

THE UNIONIZATION OF BLACK MOTION PICTURE PROJECTIONISTS IN
HOUSTON AND DALLAS, 1937-1971

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council
of Texas State University-San Marcos
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of ARTS

By

Hugh T. O'Donovan, B.A.

San Marcos, Texas
Spring 2004

COPYRIGHT

by

Hugh T. O' Donovan

2004

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of the thesis represents the end of a long journey which began seven years ago. I came to Texas State University -San Marcos after being out of high school for three years. I had no idea what I wanted to study, or what I was even doing in college. But, by the second day of class, I knew I wanted to study history. This revelation occurred because of one person, Dr. Victoria Bynum. She was such an exceptional instructor that by the second day of her freshman history survey class, I was hooked. I decided then and there that I wanted to study history. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Dr. Bynum simply for her inspiration.

I am also greatly indebted to Dr. Gregg Andrews, not only for serving as the chair of my thesis committee and providing all the guidance any student could hope to receive, but also for reaching out and pulling me up from the darkness I had fallen into after my first semester of graduate school. Without his support, this thesis would not have been written.

I will also be eternally grateful to Dr. Jimmy McWilliams. Working as his teaching assistant for the last two years provided me not only the opportunity to watch a

great historian fascinate a room of three hundred students who could care less about history, but also gave me the chance to form a friendship with some one who is simply a good and genuine person.

I would also like to thank Dr. Dwight Watson and Dr. Mary Brennan for serving on my thesis committee and for not only providing advice about my topic, but also bits of wisdom about teaching and learning. Both were always willing to listen and provide advice, and for that I thank them.

After seven years, I have been fortunate enough to have had some contact with nearly every member of the History faculty. Each and every member, in their own way, provided assistance and guidance to me, and for that I am thankful. I would also like to thank the staffs at The University of Texas - Arlington, Special Collections Archives, the Dallas Public Library Archive, and the Inter-Library Loan office here at Texas State University for their support.

Finally, I owe my deepest appreciation to my family and friends. I would like to thank my father, Tony O'Donovan, for offering a non-historian's perspective on my thesis by being willing to read much of what I wrote. My three sisters, Rosheen, Denise, and Debbie, have all

provided support, be it financial or emotional, over the last few years that allowed me to follow my dream. I would also like to thank my fellow graduate students who came over to my house to play darts and let me blow off a little steam.

The last words of thanks go to my mother, Adrienne Wlodarczyk. Words cannot express all that she has done for me. I thank my mother most of all for her unconditional love and support. A son cannot ask for more.

Thank you all. The journey is just beginning again.

This manuscript was submitted on March 13, 2004.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter	
INTRODUCTION	1
1. THE I.A.T.S.E. AND THE DECISION TO ORGANIZE THE MOVING PICTURE MACHINE OPERATORS	8
2. THE FORMATION OF SEGREGATED LOCALS IN DALLAS AND HOUSTON	25
3. A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL: DALLAS LOCAL 249-A, 1949-1969	51
4. INTEGRATION AND THE LOSS OF INDEPENDENCE	72
CONCLUSION	96
APPENDIX	107
WORKS CITED	111

INTRODUCTION

Most people have been to a movie theater. You buy your ticket. You visit the concession stand. You have your ticket torn by the usher who directs you to your theater, where you hope you do not have to sit in the front row. You take your seat as your feet stick to the floor. Then the magic happens. The lights dim, an image is projected on the screen, sound comes booming from the walls, and for the next two hours you stare at the screen, munching your popcorn, hoping that little kid behind you stops kicking your seat.

That magic on the screen is controlled by one person, the motion picture machine operator, or projectionist. Yes, actors, directors, writers, producers, and many others create the images you are watching, but it is the projectionist alone who brings the images to life by operating the machine that projects them onto the screen. You could probably do without the concession worker, and most people could find their theater without the help of

the usher, but without the projectionist, the magic would not happen, and you would be left sitting in the theater with popcorn butter dripping onto your lap, the kid behind you kicking your seat. Not the ideal Friday night trip to the show.

In the early 20th Century, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes [sic] and Moving Picture Machine Operators (IATSE), an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor, began organizing projectionists. Comprised of stagehands, lighting technicians, and other stage employees, IATSE's members, overcoming fears of the new medium of film, recognized the value of projectionists to their labor organization. For the IATSE, projectionists were a valuable bargaining tool against the powerful movie studios, since the projectionists could be called upon to refuse to show a film that was not made with union labor. This power could be wielded not only in white theaters, but also in the black theaters created in response to racial segregation.

Although the IATSE never officially refused to organize black workers, not much effort was exerted to bring black theatrical workers under its fold. By 1949, in fact, only 17 segregated locals had been chartered by the IATSE. These locals were comprised of blacks who worked in

Jim Crow venues, including segregated movie theaters.

Among these locals was Local 279-A, which was chartered in Houston, Texas, in 1937, and Dallas's Local 249-A, the last segregated local chartered by the IATSE twelve years later. These locals provided a chance for black projectionists to organize and gain union protection in the black theaters of each city.

The historiography of the IATSE has largely ignored the role of segregated locals. Several Master's theses and doctoral dissertations have explored the development and history of the IATSE, but with very little attention to black members of the union. Several memoirs by former projectionists and IATSE members provide brief attention to segregated locals, or, in some cases, ignore them all together.¹

¹For studies of the IATSE, see Robert Osborne Baker, "The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the United States and Canada" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1933); John Russell Cauble, "A Study of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the United States and Canada" (Masters thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1964); Ellen Rowan Justice, "IATSE in Texas: One of the Factors Contributing to the Growth of the Feature Film Production Industry in Texas" (Master's thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1978); Phillip Andrew Alexander, "Staging Business: A History of the United Scenic Artists, 1895-1995 (Stage Design, Labor Unions)" (Ph. D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1999); Michael Charles Nielsen, "Motion Picture Craft Workers and Craft Unions in Hollywood: The Studio Era, 1912-1948" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1985); Denise Hartsough, "Film Union Meets Television: IA Organizing Efforts, 1947-1952," Labor History 33 (Summer 1992): 357-371; Germain Quinn, Fifty Years Backstage (Minneapolis: N.P., 1926); Earl Moseley, The Reel Mose: An Autobiography of a Motion Picture Theater Projectionists (Denver City, Texas: Reel Graphic, 1986); Geoffrey H. Carder, The Man in the

