*. "It's social equality in action."[24] Binford also banned appearances of black celebrities such as Louis Armstrong in Beale Street theaters, and in 1936 forbade the showing of the Joe Louis–Max Schmeling heavyweight championship fight, which Louis was expected to win—all in order to strengthen the idea of white dominance. "After all," said Commissioner of Public Safety Joe Boyle, "this is white man's country."[25]

The passions of white racists were often aroused most fiercely regarding the question of the "purity" of the races, which was intertwined with a desire to "protect" white women. Interracial marriages were prohibited by Tennessee law throughout the years following the Civil War, but the antimiscegenation law forbidding "extramarital liaisons" was usually only applied to black men involved with white women.[26] In response to the successful appeal of the death sentence for one of the Scottsboro boys, the

white *Commercial Appeal* illustrated the sincerity with which many white southerners believed in the preservation of "racial purity":

> The preservation of racial purity is a much more vital need than the preservation of racial equality. In the Scottsboro cases the two most important issues have been and still are the right of every individual to protection against unlawful violence and the preservation of the natural instinct for racial purity. This instinct is unaffected by delinquencies among individuals of the race. The fundamental demand is that the principal of racial inviolability be preserved regardless of any and all circumstances.[27]

For black Memphians, the realities of living in a society that treated them as inferiors forced a recognition of the terrible violence that could spring forth from some whites and a realization of the fact that the law often cast a blind eye towards white perpetrators. For example, in 1917 Ell Persons was accused of the rape and axe slaying of a sixteen-year-old white girl. Although a white woman had been seen coming from the scene of the crime, Persons became the sole focus of Memphis authorities. A French scientist had "determined" that photography could be used to determine the last image seen by such a victim, and Memphis authorities concluded that a photograph of the girl's pupils revealed Persons as the last such image. The NAACP national office sent an investigator on a ten-day study of the case, and he could find no evidence of Persons's guilt. Nevertheless, days before his trial Persons was seized by a white mob, and a 22 May article in the *Commercial Appeal* functioned as an advertisement, telling Memphians the approximate time and place of the impending lynching. Women dressed up for the occasion, vendors sold refreshments, and parents asked schoolteachers to excuse their children as the estimated crowd of five thousand watched as Persons was burned alive. After the lynching about five miles from the city's limits, Persons's mutilated body was cast among a crowd of blacks on Beale Street. Except for one editorial, there was little public condemnation of the lynching from white Memphians.[28]

Vasco Smith remembers the day when his father instructed his two sons to "stop playing with the white girls and the white boys." Smith showed his sons the front page of the black *Chicago Defender*, which showed a photograph of a black man whose burning body was hanging from a rope. His father warned Smith that this man was lynched "because he looked at a white woman." Smith's father said, "You're getting to the stage where you're no longer children. After a while, you're gonna be big boys, and you just as well get used to the idea right now that what you're doing right now will get you killed later on."[29]

Black Memphians, aware that they could not depend on the law for protection, learned to use great caution when dealing with white people.

Reverend Charles Patterson recalls that African Americans even learned to read the body language of whites. This was necessary for black Memphians because "we felt that it was essential to our survival to understand the behavior, to know whether the message that came over verbally was the real message intended." Patterson recalled that black Memphians had to be very careful, often even acquiescent, in interaction with whites or "you might get your head busted by a white policeman or white person and the law wouldn't do anything about it."[30] This threat of violence was perhaps the unstated reason explaining why the authors of *The Negro's Church,* published in 1933, found that an African American "must be an epitome of politeness; must smile when ordinarily he would frown; must pretend that it is all right when the respect that is habitually given others is deliberately denied him."[31]

Whites in Memphis used the systematic injustices of segregation to maintain their dominant position relative to African Americans. In the view of white paternalists, African Americans could "advance" without crossing the line toward social equality because such advancement, as understood in Douglas Park, was never out of the scope of white authority. From Judge Greer's dedication of Douglas Park to the lynching of Ell Persons, whites reminded blacks that they lived in "white man's country." However, African Americans in Memphis struggled in the midst of racial hostility to exert control over their community by understanding Beale Street as their own.

"That was *Our* Street"

From the end of the nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century, Beale Street was the commercial, political, and entertainment center for black Memphians. It was the locus around which the black community revolved, but it was not, however, the whole of the black community. It must be remembered that African Americans *came* to Beale Street. They were not always there. In *Beale Street: Where the Blues Began,* published in 1934, George W. Lee wrote, "Saturday night belongs to the cooks, maids, houseboys and factory hands. . . ."[32] With the majority of African Americans employed as service workers or laborers, black Memphians routinely worked in environments that were understood by many whites as the proper "place" for African Americans.[33] This study of Beale Street, then, is not meant to stand in for the larger black community of Memphis. By remembering that black Memphians lived in a city that many whites considered "white man's country," the claim of ownership that African Americans made in Beale Street becomes even more significant.

In a very real sense, Beale Street became the focal point for black Memphians because of segregation. Dry good stores, barbershops, professional businesses, drug stores, theaters, saloons, cafes, and a whole host

of the things that made up everyday life for black Memphians got their start and came to flourish on Beale because other areas of the city offered limited access or were closed to African Americans. In fact, the increased opportunities that integration brought to black Memphians at least partly caused Beale to fall from its glory in the 1950s and 1960s. However, when Beale Street was in its prime, when it saw "carefree humans enjoying the magic of the night and great throngs move leisurely down the street,"[34] the voice of Inez Wright can be heard—"We were proud of Beale Street. That was *our* street."[35] African American Memphians claimed ownership in Beale Street in a way that overcame the white paternalistic view of the street. The center for black commerce, political activity, and entertainment, Beale Street served as a kind of community within the larger black society of Memphis. In understanding Beale Street this way, it will be clear that, by grasping it as their own, black Memphians struggled for autonomy within the confines of segregation and discrimination.

With the majority of African Americans in service industries or manual labor jobs, black Memphians placed great importance on the businesses that they did control. The *1943 Negro Year Book and Directory*, published by the Memphis Negro Chamber of Commerce with the cooperation of the *Memphis World*, emphasized the importance of black business in its stated purposes:[36]

> TO advertise the Negroes in business and what they sell.
>
> TO acquaint the public with the large number among us who have a specific kind of service to offer.
>
> TO give business a peep into the vast and important Negro market.
>
> TO command appreciation by showing some of the things Negroes have done and are doing under great difficulty.
>
> TO paint a real picture of our work and achievements with a view to inspiring our younger people.
>
> TO show the many and increasing number of opportunities that are being given us, by our city, as pertains to our health, our education, and our civic welfare.

The Yearbook "command[s] appreciation" for the accomplishments of black Memphians, and the above statements of purpose show that, in the editors' opinion, many of the "things Negroes have done and are doing" involved the world of business.

The importance that African Americans placed on their businesses can perhaps be seen most clearly in the community's reaction to failure. The fall of the Fraternal and Solvent Bank and Trust Company in 1928 left many black Memphians disappointed in their leaders, while others attempted to

regroup the black community. Merah S. Stuart, an officer in the Universal Life Insurance Company, feared "drooping spirits and waning confidence of our people." Nevertheless, he found comfort in his conviction that black Memphians had proven, unlike other black communities in the South, their willingness to support black business and would continue to do so in the future.[37] In the black *Memphis Triangle*, George Lee offered a quick reminder to blacks that at least twenty-six white banks had failed in Memphis over the past twenty years, only to build "stronger and more powerful institutions." Arguing that the bank failure should not be seen as a defining statement on the African American race, Lee suggested that a broader picture must be understood. Lee encouraged black Memphians to understand that "disaster is as much a part of life as success. . . . It's God's plan for teaching us that we are but mortals living in an atmosphere of imperfection."[38]

There were varied reactions in the black community to the bank failure of the late 1920s. However, the nature of these reactions, whether critical or optimistic, is really not very important in this discussion. The interesting thing is that the bank failure did in fact create such an emotional response in the black community—grasping at ideas outside the realm of financial difficulty—thus illustrating the importance that black Memphians placed on their businesses.

The business cycles of Beale Street were influenced by the larger economic swings of the country and, thus, Beale Street suffered from the grip of the Great Depression. During the 1930s, the number of black retail stores declined from 378 to 318, African American attorneys declined from 8 to 5, and African American physicians from 86 to 46.[39] George W. Lee wrote in his *Beale Street: Where the Blues Began*:

> Beale Street is no longer the mecca of many thriving businesses of the Negro. The heavy hand of the depression, the competition of foreigners, have left their mark. The old avenue is still as boisterous and loud as ever. The electric lights blaze with their usual glow. The orchestras and pianos are still playing the blues while the echoes of jazz float out upon the midnight skies; but the good old days of Beale Street have gone by many years. The thriving businesses once presided over by colored people have vanished like snowflakes upon the sod. Beale Street, in the days of the depression, is the burial ground for the ambitions of many a Negro, lured there with high hopes and the dream of a great career. . . . And Beale Street will come back.[40]

This optimistic vision of Beale Street was shared by Nat D. Williams, a history teacher at Booker T. Washington High School, who wrote a column called "Down on Beale" during his time at the *Memphis World* from 1931 to 1952. Williams wrote, "There will always be a Beale Street, because Beale Street is a spirit . . . Beale Street is a symbol . . . Beale Street is a way of

life . . . Beale Street is hope."[41] As George Lee anticipated, the street's businesses returned and flourished when World War II pulled the country out of the Depression. Both African Americans and whites, often Jews and Italians, owned Beale Street businesses. Because blacks often operated the white-owned stores, this mixed ownership did not detract from the black community's feeling that Beale was "our street." Red Sox star pitcher Verdell Mathis remembers that "you wouldn't see . . . white people period on Beale Street. . . . They wouldn't come down here."[42]

Treated as inferiors in other parts of the city, the respect that a black Memphian was paid when entering a Beale Street store contributed to the comforting sense of belonging. Charles Patterson remembers shopping on white Main Street where the money from African Americans, and little else, was welcome. For example, blacks were often not allowed to try on shoes or hats, and thus blacks were left "buying things on a guess."[43] As a child, buying shoes on Main Street would require his mother tracing his foot on a piece of cardboard in order to approximate the correct shoe size. However, for Patterson, "Beale Street was different."[44] Vasco Smith, who refused to buy clothes from a store where he was mistreated, acknowledged that "not everybody felt that way." In addition to a place where one was assured the right to try on shoes, Smith remembers that on Beale Street he could get hats and shoes "made to order."[45] Savannah Simmons said that entering a Beale Street place of business "felt good because it felt like you belonged there because you are respected when you walk in . . . if you walk in first you get served first."[46]

In addition to the respect that blacks enjoyed on Beale, Inez Wright remembers that Beale Street provided relief from the forced carefulness with which blacks lived in relationship to whites. When shopping in a white department store, Wright remembers that her mother's hands would constantly be on her two daughters "like she was trying to keep us from doing something wrong." Specifically, her protective mother scolded her for drinking from a "white" water fountain. However, Wright said that on Beale Street "we could feel free. . . . [my parents] didn't have to hold our hands on Beale Street."[47] Finally, B. B. King said, "We believed Beale Street was ours. . . . You could get justice on Beale Street, you get whatever was available for people on Beale Street." He concluded that Beale Street "really meant pride."[48]

Along with the businesses that lined the avenue, Beale Street was the home for black political activity in Memphis. Although the Crump political machine doled out favors to black Memphians in order to maintain its power, it is important that black Memphians participated in these political games. With white Republicans rare throughout the South, African Americans easily dominated the party, and Robert R. Church Jr. became the leader of the Republican Party in West Tennessee.[49] When his father died in 1912, Church retired as president of his father's bank and began his career in politics.

Carrying on his father's influence on Beale Street, Church led the political organization of black Memphians. With the NAACP and Lincoln League meetings regularly held in Church's Auditorium, and with Robert Church's office on Beale Street, Beale was the location where Church became boss of the Republican Party in West Tennessee.

Robert Church, with the help of leading black businessmen like J. B. Martin, one of the Red Sox owners, created the Lincoln League in 1916 in an effort to politically organize African Americans in Memphis. The Lincoln League held weekly meetings in Church's Auditorium on Beale Street and urged blacks to fight against lynching and Jim Crow, registered more than ten thousand black voters, and raised money to pay the poll taxes of poor blacks.[50] In 1916, as a signal to national Republicans, Church urged Lincoln League supporters to vote for African Americans running for Congress and the state legislature. Although unable to elect the black candidates, the Lincoln League's impressive display of 2,500 votes defeated the regular Republican ticket by almost four to one.[51] This sign of support established Church as the dominant Republican leader in West Tennessee and placed him on the Republican Advisory Board. The Lincoln League grew to the statewide organization "Lincoln League of Tennessee," and with the success of this organization expanded to the national "Lincoln League of America" in 1919. Declining to become president, Church became chairman of the executive committee.[52] His influence within the Republican Party grew so that a 1928 editorial in the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* said:

> No Federal appointment is made in Memphis and Shelby County under a Republican administration without his endorsement. Federal office-holders and applicants for federal favor not only admit his authority, but seek his favor. . . . His influence in the Republican party is more extensive in the South than any man white or black. . . .[53]

Despite Church's influence within the Republican Party, Memphis city officials were elected at large to ensure that African Americans could not outvote the white majority, and no African American had served in the Memphis city government since 1886. Thus the Lincoln League did not design to wrest control of local offices from white leaders. Rather, Church succeeded in laying the groundwork for an African American political body that could influence elections. The white administration provided amenities to African Americans in ways that demonstrated its paternalism. Police Commissioner Joe Boyle, the man who proclaimed Memphis "white man's country," bragged to the *Press-Scimitar* in 1940:

> I have been a consistent friend of the honest, working colored people of this community. Our administration has repaired and built more colored schools, playgrounds, swimming pools, recreation centers for the colored people than all the others combined. . . . Memphis has been

> given three fine housing projects for the colored people, when other Southern cities have been lucky to get one.[54]

Unlike Middle and East Tennessee, where African Americans did not have a political leader like Church, Memphis blacks successfully fought complete political isolation.[55] Throughout Crump's years as "Boss," he was dependent on the black vote to maintain his power in Memphis, and black Memphians used this leverage to extract campaign promises and, in this way, fought for an increased standard of living.[56]

In viewing Beale Street as a commercial and political center for black Memphians, it is clear that it was more than what it is famous for—a wild nightlife where lively music flowed. Beale Street had this side, but it was also home to the everyday activities of black Memphians. In addition to grocery, clothing, and dry good stores, it was the location for the offices of doctors, dentists, and real-estate men. Alongside Beale Street's nightlife, the businesses, offices, and political activity of Beale Street created noticeably different atmospheres for the street's day and nighttime activities. Such wide-ranging aspects and multiple atmospheres created a complex street that functioned as a distinct community within Memphis.

Overshadowing the street's businesses and politics, Beale Street is famous as the "Birthplace of the Blues." W. C. Handy's "Memphis Blues" was actually released later in 1912 than Artie Matthews's "Baby Seal Blues" and Hart A. Wand's "Dallas Blues," but Handy's song was the success, and he became known as the "Father of the Blues."[57] Largely due to Handy, Beale Street is, and has long been, much talked about. George W. Lee wrote of a Beale Street Saturday night where "the working folks are on parade; going nowhere in particular, just out strolling, just glad of a chance to dress up and expose themselves on the avenue. . . ." Lee writes that the "thrilling adventure" of such a night must have inspired Handy's 1917 "Beale Street Blues":[58]

The Seven Wonders of the World I have seen
And many are the places I have been;
Take my advice, folks, and see Beale Street first.
You see pretty browns dressed in beautiful gowns,
You will see tailor-mades and hand-me-downs;
You will meet honest men and pick-pockets skilled,
You will find that business never closes until
Somebody gets killed.
You will see hog-nosed restaurants and chitterling
Cafes and jugs that tell of by-gone days.

You will see golden balls enough to pave the new

Jerusalem.

I would rather be there than any place I know.

It is going to take a sergeant just for to make me go—

I am going down to the river maybe by and by,

Cause the river is wet and Beale's done gone dry.