One exception to this historiographical trend is Kathy Anne Perkins's "Black Backstage Workers, 1900-1969," an article that studies the black stagehands of New York who comprised IATSE's Local 1-A. In New York, the Federal Theatre Project (FTP) not only provided black stage hands with an opportunity to hone their craft, but it also spurred the formation of Local 1-A. When the FTP ended in 1939, however, the members of Local 1-A found themselves struggling to find employment. Perkins, using a 1969 New York State Division of Human Rights study, shows that although the opportunity for increased employment increased when Local 1-A merged with Local 1 in 1955, racial hiring practices continued to hinder employment for black members of Local 1-A.²

The only scholarly work on the black projectionists of Houston and Dallas is Ernest Obadele-Starks's recent article, "Black Texans and Theater Craft Unionism: The Struggle for Racial Equality." One of the strengths of this article is its examination of attempts by Houston's Local 279-A to gain equal pay through legal avenues.

Box: Memoirs of a Cinema Projectionist (Cornwall: United Writers Publications Ltd., 1984); Murray Ross, Stars and Strikes: Unionization of Hollywood (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941).

²Kathy Anne Perkins, "Black Backstage Workers, 1900-1969," Black American Literature Forum 16 (Winter 1982): 160-163.

Starks relied on the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services (FMCS) records to examine the Local's attempt to improve wages. The FMCS recommended a wage increase that was far below what the members of Local 279-A demanded, explaining that the higher white wages "were justified" because white members of Local 279 worked in "larger and more extravagant suburban theaters." Starks also points out that in 1944, attempts to gain equal wages by appealing to the Fair Employment Practices Commission also failed because the theater industry did not appear "on the government's list of 'essential industries.'" ³

Despite the important contribution of Starks's study, it contains several weaknesses, perhaps the most serious of which is his erroneous claim that the black projectionists of Houston joined the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). In Houston, it was the CIO's attempt to organize black projectionists that put pressure on IATSE's white Local 279 to organize their black counterparts, but Local 279-A was an AFL affiliate. Lee A Lewis, a founding member of Local 279-A, later made it very clear that they never intended to join the CIO because, "there wasn't any way in

³Ernest Obadele-Starks, "Black Texans and Theater Craft Unionism: The Struggle for Racial Equality," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 106 (April 2003): 535.

the world for the CIO to make inroads into the amusement business, period."⁴

Utilizing oral history interviews, Local 249-A minutes, IATSE convention records, Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce records, and newspapers, this study examines the history of Locals 279-A, of Houston, and 249-A, of Dallas, through their mergers with the white locals in each city in 1969. This study shows that while segregation created an opportunity for black projectionists to organize, that opportunity was severely limited. The study will also explore the effects of racial integration on the black locals of the IATSE.

This thesis begins with an examination of the formation of the IATSE and the struggle, both internal and external, over the organization of projectionists. Chapter One concludes with an overview of working conditions and challenges faced by projectionists on the job. Chapter Two explains the role played by segregation and Jim Crow theaters in the organization of Local 279-A and Local 249-A. Chapter Three shows that, while segregation encouraged the formation of Local 249-A, it also placed numerous limitations on members of the Local, resulting in a

⁴Ibid., 538-539. Lee A. Lewis interviewed by George Green, November, 1971, Special Collections, Texas Labor Archives Oral Histories, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX, 15.

tumultuous existence for the Local. The final chapter examines the mergers of the black locals with white locals in their cities as a result of the integration of movie theaters and a movement within the IATSE to eliminate all segregated locals.⁵

⁵For an additional study of black skilled craft locals, see Clark Halker, "A History of Local 208 and the Struggle for Racial Equality in the American Federation of Musicians," Black Music Research Journal 8 (Autumn 1988): 207-222.

CHAPTER I

THE I.A.T.S.E. AND THE DECISION TO ORGANIZE MOVING PICTURE
MACHINE OPERATORS

Before investigating the formation of black projectionists' locals in Houston and Dallas, I will sketch a brief history of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes [sic] and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the United States and Canada (IATSE) that examines the external and internal battles over the unionization of all projectionists. I will then explain the duties of a projectionist and explore the working conditions and other related challenges on the job.

In 1893, hoping to combat low wages, long hours, and numerous other job-related conditions, several theatrical stage employees petitioned the American Federation of Labor (AFL) to become the National Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes. By 1902, the 'National' was changed to 'International,' a reflection of the inclusion of Montreal Local 56. Thirteen years later, the name again changed

when the Alliance was granted jurisdiction by the AFL over the projectionists. By 1995, the union officially became the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, its Territories and Canada. Each name change reflected the growing scope of the union and the increased job diversity of its membership.¹

At the IATSE's 1906 national convention, representatives from "Calcium and Electro Calcium Light Operators and Projectoscope Machine Operators of New York, Brooklyn, Chicago, and Pittsburgh" asked for the formation of separate locals for projectionists.² They were refused "on the ground that the Alliance did not desire to

¹International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the U.S. and Canada, Combined Convention Proceedings, 1893-1926 (Newark, N.J.: The Musicians' Press Print, 1926) 1898: 61 [Hereafter cited as IATSE, Proceedings, 1893-1926, followed by year and page number]. First established as craft unions, each craft with its own separate local as well as home rule, the IATSE now commands jurisdiction over a wide range of entertainment industry jobs ranging from stage hands and make-up artists to lighting technicians and animators who work in live theater or on movie and television sets. For further study of the early years of the IATSE, see Robert Osborne Baker, "The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the United States and Canada" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1933); John Russell Cauble, "A Study of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the United States and Canada" (Masters Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1964); Michael Charles Nielsen, "Motion Picture Craft Workers and Craft Unions in Hollywood: The Studio Era, 1912-1948" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1985).