While white Memphis told its black citizens where they could and could not go, and thus viewed the white-policed Beale Street as African Americans' "place," black people "turned it around and said Beale was the *only* place to be."[59] The above lyrics demonstrate this kind of claim that black Memphians made in Beale Street. Here, Handy acknowledges the sum of Beale Street—its beautiful women and cafes along with the crime that rode on the tails of a raucous nightlife—and concludes that he would rather be there than anywhere else.

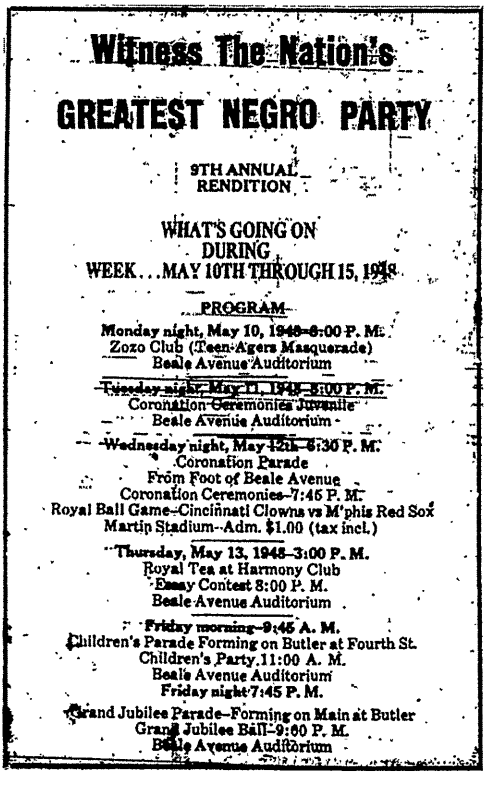
George Lee observed that on Saturday nights "the color and tempo of the street reaches its highest point. The sidewalks then are crowded with carefree humans enjoying the magic of the night and great throngs move leisurely down the street to pack the Daisy Theater and enjoy a thrilling Westerner."[60] The nightlife of Beale Street was primarily found between Hernando and Fourth Street. It was this block which Lee referred to as an "underworld." For Lee, the block featured

> a gay and raucous night life that includes gambling, streetwalking, and every kind of vice known to the demimonde flourishes, though outwardly it looks innocent enough: a noisy and congested block in which guitar players stroll up and down filling the night with music, in which blind men sing on the street corners, and preachers bark in Handy's Park. Throughout the day this underworld block on Beale Street sleeps peacefully, but when the sun sinks beyond the river and the stars come out it sings, laughs, drinks and dances until early morning.[61]

Outshining other theaters, the Palace Theater was Memphis's most famous and popular theater. The largest theater for blacks in the South, the Palace was built by Anselmo Barrasso.[62] His brother, F. A. Barrasso, had organized the Theater Owners' Booking Association (TOBA) in 1909, a circuit of eastern theaters that entertained black audiences. Vaudeville skits, blues musicians, opera singers, dancers, acrobats, jugglers, comics, chorus girls, and orchestras toured on the TOBA and performed at the Palace.[63] Amateur night originated at the Palace in the twenties and continued to the fifties. Hosted by Nat D. Williams and later by local musician Rufus Thomas, these talent shows allowed a wide range of local talent to compete for cash prizes.[64]

In these theaters well-known musicians often performed larger shows, but music could be heard all along Beale Street, including in smaller clubs such as P. Wee's, the Monarch, and the Panama. The favorite hang out for local musicians was P. Wee's, where "the cloakroom was full of horns, bull-fiddles, violins, guitars and banjos—accessible to anyone who wanted to play some music."[65] It was in and around these clubs and saloons that Beale Street saw its singing, dancing, drinking, gambling, and violent crime associated with George Lee's "underworld." With its violence, Beale Street was certainly not perfect, but as blues musician Booker White said, "If ever there was a good time, so help me God, there was good times on Beale."[66]

Perhaps the most clearly articulated expression of Beale Street's vibrant life is found in the annual Cotton Maker's Jubilee. In 1935 Beale Street dentist Dr. R. Q. Venson organized the event as the Cotton Maker's Fiesta, and it later became known as the Cotton Maker's Jubilee. Dr. Venson created the Cotton Maker's Jubilee in response to the all-white Memphis Cotton Carnival, which began in 1931. In contrast to the Cotton Carnival, where the roles of African Americans were limited to such demeaning acts as pulling the floats and serving the white "king," Dr. Venson successfully created in the Jubilee an atmosphere that gave great pride to many black Memphians.[67] The events of the week long Cotton Maker's Jubilee included several social events, a Red Sox baseball game, an essay contest, and two parades. The Grand Jubilee Parade culminated the festivities as it marched down Beale Street. An advertisement in the *Memphis World* on 7 May 1948 detailed the happenings of the Cotton Maker's Jubilee and boldly proclaimed it "The Nation's Greatest Negro Party."


Witness The Nation's
GREATEST NEGRO PARTY
9TH ANNUAL RENDITION
WHAT'S GOING ON DURING WEEK...MAY 10TH THROUGH 15, 1948
PROGRAM
Monday night, May 10, 1948–8:00 P. M.
Zozo Club (Teen-Agers Masquerade)
Beale Avenue Auditorium
Tuesday night, May 11, 1948–8:00 P. M.
Coronation Ceremonies Juvenile
Beale Avenue Auditorium
Wednesday night, May 12th–6:30 P. M.
Coronation Parade
From Foot of Beale Avenue
Coronation Ceremonies–7:45 P. M.
Royal Ball Game–Cincinnati Clowns vs M'phis Red Sox
Martin Stadium–Adm. $1.00 (tax incl.)
Thursday, May 13, 1948–3:00 P. M.
Royal Tea at Harmony Club
Essay Contest 8:00 P. M.
Beale Avenue Auditorium
Friday morning–9:45 A. M.
Children's Parade Forming on Butler at Fourth St.
Children's Party 11:00 A. M.
Beale Avenue Auditorium
Friday night 7:45 P. M.
Grand Jubilee Parade–Forming on Main at Butler
Grand Jubilee Ball–9:00 P. M.
Beale Avenue Auditorium

Benjamin Hooks remembers that the "crowd would be beyond counting" for the Grand Jubilee Parade. The Cotton Maker's Jubilee occurred after the Cotton Carnival, and thus the same floats were used in both

festivals' parades. When he was a child, Hooks redecorated the Cotton Carnival's floats for the Grand Jubilee Parade and thought, "we made them look better than when we got them." According to Hooks, an underlying attitude of black Memphians toward the parade was that of outdoing the white parade: "Sometimes saying it and sometimes not saying it—we can do it better than you."[68] Inez Wright, who was chosen from her school to be on the float with WDIA radio station, the nation's first all-black radio station, recalls that it was "one of the proudest days of my life, to [be] on a float down Beale Street."[69] Wright was active throughout the Civil Rights Movement in Memphis—working for the Urban League to help ease racial tension during the city's implementation of busing—and looks back on her day in the Grand Jubilee Parade with as much pride and sense of accomplishment as her later involvement in Memphis. Such an attitude shows the emphasis that Wright and many other black Memphians placed on the Cotton Maker's Jubilee and gives support to the *Memphis World*'s claim that it was the "Nation's Greatest Negro Party."

As the commercial, political, and entertainment center for black Memphians, Beale Street provided a colorful life where many African Americans defined the street and their lives for themselves. Ignoring the paternalism of many whites, where Beale Street was the area of Memphis allocated to blacks, Rufus Thomas, who often performed on Beale Street, remembers it as a place where

> . . . [people] didn't walk. They strolled when they walked. This is Beale Street. When you're walking Beale Street, you don't have a care in the world. All of your cares are gone when you hit Beale Street. . . . It was a black man's haven. . . . when you got downtown and you got to Beale Street—hey man, that was it![70]

In *Wheelin' On Beale*, Louis Cantor writes that Nat Williams's column "Down on Beale" touched on philosophical topics as well as subjects "as flippant" as the feeling of "standing in front of the famous One-Minute Café inhaling the mixed aromas of fried catfish, chitlings, spaghetti and meatballs, and fat, sizzling hot dogs covered with slaw, which some of the boys call 'Beale Street club sandwiches.'"[71] This essay argues that the experiences of black Memphians at places like the One-Minute Café were not insignificant. Rather, they should be viewed as subjects that provide important insight into how black Memphians understood their community. Verdell Mathis remembers:

> The One-Minute, you talkin' about hot dogs. They had the best hot dogs in the world. I'm not kidding you. . . . And they had 'em special. It's a different frank from today's frank. They didn't call 'em franks then. He had those hot dogs made special for the One-Minute. Boy he would sell some. That place stayed crowded.[72]

As Mathis believed that the One-Minute had the best hot dogs, Beale Streeters believed that they enjoyed the best street in the city. This is not to say that black Memphians did not recognize and struggle against the segregation that, in a sense, allowed Beale Street to prosper. However, by looking at the attitude of blacks toward Beale Street, one can recognize the way in which black Memphians created and grasped their own rich life within the boundaries of a segregated city. By asserting ownership in Beale Street, black Memphians attempted to exert control in their community and thus resisted the common white perception of Memphis as "white man's country."

"If You Want to Talk Baseball . . ."

This section will provide a better understanding of the claim that black Memphians made in Beale Street by looking closely at its baseball games. These games are not usually considered a part of Beale Street, but they were thematically the very same. Martin's Stadium, along with its neighboring Beale Street, was the place to be for black Memphians. Beale Street was "to the real Beale Streeter, a symbol of escape from white prejudice and arrogance."[73] For Rufus Thomas, it was a place where "you didn't have a care in the world."[74] These same comments apply to Red Sox baseball games where Benjamin Hooks understood that "it was escapism, you know, to go to the baseball game."[75] This escapism that Hooks remembers turned games at Martin's Stadium into a "great spectacle."[76] One Red Sox fan was known to walk up and down Beale Street, putting on a kind of theatrical performance, in an effort to excite fans about upcoming games.[77] Separated by roughly a mile, the baseball stadium, filled by "Beale St. folks," was simply an extension of Beale Street's theaters.

During a time when whites consistently and thoroughly treated blacks as second-class citizens, the Memphis Red Sox helped to create a vibrant black community in Memphis. First, the Red Sox allowed black Memphians to carry forth the black pride of the 1920s' "new Negro," which was centered but not limited to Harlem's renaissance. In *The New Negro*, written in 1925, Alain Locke observed that, with a "renewed self-respect and self-dependence, the life of the Negro community is bound to enter a new dynamic phase, the buoyancy from within compensating for whatever pressure there may be of conditions from without."[78] The Memphis Red Sox can be understood in two ways. First, the Red Sox, and the claim that the black community made in the team, helped to generate Locke's anticipated "dynamic" life in Memphis' African American community. In this sense, the Red Sox strengthened black Memphians' pride in their community, which facilitated their assertion of ownership in their lives. At the same time, the image of an enthusiastic crowd at a Red Sox game should be understood as

the realization of the "dynamic" life that Locke predicted.[79]

Black Memphians took great pride in the fact that the Red Sox were owned and operated by African Americans. Because the Red Sox owners controlled their baseball stadium, the Red Sox were one of the few Negro league teams that did not have to lease the stadium of a white team. Baseball also provided the opportunity for blacks to compete on an equal footing with whites during exhibition games. Many African Americans saw these games as opportunities to demonstrate the equality of the races. At the same time, the Red Sox also played a subtler role in the black community. In a very real sense, the Red Sox simply played, and the community simply watched, baseball. In this sense, there was no conscious recognition that the players were black. In Lewis Park and later Martin's Stadium, baseball games were played, and these games provided players and spectators the opportunity to put aside Jim Crow. During these times, blacks were not looking to the white Major Leagues or to white society in general; the black community in Memphis had a definite understanding of itself that did not look elsewhere for definition.

As a black baseball team, the Red Sox played in what is generally termed the "Negro leagues," an umbrella term that refers to several distinct leagues.[80] Although blacks participated in baseball, horse racing, and golf during the late 1800s, the increasingly segregated American society at the turn of the century, one that produced the "separate but equal" clause in *Plessy v Ferguson* in 1896, created segregated sports as well.[81] By 1899, the major and minor leagues had forced out its remaining African American players, and professional baseball was strictly segregated by an unwritten "gentleman's agreement" between team owners, until Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in 1947.[82]

The Red Sox were organized in 1919 by A. P. Martin, a prominent African American barber in Memphis. R. S. Lewis, an undertaker in Memphis, bought the team in 1922 and later, after financial difficulty, sold interest in the team to Dr. J. B. Martin and Dr. W. S. Martin in 1927. With Dr. A. T. Martin and Dr. B. B. Martin later buying part interest in the team, the Martin brothers controlled the team until its disintegration in 1960. Each receiving a degree from Meharry Medical School in Nashville, Dr. B. B. Martin was a dentist, Dr. J. B. Martin was a pharmacist, and Drs. W. S. and A. T. Martin were physicians.[83]

From 1919 to 1937, the Red Sox oscillated between the Negro Southern League and the Negro National League. In 1937 the team became a charter member in the Negro American League with teams from Birmingham, Kansas City, Knoxville, Chicago, Detroit, Atlanta, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Raleigh, and Cincinnati.[84] In addition to league play, the Red Sox, like most Negro league teams, "barnstormed" around the country, playing games

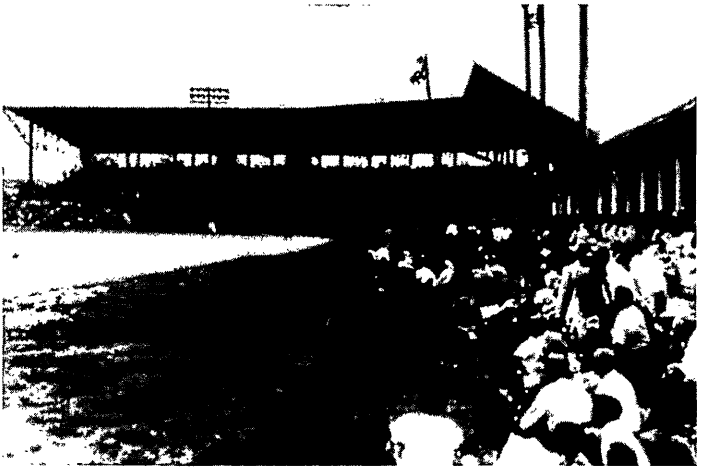
where they could find them. These free-lance road trips were often the source of competition between black and white teams.

Before exploring the impact of the Red Sox in the community—and then questioning what the community's claim in the team says about the larger black community of Memphis—one needs to first understand that the Red Sox did, in fact, appear regularly in the lives of black Memphians. That the Red Sox had a presence in Memphis from 1919 to 1959 says much about the financial stability of the team. The team was run by businessmen who were out to make a profit, and this was only possible with fans attending the games. Fans did, indeed, go to the games. For example, in 1928 part owner R. S. Lewis decided to expand the stadium's grandstand by an additional two thousand seats to accommodate large crowds such as the reported eight thousand fans who packed Lewis Stadium to see the Red Sox play the Kansas City Monarchs in 1924.[85] Under the Martin brothers, stadium renovation would again point to sustained fan interest. In 1947, W. S. Martin funded the construction of a new $250,000 concrete stadium to replace the old wooden stadium, built by R. S. Lewis and originally called Lewis Park. The new stadium opened for the 1948 season. Fans flocked to the games until, as was the case throughout the Negro leagues, attendance dropped continuously from the early 1950s to the team's disintegration in 1959.[86] The popularity of Jackie Robinson, who broke baseball's color barrier in 1947, and subsequent black major leaguers like Roy Campanella, allowed fan interest to drift from the Negro leagues to the white Major Leagues. Thus support for the Red Sox waned. As noted earlier, the increasing opportunities that integration afforded African Americans in Memphis led in a sense to a deadening of Beale Street. African Americans followed new opportunities and created new interests that weakened Beale Street's centrality in the black community.