²IATSE, Proceedings, 1893-1926, 1906, 218.

recognize motion pictures as a separate field."³ By the 1908 convention, however, the organization had changed its stance. At this convention, the IASTE committed itself to the official organization of projectionists:

We, regardless of the ultimatum issued at the Pittsburg, 1905, convention, whereby we set forth that the work and the men who were engaged in it, of this special industry so-called, were outside the pale of the I.A.T.S.E., although we did not stop to get it all, or do it all, but now we assert boldly, all-all-belongs to the I.A.T.S.E. ... We have to have this branch of our industry recognized as ours or lose control over all. We accepted this obligation, and with it we had to proceed to protect it, as so it was that we had to organize the workmen of this field. Local unions our I.A.T.S.E. had previously rejected were now granted charters and with such a clear, concise definition of their rights as members of the I.A.T.S.E.⁴

Despite the IATSE's new commitment to organize projectionists, some delegates who were fearful of jurisdictional encroachments, emphasized the need to clearly define the job of the projectionist. They insisted that the projectionists were to remain "strictly engaged in the purely moving picture performance, and that they must strictly and absolutely confine themselves to the care and operation of purely what are known as moving picture film machines."⁵

³Baker, "The International Alliance," 36.

⁴IATSE, Proceedings, 1893-1926, 1908, 265.

⁵Ibid.

At the 1909 convention, ten projectionists' locals, representing 562 projectionists from Boston to Los Angeles, appeared on the official roll call of delegates, with Chicago Local 145 having more votes, a reflection of membership numbers, than most of the other long standing locals. At the following convention, ten more projectionists' locals across North America received charters. By the 1912 convention, Dallas Local 249 was seated, and by the following year, Houston Local 279 also appeared on the convention roll call. While the convention records show a substantial growth in the number of projectionists' locals, this organizational growth was not without resistance, both external and internal.⁶

The external battle for jurisdictional control over the organization of projectionists involved the IATSE, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), and the Actors' National Protective Union (ANPU). Since its inception, the IATSE has had numerous disagreements with the IBEW over who would have jurisdiction to organize the various crafts that encompass the theater industry. Initially, the disagreement was resolved by giving the IATSE jurisdiction over all work behind the proscenium

⁶IATSE, Proceedings, 1893-1926, 1909, 297-298, 317; IATSE, Proceedings, 1893-1926, 1910, 339; IATSE, Proceedings, 1893-1926, 1912, 393; IATSE, Proceedings, 1893-1926, 1913, 455.

arch, "where as everything in front of the curtain would be held by the IBEW." This agreement lasted only a short time, however, because of tensions further aggravated by the increased use of moving picture projectors operated from the rear of the theater. In 1909, the IBEW claimed "jurisdiction over all electrical work, no matter where done," and threatened to call for general strikes in any theater where they were not given control over the projectionists.⁷

The ANPU also hoped to gain control over the organization of projectionists. Composed of stage actors, the ANPU feared that the expansion of the motion picture industry would lead to a decline in live theater attendance and therefore threaten to leave them unemployed. By controlling the projectionists, the ANPU hoped to limit the number of theaters that switched to using this new medium of film. On January 29, 1909, representatives of the IATSE, IBEW, and the ANPU met to discuss the organization of projectionists. Although the meeting provided no clear answer as to who would organize the projectionists, all three groups did pledge "to exert every effort to prevent

⁷IATSE, Proceedings, 1893-1926, 1908, 285; Nielsen, "Motion Picture Craft Workers," 30-31; IATSE, Proceedings, 1893-1926, 1909, 311.

the substitution of moving picture machine entertainments to take the place of members of the theatrical profession." This however, was not to be the case.⁸

The jurisdictional dispute between the IATSE and the IBEW was resolved, on paper at least, in a 1914 decision by the AFL granting full jurisdiction of projectionists to the IATSE. While it appeared that a solution had been reached, disputes over the projectionists continued for numerous years.⁹

It was due to their ability to hold secondary boycotts that projectionists were such a hot commodity to both the IATSE and the IBEW. At the 20th Annual Convention, held two years before the AFL ruling on the organization of projectionists, the IATSE leadership ruled that "Moving Picture Operators of the I.A.T.S.E. must refuse to operate machines handling ... unfair films." 'Unfair films' was, and still is today, defined as any film that was shot using non-IATSE labor. The IATSE used this threat of a secondary boycott in negotiations with the powerful movie studios that were beginning to appear in Hollywood.¹⁰

⁸IATSE, Proceedings, 1893-1926, 1909, 307.

⁹IATSE, Proceedings, 1893-1926, 1915, 548.

¹⁰IATSE, Proceedings, 1893-1926, 1912, 441; Nielsen, "Motion Picture Craft Workers," 58.

The struggle over organization of the projectionists did not come solely from external sources. The IATSE also faced resistance from their own membership. According to Germain Quinn, who served as Second Vice-President from 1910 to 1913 when much of the debate over the organization of projectionists was taking place, "the admittance of Moving Picture Machine Operators met with strenuous opposition from many men who a few years previous, had felt the lash of disunion and groaned under the weight of unbearable conditions."¹¹

Some delegates tried to dismiss projectionists as "unworthy of our consideration" and attempted to dismiss the moving picture industry as "the fad of the present" predicting that "they would be but short lived." These IATSE members simply held the same fears as those held by members of the ANPU. They feared that this new industry could possibly displace them from their current places of employment. However, wiser heads prevailed when some delegates woke "from the lethargy we were in, and we also realized the importance of this class of work as part of

¹¹Germain Quinn, Fifty Years Backstage (Minneapolis: N.P, 1926), 150.

theatrical mechanics, and that they were to be a permanent part of our industry that was advancing by giant strides."¹²

Evidently, the importance of these new laborers, and the medium as a whole, quickly became clear to the leadership and many members of the union. According to Quinn, this new group of projectionists "added skill, substance and prestige to the entire International Organization." He stressed that it would do harm to ignore the projectionists because of their "position of industrial worth and virile power."¹³

Why these workers were so important had everything to do with their position in the projection booth. As stated earlier, the IATSE would often call upon projectionists to stage a secondary boycott by refusing to show films that had been made without the use of union workers. It was the nature of projectionists' work that put them in the position to wield this power.