During the team's prime, however, it was a significant social institution in Memphis' black community. In 1948 the *Memphis World*, for example, expected "some 5000 fans" for an upcoming exhibition game against the Chicago American Giants.[87] The same year the paper also reported "a near capacity crowd of 6500 fans [at] last week's bargain bill."[88] Along with fan support at home games, it is noteworthy that Red Sox fans earned a reputation for following the team to away games. The *Chicago Defender* expected "Beale St. folks [to] be out in full force Sunday" for an away game against the Chicago Giants.[89] For a game in Birmingham in 1928, the *Defender* also said that "[a] large crowd of rooters will leave for the Alabama city to cheer the Sox on."[90]

Simply put, a Red Sox game was a big deal. Black Memphians from all economic and social classes crowded the stadium to the point where chairs were sometimes placed on the field to accommodate the overflowing crowd,

and fans often found ways to see the game when they could not watch from the stands.[91] To keep fans from watching the games without buying a ticket, the Martin brothers often tried to block views from outside of the stadium, but fans would take advantage of a railroad track behind centerfield and, according to Memphis musician Rufus Thomas, "get on top of the boxcars. Anything to see that ball game! They would see it. There were trees. They'd get in the trees to see the ball games. Anywhere they could get to see the ball games . . . they'd go."[92]



Crowd at a Red Sox Game. Courtesy of Ernest C. Withers.

As a child, Verdell Mathis, who later became a star pitcher for the team, remembers watching the game with friends from left field. They would "take a knife and cut holes in the bottom of the fence, and we would lay down flat and we could see that game good." Or, in order to have a better view of the pitcher, Mathis would climb up on a rock pile that was situated close to home plate. Naturally, Mathis and his friends would have preferred to watch the game from inside the stadium. They would sometimes sneak into the park early in the day and "stash out under the stands and different places." Getting thrown out of the stadium often created quite a scene but, for Mathis, "we didn't care; didn't make us no difference. We got in the best way we could, man."[93] Reverend Charles Patterson, like Verdell Mathis, remembers that returning a foul ball could be a ticket into the stadium. This turned into quite a competition at times: "We kids would run and scramble and sometimes fight to get the ball because that was your admission into the ballpark."[94]

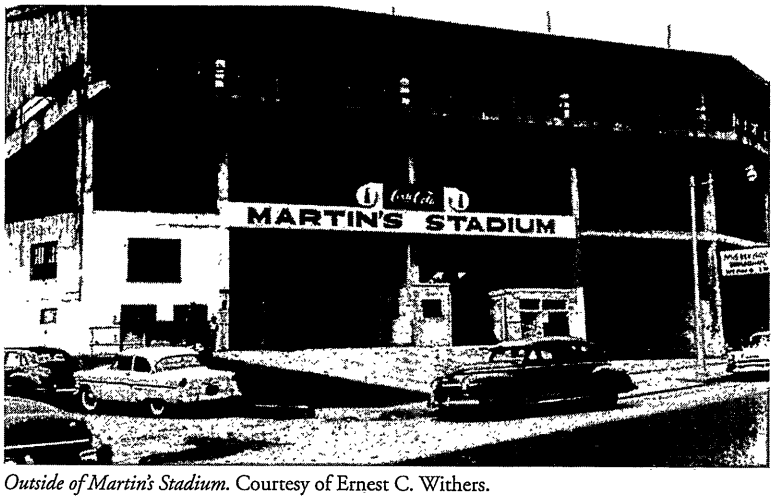
Who went and what they wore, along with the sheer number of people who attended the games, is crucial for one's understanding of Red Sox games. Benjamin Hooks was impressed with the cross-section of the black community that was represented at Martin's Stadium. The black social elite,

in addition to those of the working class, watched the Red Sox play.[95] Indeed, a 1924 *Chicago Defender* article notes that, of the "eight thousand fans [who] saw the contest," "Beale St. was out in full force, overalls mingling with cutaways and box back coats with Palm Beach suits."[96] This intermingling of the different tiers of society undoubtedly helped to create the vibrant community that black Memphians enjoyed at Red Sox games.

For Verdell Mathis, Sunday double headers were "the biggest deal."[97] Like Beale Street clubs at night, Martin's Stadium was the center of social activity on Sunday afternoon. Church services often ended early to allow fans to attend the early afternoon game.[98] The fans were especially famous for their immaculate dress for these Sunday games. Rufus Thomas remembers:

> . . . it was a thing of black people and their gatherings. Wherever they went, and especially to a ball game . . . they put on the best frocks, the best suit, the best everything they had and went to this ball game. They would sit up there watching the ball game and look like a fashion parade. When they'd come in there and the ladies with their hats and their dresses. . . .[99]

Thomas, like many others who spoke about the Sunday games, seems to overlook the fact that many fans came directly from church services to the game. Thus it should not be surprising that they were dressed nicely at the games. Thomas, however, associated the "fashion parade" with the baseball game, and in this he shows the importance that many black Memphians placed on the Red Sox.



Outside of Martin's Stadium. Courtesy of Ernest C. Withers.

The team was important in the black community of Memphis largely because it was a successful black business. When R. S. Lewis sold the team in 1927, the Red Sox came under the control of Dr. W. S. Martin and his

brother Dr. J. B. Martin. Although the two other brothers eventually bought shares in the team, Dr. W. S. Martin was widely considered the primary owner of the team.[100] This single ownership can be seen in the stadium's sign that read "Martin's Stadium" because, if the stadium had belonged to more than one person, the sign would have read "Martins' Stadium." The more interesting story in the sign, though, is its striking possessive form. Stadium names do not usually take this form. The Atlanta Braves, for example, are owned by Ted Turner and play at "Turner Field," not "Turner's Field." Indeed, Memphians today use the more standard "Martin Stadium" in referring to the stadium, and during the time when the Red Sox played both "Martin" and "Martin's" were used. However, when a physical sign was placed on the stadium, the possessive form was used, and this distinction emphasizes the uniqueness and importance of the African American ownership of the team and its stadium. Benjamin Hooks illustrates the importance of black ownership of the team:

> the good part was that in those days where African-American people didn't have a great deal of ownership, to know that just going to the park that black people owned this park. That they ran it, they took up tickets, they made the sales, they sold popcorn in the concessions . . . here is something that black folk are doing and doing it well. They have to keep the grass cut, the rest rooms working, and the team playing. And all of these things, even as a kid, I had a whole lot of other thoughts in my mind other than just the baseball.[101]

Players from the Red Sox repeatedly mentioned this unique aspect of the team. Steven J. Ross interviewed four former Red Sox players, and the transcript shows that a discussion about different field conditions quickly jumped to Martin's Stadium and the black ownership of the Red Sox:[102]

Verdell Mathis: During the regular season, we'd play a doubleheader here on Sunday; it'd rain here on Sunday . . . if it stopped raining, I don't care how wet the field would be, they'd order gallons and gallons and gallons of gasoline. . . .

Joe Scott: Gas, burn it off.

Later in the same conversation, Ross asks:

Steven J. Ross: What was the worst field you ever played on?

Marlin Carter: You name it. (Laughter)

Joe Scott: Well, the only minor league parks we played in, we played in minor league parks, the field was good.

Verdell Mathis: We had the only black-owned park in baseball.

Joe Scott: Right.

Verdell Mathis: Martin Stadium.

Joe Scott: Martin Stadium.

Frank Pearson: Yeah.

Verdell Mathis: And it was in pretty good shape.

Against the flow of the conversation, Mathis commented on the black ownership of the Red Sox. It seems that Mathis saw the topic of different fields' playing conditions as an opportunity to talk about the Martin ownership. The transition from field conditions to ownership was not a smooth one, but it was made because Mathis wanted to talk about the African American ownership of the Red Sox and especially Martin's Stadium. The pride that the black community had in the Martin ownership can also be seen in the *Memphis World* in 1950. An article bragged that Memphis was "the **ONLY** locality in the entire circuit that has a Negro-owned and operated baseball park, Martin Stadium" (original emphasis). In the same article, fans and players described Martin Stadium as "a tribute to the Negro race."[103] Black Memphians looked to the Red Sox, not only as a baseball team, but also as a business that was owned and operated by blacks. Looking up to the Martin brothers, with their professions in the various medical fields, black Memphians were allowed to cast their view even beyond their ownership of the Red Sox. They were continually reminded that there were black physicians, dentists, and pharmacists. The successful Martin brothers must have pleased the business-oriented George Lee. This black ownership answered Lee's call to "force consciousness down the throat of the Negro."[104]

The Red Sox played an important role in the black community in Memphis in that baseball allowed blacks to compete and demonstrate their equality with whites. Most baseball games against white major leaguers took place after the season. Barnstorming around the country, black All-Star teams would often travel with and compete against players from the white Major Leagues. These barnstorming teams of black players represented the Red Sox, sometimes in a certain Red Sox player, but often simply because of their shared skin color. Representing the Negro leagues, Satchel Paige would pitch against Major Leaguer Bob Feller in a nine inning baseball game. The two races could meet on the field, social distinctions could be dropped, and they played ball.