According to a Michigan Occupational Guide published in 1958, a projectionist was defined as one who "operates projection and sound reproduction equipment to produce a coordinated effect on a screen." Robert Baker, an IATSE

¹²IATSE, Proceedings, 1893-1926, 1908, 265, 285.

¹³Quinn, Fifty Years Backstage, 150.

projectionist, wrote in 1933 that "in the projectionists' hands is the power to make or mar the pictures they receive." While considering these simple definitions, one must keep in mind all that goes into producing the "coordinated effect." From running the projector to handling the film, a great deal of skill and knowledge is required of the projectionist.¹⁴

For many years, 35 mm. films, the most common type of film used in public theaters, were made from inflammable nitro-cellulose, but they were eventually replaced by the slow-burning cellulose acetate. Most standard film is 1 3/8 inch thick and contains approximately 16 frames per foot. When a film arrives at a theater, it comes in several sections, or reels, ranging from 1,000 feet to 2,000 feet of film. After receiving the film, the projectionist splices together two sections of the film, using cement composed of Amyl acetate, Acetone, and Glacial acetic acid. If done properly, this compound should hold the separate reels of film together through several showings of the film. Once assembled into several larger reels, the film passes through a standard projector at a

¹⁴Michigan Employment Security Commission, "Motion Picture Projectionists, Occupational Guide No. 34," Michigan Occupational Guide Series (Detroit, Mich.: Michigan Employment Security Commission,

speed of 90 feet per minute. Therefore, the standard reel of 2,000 feet takes 22 minutes to run its course through the projector.¹⁵

Since the technology was not yet available to splice all the reels of one film together, the projectionist had to watch for a change-over cue, a black dot which appears in the right-hand corner of the screen on four consecutive frames, starting 22 frames from the end of the reel. This cue tells the projectionist that it is time to start the next section of the film. If a projection booth is equipped with multiple projectors for the same screen, the projectionist is able to start the second projector, allowing the film to continue without interrupting the performance. If a projection booth only has one projector per screen, this change-over may come at the perfect time for an intermission. The projectionist then switches reels and continues showing the film once the audience returns from a visit to the concession stand. At the end of the

Employment Service Division, 1958), 4-5; Baker, "The International Alliance," 68.

¹⁵F.H. Richardson, F.H. Richardson's Blue Book of Projection, 6th ed. (New York: Quigley Publishing Company, Inc., 1935), 173, 186; R. Pitchford and F. Coombs, The Projectionist's Handbook: A complete guide to cinema operating (London: The Watkins-Pitchford Technical Publications, 1933), 34, 55-58.

film, the projectionist rewinds the finished reels in preparation for the next show.¹⁶

According to Pitchford, who described the procedure in 1933, an average of 150,000 feet of film passes through a projector each week, a number that could only have increased as theater attendance continued to climb in the years to come. Since films are expensive, it is the responsibility of the projectionist to make sure that his projector is in peak working condition to prevent damage to the film. For the projectionist, this entails an in-depth knowledge of the equipment he is using. Kalee Model no. 8, Simplex, Ross, Gaumont Eclipse, and Ernemann, were just a few of the types of projectors a projectionist might be called upon to run. Conveniently, most projectors have the same basic parts, such as a supporting base, lamp house, exciting lamp, dowser blade, gear train drive, sprockets, and lenses. It is up to the projectionist to know how to clean and maintain the machines as well as respond to problems that might arise.¹⁷

¹⁶Richardson F.H. Richardson's Blue Book of Projection, 197-198; Pitchford The Projectionist's Handbook, 34, 55-58; Philip Mannio, ABC'S of Projection Rev. ed., (State college, PA.: M.O. Publishing, 1948), 9.

¹⁷Pitchford, The Projectionist's Handbook, 42-54, 76-110; Richardson, F.H. Richardson's Blue Book of Projection, 209-241.

One of the main problems facing the projectionist is the presence of dust. Not only do customers and employees bring dust into the theater, but also the film itself produces dust as it runs its course through the projector. In fact, dust comes from everywhere. From smudging the lenses to scratching the film to wearing down the parts of the projector, dust poses many problems. To combat this dust problem, the projectionist must maintain a spotless workspace, regularly servicing the projector by oiling the various parts when it is called for, as well as handling the film with the utmost care. Unfortunately for the projectionist, all the above work could be done in vain if he is working in a projection booth that is not properly ventilated.¹⁸

Above all, what helps the projectionist present a flawless showing of a film is proper training. Most locals took it upon themselves to train their own members. Dallas Local 249-A had a training committee that reported at each meeting on the status of trainees. According to projectionist Samuel Tankersley, training was important because "to a new man, not familiar with it, film is rather

¹⁸Richardson, Richardson's Blue Book of Projection, 257-258.

fragile, and unless you follow the instructions pretty close, you could make an error."¹⁹

As the technology advanced, a few entrepreneurs attempted to establish projectionist schools. IASTE's leaders did everything they could to discourage members from attending these schools. As an alternative solution, locals began holding "classes" after regular meetings where the members could learn about new technological advancements in their field.²⁰

Union projectionists start out as apprentices, working at several different theaters under the tutelage of local union members. The reason for apprenticing at many theaters was to provide new projectionists with experience working with the variety of machines used in the theaters under contract with the local, thereby making the projectionist a more valuable asset to the local. The apprenticeship might last anywhere from a few months to a few years, depending on the apprentice. An apprentice begins by learning to rewind film or perform other simple tasks before moving on to more complex tasks such as repairing the projectors. At the end of the training

¹⁹S. R. Tankersley interviewed by George Green, November, 1971, Special Collections, Texas Labor Archives, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX, 19.