However, these games were at the same time more than mere baseball games. Joe B. Scott, who served in the military during World War II, played on black service teams before later playing for the Red Sox. His black service teams played exhibition games against white Major League players of other service teams. He remembers that "We came out on top a lot of times. . . . It

was fun playing against the white teams because we knew we could compete. . . . It was showing your athletic ability to play with the white teams."[105] Buck O'Neil recalls barnstorming against white teams:

> The world told them [white Major Leaguers] they were the best baseball players in the world, and they didn't have anything to prove—only they were making some winter money. We wanted the money too, but we wanted to prove to the world that we could play, that we were as good as these fellas, so we actually put a little more into it. . . . We wanted to prove a point. This is why we won the majority of the ball games.[106]

Former Red Sox player and manager Ted "Double Duty" Radcliffe summed up his recollection of these games. He said, "We kicked them! We kicked the big leaguers!"[107] He says this as if the black teams consistently beat the white teams. Importantly, this is undoubtedly not exactly true. Most sources indicate that the games were competitive, with wins and losses dividing up quite evenly. It is possible that Radcliffe is simply retelling the story the way he wants it told. Either Radcliffe has consciously changed the story, or he has allowed himself to remember the games in this way. Either way, this short comment by Radcliffe tells us much about the importance that he placed on the outcomes of these games. It mattered who won and, in Radcliffe's mind, his teams "kicked" the white teams on a regular basis. In hearing Radcliffe's voice, one understands that he feels the same as Buck O'Neil in that the black players "wanted to prove a point." They proved that they could compete athletically with the white players. In a time when blacks were kept from competing fairly with whites in other areas, they found fair competition in these baseball games.

With blacks proving that they could play baseball as well as whites, black baseball fans could admire players in the Negro leagues as well as players in the white Major Leagues. Many blacks did indeed look up to white ballplayers. The Negro leagues allowed fans to find black heroes in addition to, or in place of, the white ballplayers. This is significant to the understanding of black baseball teams as a social institution that strengthened black pride. Black heroes were necessary for this to be possible. According to Charles Patterson, who used to scramble for foul balls in order to win a ticket to the game, the Red Sox players "were like legends at that time."[108] Former Red Sox player Frank Pearson remembers that "people just knew you on the street. . . . I had some people [who] knew me on the street and didn't know me in my uniform." Indeed, constant recognition sometimes became a burden for Pearson, and this made him want to "go someplace [he] wasn't known sometimes, you know."[109] Buck O'Neil, who played one season for the Red Sox, relates the influence of black players in his early life:

> I didn't know about Negro league baseball, and my daddy saw us playing and emulating the different [white] stars and he said, "I'm going to take you somewhere where you'll see some other ballplayers. I said, "Oh? Are they as good as these guys?" He said, "Yeah. They might be better." So after I saw . . . the great [black] ballplayers . . . I'm going to be Cool Papa Bell now, not Ty Cobb. I'm Cool Papa Bell, yeah . . . that's who we're emulating now.[110]

According to W. E. B. Du Bois, "the only effective defense that the segregated and despised group has against complete spiritual and physical disaster, is internal self-organization for self-respect and self-defense."[111] This indeed aptly characterizes the relationship between black Memphians and the Red Sox. This "self-organization" of the black community, in concert with the Red Sox, can be understood as both a social institution that helped create a vibrant black community in Memphis and as the vibrant community itself. In the latter sense, the Red Sox and the claim that the black community made in the team are symbolic of the ways that the black community built relationships and organizations that did not look to white society for definition. Black Memphians were not always concerned with breaking into white society. They were not *always* longing for the opportunities not afforded them. Benjamin Hooks said:

> We built a tremendous life within this closed circle. . . . We built a culture that could sustain us—a church life that had validity and meaning and gave us a sense of purpose. . . . And for black Memphians, a lot of people didn't know about baseball but they knew what the Red Sox were and they knew where they were located . . . it was some expression that we had come a long way. So this ability to build a life, to build a culture, to build a society in a rigidly segregated society that told you that you were nobody, but we've proven to folk that we were somebody, and most of all, to ourselves.[112]

It must be remembered that the Red Sox played, and the fans watched, baseball. Black Memphians did not dress up, come to the game, and mingle with people from across different strata of black society for the sole purpose of building community pride. They were not consciously following Du Bois's call to "self-organization" as a way to combat the injustices of a rigidly segregated society. Red Sox games should be understood as both more than, and simply, baseball. Benjamin Hooks describes his understanding of the Red Sox in such a manner. In one way, he was conscious of the black ownership and operation of the Red Sox so that, "even as a kid, I had a whole lot of other thoughts in my mind other than just the baseball." However, he also said:

> When I went to Martin Stadium I was really going because I liked baseball, and at that time the Red Sox had some very good teams, and

> because the peanuts were good . . . when I went I just enjoyed it. . . . It was just another great experience. When I went to the movies, down on Beale Street, I never thought that I was going to a black movie. . . . I was just going to a movie."[113]

Thus, although baseball can be understood as an active instrument in building community pride, it was at the same time simply baseball. Former Red Sox player Joe B. Scott made this point clear in an interview. Scott was born in Memphis, moved to Chicago, and then returned to Memphis. When it came to baseball, however, Scott "didn't think of the North and the South. All I was thinking about was baseball and playing. That's all. . . . All I wanted to do was to play baseball and hit that baseball. . . ."[114] Throughout our conversation, Mr. Scott wanted to talk baseball. Scott acknowledged the larger role that Negro league baseball played in integrating society, saying, "Jackie [Robinson] did do a whole lot for baseball. He opened the doors. Some people say we, ahead of Jackie, opened the doors. . . ."[115] However, this is not what interested Scott. It was almost frustrating trying to get Mr. Scott to talk about the relationship between the Red Sox, the black community, and the social conditions of Memphis. During one stretch of conversation while we were talking about Beale Street, Crump, segregation, and Memphis politics, Mr. Scott said, "If you want to talk baseball, we aren't talking baseball in general, but . . . you tell me about baseball, I'll tell you about the players I played against. They were all great. . . . When you talk of sports. . . ." Rather than frustrating the purposes of what I at first understood as the aim of the interview, Mr. Scott, by his constant return to baseball, illustrated that this "talk about baseball" is central to an accurate understanding of the African American community of Jim Crow Memphis. Joe Scott played, and the fans watched, baseball. Black baseball in Memphis served to strengthen black pride, but it remained baseball.

The Red Sox helped create a black community in Memphis where African Americans could dress up, mingle with rich and poor, and eat peanuts at a baseball game. As Beale Street movies for Benjamin Hooks were not consciously "black," neither were these baseball games. In this sense, the black community of Memphis had a definite understanding of itself that did not look to white society for definition.