²⁰Baker, "The International Alliance," 72-73.

period, the apprentice must take a test given by the union before receiving a full membership card. In a few states, projectionists must also take a state exam before being allowed to run a projector on their own.²¹

For the projectionist, proper training enabled him to respond to the numerous problems that might occur in the projection booth. First and foremost were problems related to the fragile condition of the film itself. If not properly threaded through the projector, film can be ruined in numerous ways. Scratches, creases, torn sprocket holes, breaks, holes, or burn spots on the film are all signs to the projectionist that something is wrong. Careless handling of the film, a malfunctioning machine, or improper threading can damage the film, and it is the responsibility of the projectionist to take note of these and make the correct adjustments necessary to avoid the problem.²²

Another serious concern of every projectionist is the possibility of fire. When a fire breaks out, the projectionist must quickly assess the possible dangers and respond in the appropriate manner. A fire can cost the

²¹United States, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 1976-1977 ed. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1978), 66; Michigan Employment Security Commission, "Motion Picture Projectionists," 12.

²²1946 Audio-Visual Projectionist's Handbook (Chicago Ill.: Business Screen Magazine, 1946), 25.

theater in many ways. The film itself, as well as the projector, require a large investment of money and can quickly be destroyed by a fire. Also, a fire can interrupt the showing of a film, disturbing an admission paying audience.

The obvious other concern during a fire is for the safety of the projectionist himself. As stated, early film was made of flammable nitro-cellulose, which could burst into flames for any number of reasons. Any little spark from an unclean machine could cause the film to catch fire. Also, if for some reason the film slows down below the safe speed of 60 feet of film per minute, a fire could start as the film passes in front of the lamp. If the film slows down, the projectors' automatic fire shutter should drop down between the film and the light source, preventing the film from catching on fire. Other equipment that the projectionist might have on hand to battle fires would include a bucket of water, a bucket of sand, and a fire blanket.²³

In his memoir, The Man in the Box: Memoirs of a Cinema Projectionist, British projectionist Geoffrey Carder recounts two instances in which he confronted a fire in the

²³Richardson, F.H. Richardson's Blue Book of Projection, 240-241; Pitchford, The Projectionist's Handbook, 38-39.

booth. The first fire was defeated by simply banging an old hat on the fire to put it out. As to the second fire, Carder, by shutting down the machine and preventing the spread of the fire, was able to finish showing the film on a second projector after a fire had damaged the first projector. Therefore, due to his quick thinking, Carder was able to not only protect the film and the theater itself, but also to continue the showing of the film, much to the pleasure of the paying audience.²⁴

Unfortunately, there are times when a hat is simply not enough to fight a fire raging in the projection booth. On November 11, 1936, for example, projectionist Michael McNamara "received second degree burns of the hands and face" attempting to prevent the spread of a fire. On March 29, 1938, the New York Times reported that Solomon Spielberg, "a motion picture machine operator, suffered severe burns of the face and head yesterday when a length of film ignited." Solomon was immediately taken to the hospital in critical condition. On November 16, 1960, it was reported that 163 people, 122 of which were under the age of 14, died in a fire at the Sherazad Movie Theater in Amude, Syria, when "a spark from the projection machine

²⁴Geoffrey H. Carder, The Man in the Box: Memoirs of a Cinema Projectionist, (Cornwall: United Writers Publications Ltd., 1984), 25, 48-51.

ignited a pile of old films." Clearly, fire represented a threat to projectionists and audiences alike. While the more common use of slow-burning cellulose acetate has lessened the frequency of fires, they are still a threat. As a result, projectionists still learn how to calmly respond to this potentially dangerous situation.²⁵

Whether fighting fires or fighting dust, projectionists require a great deal of skill in the performance of their job. However, when the IATSE originally organized, the members were resistant to including these workers. As film slowly became the popular form of entertainment and the value of the projectionist to the labor movement became apparent, the IATSE welcomed the projectionists into their organization with arms wide open. However, it was only white projectionists that were welcome. As the next chapter will show, there was a great amount of resistance from union members to the organization of black projectionists, regardless of their skill.

²⁵"150 at Movie File Out Unaware of Blaze," New York Times, November 11, 1936, 53; "Film Machine Operator Burned," New York Times, March 29, 1938, 7; "Owners Held After Theater Fire Kills 163," The Dallas Morning News, November 16, 1960, sec 1 pg 1.

CHAPTER II

THE FORMATION OF SEGREGATED LOCALS IN DALLAS AND HOUSTON

In 1896, the Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson* legalized racial segregation and paved the way for "separate but equal" facilities and social arrangements across the United States. From restaurants to schools to movie theaters, the creation of separate white and black public facilities became the norm throughout the South. Segregation also led to the creation of "Jim Crow" locals within the trade union movement, and in other ways limited the organizing efforts of black workers.

This chapter will focus on how the opening of black movie theaters, as a reaction to segregation in Texas, presented an opportunity for the organization of black projectionists in Houston and Dallas into the IATSE, an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor. The chapter begins with a brief history of segregation in Texas and the establishment of black theaters, and concludes with a study

of the formation of Local 279-A in Houston, Texas, in 1937, and Local 249-A in Dallas, in 1949.¹

In Texas, because there were no state ordinances or laws requiring the segregation of movie theaters, *de facto* customs created during the time of Jim Crow mandated the segregation of movie theaters. Many theaters supported segregation by outright refusing to sell tickets to blacks. Some theaters, such as the Majestic in Dallas, designated one of two balconies for black patrons. As in most traditionally segregated venues, the Majestic had a separate entrance and box office for its black patrons. The Majestic never allowed blacks into the theater lobby or any other part of the theater where they might interact with white patrons. If black customers wanted something from the concession stand, they would stand by the door and "someone would come out to them, take their order, bring them their popcorn, [and] make the change."²

Some white theaters also offered monthly midnight shows just for black audiences. These showings offered blacks a chance to see black-oriented motion pictures.