Conclusion

Under the umbrella of, but not defeated by the injustices of segregation and discrimination, African American Memphians enjoyed a rich life that they claimed as their own. By rejecting white paternalism that treated them as dependent, second-class citizens, blacks struggled for autonomy. Of

all the aspects of the black community during Jim Crow, the African American church has long been seen as *the* social institution over which African Americans exerted control. In *The Negro's Church*, published in 1933, Benjamin Mays and Joseph Nicholson wrote:

> The church was the first community or public organization that the Negro actually owned and completely controlled. And it is possibly true to this day that the Negro church is the most thoroughly owned and controlled public institution of the race. Nothing can compare with this ownership and control except ownership of the home. . . .[116]

In *The Black Community*, James Blackwell writes, "Second only to the family, the church is the most important social institution in the black community—it is the only institution over which black Americans have had complete independence, autonomy, and control."[117] John Hope Franklin stops just short of describing a completely sovereign African American church. He writes, "Barred as he was from many areas of social and political life, the Negro turned more and more to the church for self-expression, recognition, and leadership. Nothing in his world was so completely his own as his church."[118]

The idea of African Americans' complete control over the church is not entirely true. In Memphis, even African Americans' churches were subject to the whims of white city leadership. In 1944, Reverend George Albert Long of Beale Street Baptist Church invited the prominent black labor leader A. Phillip Randolph to speak at his church. More than seven hundred people attended the meeting to hear Randolph call Crump a leader who "out Hitlers Hitler." Memphis sheriff Oliver Perry said, "Had I known [that] . . . the Negro Randolph from New York City, and those he brought with him, were to make blackguarding speeches defaming this community and speaking ill of my friends . . . I would have pulled them all out of the pulpit in Preacher Long's Beale Street Church." Similarly, Crump said, "if the Negroes in the community or any whites insist on these imported rabble rousers, creating hatred, they might as well make up their minds to abide by the consequences and the town will be better off without that type of citizen, including the preacher who gave permission to hold that meeting in his church."[119] In response to Randolph's speech, the city fire inspectors demanded that Beale Street Baptist make repairs costing several thousand dollars. Long was also the victim of a physical attack which, David Tucker concludes in his *Black Pastors and Leaders*, was "probably inspired by the [Crump] organization." The hand of the Crump machine kept the congregation small and in debt, and by 1947 Reverend Long had moved to Detroit.[120]

This confrontation surrounding Randolph's appearance at Beale Street Baptist shows that the black church in Memphis was not immune to the

influence of the Crump machine, which designed to keep black Memphians in their "place." Memphis sheriff Oliver Perry believed that his authority encompassed the churches of the black community to such a degree that he could physically control Beale Street Baptist's pulpit. Nevertheless, many historians have concluded that, during the time of Jim Crow, the black church was the one area in which blacks had complete control. In reality, however, Memphis city officials—whether E. H. Crump, Perry, policemen, or fire inspectors—could reach into every aspect of African American life, including the black church, to try to keep blacks in their "place." The story of Beale Street Baptist causes one to question to what extent the black church was "controlled" by African Americans and, consequently, to realize the degree to which blacks' lives were influenced by whites. The power of white leadership in Memphis penetrated even the African American church, a social institution that has nevertheless been defined as African Americans' "own." An understanding of the wide-ranging influence of white racism in the lives of blacks allows for a greater appreciation of the claim that black Memphians made in their community. African Americans claimed Beale Street as their own in response to those who said that Memphis was "white man's country."

Black Memphians defined Beale Street as theirs even though whites did have considerable influence over the happenings of the street. In 1933, for example, the Memphis police department initiated a crackdown on "bootlegging and vice of all descriptions on the famous avenue."[121] The Hole in the Wall, a gambling den on Beale Street, systematically avoided the "whiskey raiders that sometimes swooped down upon the place." According to George W. Lee:

> Every morning all the liquor in the house was packed into garbage cans and rolled out in front of the place. A lookout was stationed nearby. When a customer came in search of whiskey, he paid his money over the counter to the white-jacketed attendant behind it, who signaled the lookout, and when the customer came out he was slipped a half-pint fished out of the can. The lookout then resumed his position until the garbage wagon came in sight, when all hands got busy rolling the cans inside to keep the garbage man from picking them up. . . . [122]

By simply hiding their whiskey, the operators of the Hole in the Wall contested the rules imposed on them by white authorities, thus showing that they were not willing to passively submit and stay in their "place." It was about such "day-to-day" resistance in the segregated South that Robin Kelley writes in urging a "broadening of our focus to include the daily confrontations and blatant acts of resistance" to complement the already in-depth studies of institutionally organized struggles for civil rights.[123] This essay argues for a still broader understanding of what it meant for African

Americans to resist the injustices of Jim Crow by considering the importance of black Memphians' understanding of their community.

Focusing attention on Beale Street, we have looked at the way that African American Memphians claimed ownership of a vibrant life in a way that did not look to white society for definition. In spite of the segregation and discrimination of Jim Crow, black Memphians enjoyed a rich community. However, in the words of Benjamin Hooks, "it was always, like an egg, rather fragile because any assault from the white community could have an effect."[124] This study has not attempted to determine whether or not Inez Wright's understanding of Beale Street—that it "was *our* street"—was accurate. An analysis of the legitimacy of black Memphians' claim in their community—if, in fact, this question can be answered objectively—is a topic for another study. For now, this essay concludes that whether or not the "tremendous life" of African Americans was truly theirs is a matter of definition. Importantly, black Memphians called it their own. This discussion has focused its attention on the vibrant community that African Americans enjoyed and claimed on Beale Street. Benjamin Hooks recalls that " . . . the Red Sox were real; Martin Stadium was real; you know, our church life was real . . . the parades, you know . . . the lives we lived, the New Daisy theater . . . the restaurants, the eating places. . . ." These various aspects of the African American community in Memphis contributed to the "tremendous life" that African American Memphians enjoyed.[125]

The black community of Memphis resisted dominant white authority by claiming ownership of a self-defined vibrant community. Black Memphians fought against the idea of their "place" as an inferior one relegated to them by whites. In going to Beale Street, black Memphians did not go to a place where they were "kept." Rather, they went to a place they understood as "our street." In his mind, Verdell Mathis did not eat at the One-Minute Café because he might not be served elsewhere. Rather, he went to the One-Minute because they "had the best hot dogs in the world." In a very real way, blacks struggled against segregation by not always dwelling on the city's injustices. Benjamin Hooks, for example, remembers, "I never thought that I was going to a black movie. . . . I was just going to a movie."[126] While others have viewed such opinions as a sign of apathy, this essay claims that the ability of blacks to define their community for themselves was a sign of resistance to the racist paternalism of whites. The attitude of whites—one that said "we are in control; we'll *let* you have Beale Street"—was largely ignored by black Memphians who simply defined Beale Street as "ours." This struggle with definitions was part of a larger struggle for autonomy, and African American Memphians exerted control in their community by defining it as their own.

ENDNOTES

[1] Lewis is quoted in Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 45.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Lester Lamon, *Blacks in Tennessee, 1791–1970* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 84.

[4] Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1971), 221, 226.

[5] Kenneth W. Goings and Gerald L. Smith, "'Unhidden' Transcripts: Memphis and African American Agency, 1862–1920," in *The New African American Urban History*, ed. Kenneth W. Goings and Raymond A. Mohl (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 146–59.

[6] Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 4.

[7] Gloria Wade-Gayles, *Pushed Back to Strength: A Black Woman's Journey Home* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 4, cited in Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 35–36.

[8] Benjamin Hooks, interview by Steven J. Ross, June 1994. Interview transcript housed at the University of Memphis. From University of Memphis's documentary film "Black Diamonds, Blues City: Stories of the Memphis Red Sox." Dr. Hooks was born in Memphis in 1925 and served as Executive Director of the NAACP from 1977–1993.

[9] *Chicago Defender*, 28 June 1924.

[10] James E. Blackwell, *The Black Community: Diversity and Unity*, 3d ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 198.

[11] These are the words of Memphis Commissioner of Public Safety Joe Boyle quoted in Roger Biles, *Memphis in the Great Depression* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 89.

[12] *Washington Post*, 13 May 1946, in David M. Tucker, *Memphis Since Crump* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980), 39.

[13] Robert Sigafoos, *Cotton Row to Beale Street* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1979), 124.

[14] William D. Miller, *Mr. Crump of Memphis* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 70.

[15] Virginia Lewis, "Fifty Years of Politics in Memphis 1900–1950" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1955), 82; Lester Lamon, *Black Tennesseans 1900–1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977), 41.

[16] Ibid., 24.

[17] Biles, *Memphis in the Great Depression*, 88.

[18] Tucker, *Memphis Since Crump*, 21; David M. Tucker, *Lieutenant Lee of Beale Street* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971), 99.

[19] Tucker, *Memphis Since Crump*, 19.

[20] Lamon, *Black Tennesseans*, 224.

[21] Miller, *Mr. Crump of Memphis*, 86.

[22] *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, 12 July 1914, cited in Tucker, *Lieutenant Lee*, 19.

[23] Lamon, *Black Tennesseans*, 225.

[24] Margaret McKee and Fred Chisenhall, *Beale Black and Blue: Life and Music on Black America's Main Street* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 89.

[25] Biles, *Memphis in the Great Depression*, 89.

[26] Joseph Cartwright, *The Triumph of Jim Crow: Tennessee Race Relations in the 1880s* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 175.