¹For a recent discussion of Local 249-A and 279-A, see Ernest Obadele-Starks, "Black Texans and Theater Craft Unionism: The Struggle for Racial Equality," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 106 (April 2003): 532-548.

²Richard Schroder, Lone Star Picture Show (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001): 57. Karl Lybrand quoted in Schroder, Lone Star Picture Show, 129.

Created by the Sack Amusement Enterprise, of Dallas, or the Foster and Lincoln Studios, or by individuals such as Spencer Williams and Oscar Micheaux, these films employed black actors, directors, producers, and screen writers and gave black audiences alternatives to the popular white films of the day.³

For some black audiences in Texas, segregated balconies and monthly midnight shows were not their only options. As the number of white theaters increased in many major cities, many white theater owners, recognizing the potential profit to be gained by catering to a black audience, began establishing black theaters. (See Appendix A) Compared to the white theaters, these black theaters were often significantly smaller in size. The Pastime in Houston, for example, seated only eight persons across. These theaters offered a wide selection of films for black audiences, ranging from minority produced films to the same films showing at the white theater, often right across the street.⁴

³Schroder, Lone Star Picture Show, 129-131. For further information on black film making in Texas, see The Handbook of Texas Online, <<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/>>. (5 March 2003). On Oscar Micheaux, see The Oscar Micheaux Home Page, <<http://www.shorock.com/arts/micheaux/>>. (5 March 2003).

⁴Schroder, Lone Star Picture Show, 55.

While most black theaters were owned by white men who also often owned a white theater in the area, or who were controlled by large companies that employed white theater managers, there were exceptions. In Houston, for a short time, one exception was the Lincoln Theater, owned and operated by a black family until the 1920s, when the B. J. Amusement Company, of Nashville, Tennessee, bought the theater. In Dallas, a former member of Local 249-A left the union and eventually purchased and ran the Star Theater for a short time.⁵

In 1937, Dallas was home to thirty-three theaters, two of which--the Harlem and the State--were black. That same year in Houston, there were twenty-seven theaters, five of which--Lincoln, Park, Pastime, Roxy, and St. Elmo--were black theaters. By 1950, Dallas had eighty-one theaters, eight of them black, while Houston had seventy-two theaters, nine of which catered to black patrons. In some cases, these theaters were nothing more than a tarp hanging on the wall of an abandoned warehouse with a seating

⁵Lee A. Lewis interviewed by George Green, November, 1971, Special Collections, Texas Labor Archives, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX, 11. In his interview, Lewis recalls the Lincoln Theater as the only black owned theater in Houston. He also makes reference to a theater in Austin, TX, owned by one Dr. Gibbons as the only other black controlled theater of which he knew. "Monthly Meeting of Local 249-A, June 11, 1953," Dallas Moving Picture Machine Operators Union Local 249-A Records, AR 65-1-1, Special Collections, Texas Labor Archives, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX.

capacity of not much more than twenty people. Some theaters remained open for a short time, only to close and reopen again under new management or in a new location.⁶

While these theaters never reached the scale of the grand movie palaces, such as the 2,400 seat Majestic in Dallas, they did offer black audiences an alternative way to see first-run motion pictures. Black audiences no longer had to buy their ticket at a separate booth and enter the theater through a separate entrance. Separate theaters gave blacks a chance to enjoy a film while sitting someplace other than the segregated upper balcony where the view might be awful and the sound almost impossible to hear. These theaters also gave them the chance to see not only the popular films of the day, but also films produced with a black audience in mind. Finally, the creation of black theaters provided black projectionists an opportunity to unionize.

When Local 279-A in Houston and Local 249-A in Dallas joined the IATSE, they became part of a union that, by 1952, had 149 projectionist locals located throughout the United States and Canada. Those 149 locals included twelve segregated projectionist locals as well as five additional

⁶Texas Theatre Totals, 1937-1950, Box 406, Folder 3, Interstate Theater Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas.

segregated locals that included workers from a variety of other theater crafts. (See Appendix B)

At the 3rd Annual Convention in 1895, when the IATSE was known simply as the National Alliance, Charles Randall, a representative from Buffalo asked "whether there was a color or creed line to be drawn in the N.A." President Lee Hart, of Chicago, responded, "As members of a body affiliated with the A.F. of L. and under their jurisdiction, we must live up to their laws, and Locals must use discretionary powers in electing members to their bodies."⁷

The goal of the AFL was to organize skilled workers into various craft unions. Since many blacks held unskilled positions, the AFL largely ignored them. When the AFL initially organized in 1886, President Samuel Gompers intended to create a union that would also extend benefits to blacks. Although the AFL's official stance was that any union seeking affiliation must pledge "never to discriminate against a fellow worker on account of color, creed, or nationality," the international union did not have the power to enforce that decree. As a result, the AFL left the locals to deal with the issue themselves.

⁷International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the U.S. and Canada, Combined Convention

Initially, Gompers was concerned that if blacks were not organized under the umbrella of the AFL, some other organization would come along and organize black workers to the detriment of the AFL.⁸

In reality, only when blacks and whites competed for the same jobs or in situations in which blacks could be used as strike breakers to undermine bargaining efforts did the AFL exert efforts to organize black workers. After the mid-1930s, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) began organizing black workers, forcing the AFL to respond. Whereas the AFL attempted to organize workers into craft unions, based on job or skill, the CIO worked to form industrial unions that lumped everyone in the same industry, regardless of skill, job description, race, or gender, into one integrated union.

With little direction from the AFL, its affiliates, including the IATSE, dealt with the organization of blacks in three different ways: by excluding them, by forming black auxiliaries, or by creating segregated locals. Each

Proceedings, 1893-1926. (Newark, N.J.: The Musicians' Press Print, 1926), (1895): 17.

⁸H.R. Northup, Organized Labor and the Negro (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishing, 1971) 8; Ray F. Marshall, The Negro and Organized Labor (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965): 11-15; Herman D. Bloch, "Craft Unions and the Negro in Historical Perspective," The Journal of Negro History 43 (January 1958): 14-15.

method worked to limit and control the involvement of blacks in the workforce and the labor movement.⁹

The AFL affiliates that practiced exclusion did so in two ways. The direct method involved a constitutional provision, or Caucasian clause, expressly denying blacks admittance to the union. The indirect method of exclusion included refusing to accept or even review the applications of black workers, as well as denying apprentices and journeymen positions to qualified blacks. The practice of exclusion worked best in crafts where there was a small pool of black labor that posed little if any threat to the job security of white workers. Unions in both the railroad industry and building trades historically practiced both forms of exclusion with regard to allowing black labor into their membership.¹⁰

In areas where blacks represented a larger percentage of the labor pool, and therefore could potentially be used

⁹On the distinction between exclusion, segregated locals, and auxiliary locals, see: Bloch, "Craft Unions and the Negro in Historical Perspective," 10-33; Herbert Hill, "Racism Within Organized Labor: A Report of Five Years of the AFL-CIO, 1955-1960," The Journal of Negro Education 30 (Spring 1961): 109-118; Ray Marshall, "The Negro and Organized Labor," The Journal of Negro Education 32 (Autumn 1963): 375-389; Idem, "Unions and the Negro Community," Industrial and Labor Relations Review 17 (January 1964): 179-202; Clyde W. Summers, "Admission Policies of Labor Unions," The Quarterly Journal of Economics 61 (November 1946): 66-107. On the CIO and race, see Michael Goldfield, "Race and the CIO: The Possibilities for Racial Egalitarianism During the 1930s and 1940s," International Labor and Working-Class History 44 (Fall 1993): 1-32.

¹⁰Marshall, "The Negro and Organized Labor," 375-377.

by employers as strikebreakers or as a negotiation tool to keep white wages down, white unions were forced to practice alternatives to exclusion. One method was to allow blacks into an auxiliary local, in which they paid union dues and were expected to behave like union men, but in which they were completely controlled by the white local to which they were attached. The auxiliaries were not issued a separate charter, had no voice in local or international issues, and were represented by white officers in all bargaining agreements. Simply put, the auxiliaries were used to keep the black labor pool from striking by offering a watered-down version of union membership.

In many ways, the final option, that of segregated locals, better served the needs of its black membership, even more so than the integrated unions created by the CIO. Segregated locals nevertheless limited job opportunities for blacks by restricting them to black sections of cities or, as in the case of locals formed under the IATSE, by restricting them to jobs created because of segregation, such as in black movie theaters or music clubs. However, segregated locals offered options not available to members of auxiliary locals. Within these segregated locals, black members assumed positions of leadership, such as that of President and Business Agent, that they never would have

assumed as members of an integrated local. Also, because Houston's Local 279-A and Dallas's Local 249-A were charter members of the IATSE, they also followed IATSE guidelines for running the locals, including home rule.

Home rule gave the locals autonomy in their own affairs and made the business agent the most powerful person in the local since it was his responsibility to negotiate all contracts with the theaters. Also, due to the fact that the IATSE locals served as a sort of hiring agency, in which theater owners hired the union and then the union provided the projectionists, it was the responsibility of the business agent to decide which projectionist would go to which theater. If a projectionist was to be blacklisted from working in a theater, the business agent could still find some work for him. However, if the projectionist was to upset the business agent representing his local, that agent could prevent the projectionist from finding any work at all. In an integrated union, a black worker would never be given such power over a white worker.¹¹

By allowing these various methods of black organization, the AFL was simply accommodating the desires

¹¹Murray Ross, Stars and Strikes: Unionization of Hollywood. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941): 21.

of its rank and file members. Regardless of their fears, or racism, Gompers and other AFL leaders had one very important motivational factor: they wanted members. These men in charge realized that the only way they could gain and keep members was to follow the wishes of the skilled workers they were targeting. Because of racial segregation in the South, it seemed logical to AFL leaders for these unions to be segregated, too. Due to deeply embedded racism within the AFL, any attempts to form integrated unions that challenged the social norms of the time would have met strong resistance. However, the AFL could not continue to ignore black labor in the 1930s when the CIO worked to form integrated unions in fields traditionally controlled by the AFL. In fact, it was such a challenge from the CIO that spurred the AFL into action in Houston and led to the formation of Local 279-A.¹²

For most projectionists, being introduced to the profession was as simple as knowing a projectionist who was willing to teach the trade. Once the future projectionist made this initial contact, he then spent a significant amount of time as an apprentice, doing menial tasks and occasionally filling in for a shift or two each week until

¹²On the CIO in Texas, see Murray Polakoff, "The Development of the Texas State C.I.O. Council" (Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1955).

someone died or another theater opened. This pattern was the case for all projectionists, black or white, including Lee A. Lewis, one of the founding members of Local 279-A in Houston.¹³

In a 1971 interview, Lewis fondly recalled that white members of Houston's Local 279 had taught him the craft of projection. Lewis remembered that at one of his early meetings with some of the projectionists, they took two projectors apart and told him to put them back together:

They threw all this junk in a tub and told me to get the machines out of it. It was about six months before I got each component part together, and if something didn't work, I would have to tear it right back down. I practically came up under the present old members of No. 279, Jess Holby, Eddie Miller - too many to mention... All the older members of No. 279 practically called me son; they practically raised me - Jody Cramer and too many to mention. Most of them are gone... The colored fellows they found interested in the trade, they just tried to help more than anything else.¹⁴

Unfortunately for Lewis and other black projectionists in the Houston area, these paternalistic attitudes and actions on the part of white projectionists did not translate into union organization. It was not until 1937, when the CIO launched a drive to organize black projectionists in

¹³Lewis interview, 4, TLA, UTA.