[27] *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, 11 April 1933, cited in Biles, *Memphis in the Great Depression*, 89.

[28] Goings and Smith, "'Unhidden' Transcripts," 142–46; Gloria Melton, "Blacks in Memphis,Tennessee, 1920–1955: A Historical Study" (Ph.D. diss., Washington State University, 1982), 46.

[29] Vasco Smith, interview by author, 26 January 2000. Born in Memphis in 1920, Dr. Smith was a dentist, served on the city's County Commission, and was a board member of the NAACP.

[30] Rev. Charles Patterson, interview by author, 7 January 2000. Patterson was born in Arkansas in 1932 and moved to Memphis in 1937. He is currently the pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Memphis.

[31] Benjamin Mays and Joseph Nicholson, *The Negro's Church* (New York: The Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1933), 283.

[32] George W. Lee, *Beale Street: Where the Blues Began* (New York: Robert O. Ballou, 1934), 63.

[33] In 1940, for example, 57.2 percent of the African American male and 83.4 percent of the African American female labor force worked as domestic service workers, other types of service workers, or laborers. Adapted from the 1940 United States Census, vol. II, part 6.

[34] Lee, *Beale Street*, 63.

[35] Inez Wright, interview by author, 25 January 2000. Ms. Wright was born in Memphis in 1933 and worked with the Urban League during the Civil Rights Movement to ease the city's transition to busing.

[36] The yearbook is found in the Memphis and Shelby County Room, Memphis/Shelby County Public Library, Memphis, Tennessee.

[37] Melton, "Blacks in Memphis," 76.

[38] Ibid., 86.

[39] Biles, *Memphis in the Great Depression*, 92.

[40] Lee, *Beale Street*, 293.

[41] Louis Cantor, *Wheelin' on Beale: The Story of the Nation's First All-Black Radio Station* (New York: Pharos Books), 31.

[42] Verdell Mathis, interview by Steven J. Ross, February 1994.

[43] Charles Patterson, interview by author, 7 January 2000.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Vasco Smith, interview by author, 26 January 2000.

[46] Savannah Simmons, interview by author, 26 November 1999. Ms. Simmons was born in Memphis in 1928 and was an employee of Hunter Fan Factory.

[47] Inez Wright, interview by author, 25 January 2000.

[48] Cantor, *Wheelin' on Beale*, 31.

[49] Tucker, *Lieutenant Lee*, 68.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Lamon, *Black Tennesseans*, 58.

[52] Annette and Roberta Church, *The Robert R. Churches of Memphis* (Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, 1974), 102–3.

[53] *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, 6 October 1928, cited in *The Robert R. Churches*, 173.

[54] *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, 30 October 1940.

[55] Lamon, *Black Tennesseans*, 58.

[56] Tucker, *Lieutenant Lee*, 79.

[57] Larry Nager, *Memphis Beat: The Lives and Times of America's Musical Crossroads* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 36.

[58] Lee, *Beale Street*, 63–65.

[59] McKee and Chisenhall, *Beale Black and Blue*, 6. Emphasis in original.

[60] Lee, *Beale Street*, 63.

[61] Ibid., 62.

[62] McKee and Chisenhall, *Beale Black and Blue*, 15.

[63] Richard M. Raichelson, *Beale Street Talks: A Walking Tour Down the Home of the Blues* (Memphis: Arcadia Records, 1994), 40.

[64] McKee and Chisenhall, *Beale Black and Blue*, 66.

[65] Bengt Olsson, *Memphis Blues and Jug Bands* (London: Studio Vista Limited, 1970), 10.

[66] McKee and Chisenhall, *Beale Black and Blue*, 6.

[67] Cantor, *Wheelin' On Beale*, 10.

[68] Benjamin Hooks, interview by author, 28 January 2000.

[69] Inez Wright, interview by author, 25 January 2000.

[70] McKee and Chisenhall, *Beale Black and Blue*, 88.

[71] Cantor, *Wheelin' on Beale*, 35. Cantor quotes Williams's "Down on Beale" column which appeared in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 January 1950.

[72] Verdell Mathis, interview by Steven J. Ross, February 1994.

[73] McKee and Chisenhall, *Beale Black and Blue*, 88.

[74] Rufus Thomas, interview by Steven J. Ross, June 1994.

[75] Benjamin Hooks, interview by Steven J. Ross, June 1994.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Joe B. Scott, interview by Steven J. Ross, March 1994.

[78] Alain Locke, *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1925), 4.

[79] Later in *The New Negro*, Locke wrote of the "self-expression of the Young Negro, in his poetry, his art, his education and his new outlook. . . ." (4–5). Whether or not Locke would have accepted baseball as an expression of the "dynamic" life that he envisioned, the Red Sox were, indeed, part of black Memphis's realization of his predicted "new dynamic phase" in the African American community.

[80] Unlike today's "Major Leagues," the Negro leagues are generally referred to with a lower case "l" to signify the loose organization of the various leagues.

[81] Mark Ribowsky, *A Complete History of the Negro Leagues* (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1995), 33.

[82] Kurt McBee, "The Memphis Red Sox Stadium: A Social Institution in Memphis' African American Community," *West Tennessee Historical Society Papers*, XLIX (1995): 149–64.

[83] Kurt McBee, " 'It was Just a Picnic to Play': The Memphis Red Sox Story," unpublished paper, University of Memphis, 10 December 1992.

[84] Ibid.

[85] *Chicago Defender*, 12 May 1928; *Chicago Defender*, 5 July 1924.

[86] McBee, "The Memphis Red Sox Stadium," 156.

[87] *Memphis World*, 26 March 1948.

[88] *Memphis World*, 9 April 1948.

[89] *Chicago Defender*, 28 June 1924.

[90] *Chicago Defender*, 12 May 1928.

[91] John R. Haddock and Steven J. Ross, *Black Diamonds, Blues City: Stories of the Memphis Red Sox*, documentary film, University of Memphis, 1996.

[92] Rufus Thomas, interview by Steven J. Ross, June 1994.

[93] Verdell Mathis, interview by Steven J. Ross, February 1994.

[94] Charles Patterson, interview by author, 7 January 2000.

[95] Ibid.

[96] *Chicago Defender*, 28 June 1924.

[97] Verdell Mathis, interview by Steven J. Ross, February 1994.
[98] Joe Scott, interview by Steven J. Ross, March 1994.
[99] Rufus Thomas, interview by Steven J. Ross, June 1994.
[100] McBee, "The Memphis Red Sox Stadium," 154.
[101] Benjamin Hooks, interview by Stephen J. Ross, June 1994.
[102] Group interview conducted by Steven J. Ross, October 1995.
[103] *Memphis World*, 17 January 1950.
[104] Melton, "Blacks in Memphis," 89.
[105] Joe Scott, interview by author, 20 March 1999.
[106] *Black Diamonds, Blues City: Stories of the Memphis Red Sox.*
[107] Ibid.
[108] Charles Patterson, interview by author, 7 January 2000.
[109] Frank Pearson, interview by Steven J. Ross, 1994.
[110] *Black Diamonds, Blues City: Stories of the Memphis Red Sox.*
[111] Mark Tushnet, "The Politics of Equality in Constitutional Law: The Equal Protection Clause, Dr. Du Bois, and Charles Hamilton Houston," in *The Constitution and American Life*, ed. David Thelen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 233.
[112] Benjamin Hooks, interview by Steven J. Ross, June 1994.
[113] Benjamin Hooks, interview by author, 28 January 2000.
[114] Joe Scott, interview by Steven J. Ross, March 1994.
[115] Joe Scott, interview by author, 20 March 1999.
[116] Mays and Nicholson, *The Negro's Church*, 279.
[117] James E. Blackwell, *The Black Community*, 198.
[118] John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, 3d ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 561.
[119] David Tucker, *Black Pastors and Leaders: Memphis, 1819–1972* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1975), 103–4.
[120] Tucker, *Black Pastors and Leaders*, 103–6.
[121] Lee, *Beale Street*, 102.
[122] Ibid., 78.
[123] Robin D. G. Kelley, "We Are Not What We Seem: Rethinking Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," in *The New African American Urban History*, ed. Goings and Mohl, 217.
[124] Benjamin Hooks, interview by author, 28 January 2000.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.