¹⁴Ibid., 4-6.

Houston, that IATSE's Local 279 made any effort to organize them.

Some of the black projectionists had attempted to organize themselves before 1937, but faced resistance from within because, as Lewis said, "A lot of fellows didn't see it. They were satisfied as per se." While they did form "kind of a little association-like thing," they were very aware that not much would become of their organization without some type of national backing from a recognized labor organization. The chance for national backing became a reality in 1937, when the CIO arrived in Houston, hoping to organize black projectionists.¹⁵

Before 1937, according to Lewis, most of Houston's black theaters had nonunion projectionists operating the machines. Starting in 1937, a representative of the CIO repeatedly approached Lewis about organizing black projectionists, but Lewis avoided talking to him. Rather than discuss organizing with the CIO representative, Lewis turned to white members of Local 279 and told them that the CIO had contacted him. As Lewis recalled,

So, with the friendship that existed between me and Eddie Miller and Adolph and those other members of 279, I went down and talked to them and told them what was happening. So they asked me what I wanted to do. Said that we want to organize and want you to come to our

¹⁵Ibid., 12.

aid. He said, 'Okay, how much are you getting a week?' I told him \$12.50. So he says, 'Well, we'll stop that.'¹⁶

With that simple exchange, the black projectionists of Houston began the path toward organizing Local 279-A. Almost immediately, they replaced white "scab" projectionists at the Park, Palace, Pastime, and Rainbow theaters with black projectionists from Local 279-A. However they faced stiff resistance from the managers of the Lincoln, Roxy, and Washington theaters.

At the Lincoln, manager W.B. Goodrich displayed placards outside his theater reading, "This Theatre Always Has and Always Will Employ Colored Operators." While the theater, owned by the B.J. Amusement Company, did employ black projectionists, according to Lewis, those employees had been brought in from out of town and were being paid "at less than union wages." The union also picketed the Roxy theater, where manager B. Barraco refused to pay the the \$27.50 per week salary demanded by the union, instead employing a "non-union Negro and one Mexican."¹⁷

While Goodrich said he would "be glad to do business with them," it was over a month before contracts were

¹⁶Ibid., 7.

¹⁷Ibid., 10; "Union Workers Picket Two Show Houses," Houston Informer, May 29, 1937, p. 1-2.

signed at both the Lincoln and Roxy theaters. However during that month, the Local received support from most of the black population which refused to go to either theater. Occasionally, sympathizers took matters into their own hands. In one instance, someone exploded a smoke bomb at the Lincoln. A week later, another person exploded a stink bomb in the ticket booth at the Lincoln that released an odor "about 100 times as strong as the ordinary dirty socks or stinking feet."¹⁸

Black unionists portrayed members of the black community who did not support the projectionists' cause as traitors to their race, appealing to racial solidarity for class purposes. When picketing began at the Lincoln, Lewis pledged, "We are going to fight the colored scabs even harder because they are traitors to the race." At a meeting of the Third Ward Civic Club, an AFL state organizer complimented the black community for its support during the projectionists' strike. However, he did point out that some were still crossing the picket lines at the theaters. When someone suggested that it could be people "from the South End" who "did not understand," another

¹⁸"Bomb Is Thrown Into Lincoln Ticket Office," Houston Informer, June 12, 1937, 1; "Union Did It," Houston Informer, May 29, 1937, 1, 3. "Two Theaters Signed Up For Union Men," Houston Informer, June 26, 1937, 1.

person responded that they "resented any suggestion that the working girls were not loyal to the race."¹⁹

Picketing was not the only method used by the Local. To combat resistance to unionization at the Washington Theater, owned by Vic Vorak, who had fought unionization by Local 279 in one of his white theaters, the Best Theater, Lewis and other black projectionists offered free movies for two weeks in a vacant lot near the Washington. This act killed any business for the Washington Theater. Vorak had no choice but to sign the union contract with Local 279-A.²⁰

"Friendships" aside, Lewis and the other projectionists knew that to become part of the IATSE was the best option for them. According to Lewis, "There wasn't any way in the world for the CIO to make inroads into the amusement business, period." Once the CIO realized that black projectionists were joining the IATSE, the CIO, according to Lewis, just stopped trying to organize them. While Lewis did believe that the IATSE would have eventually organized black projectionists, he acknowledged that the intervention by the CIO hurried up the process.

¹⁹"Union Workers Picket Two Show Houses," Houston Informer, May 29, 1937, 1-2; "State Organizer of AFL Gives Support to Striking Projectionists," Houston Informer, June 12, 1937, 1, 8.

²⁰Lewis interview, 8, 10, TLA, UTA.

Because pressure from the CIO forced the IATSE to organize the black projectionists, Lewis emphasized that he "will be eternally grateful to the CIO for it."²¹

Twelve years later, black projectionists in Dallas also joined the IATSE when they formed Local 249-A, but organizing efforts there took a much different path from the one in Houston. The overall anti-labor atmosphere of Dallas, which encouraged violence against members of organized labor, strongly suggested that it would require more than the mere intervention of the CIO to organize the Dallas black projectionists.

The formation of Local 249-A in Dallas owed much to the efforts of Samuel Tankersley, who was born on October 16, 1903, in Chatfield, Texas. Tankersley had spent a substantial portion of his adult life working for a life insurance company when a co-worker, Leroy Hawkins, overheard him wish that he could find another career path. Hawkins, who had been a projectionist during World War II in Abilene, Texas, and who spent his evenings running the projector at the Lincoln in Dallas, offered to teach Tankersley how to be a projectionist. Tankersley, after working with Hawkins three nights a week, soon took over

²¹Ibid., 15-18.

Friday and Sunday night shifts so that Hawkins could explore other ventures.²²

Tankersley then accepted a job at the Star Theater, where he made \$47.50 for a nine-shift week, and Hawkins moved to the Park Theater. Both men became curious when they noticed that other black theaters--the State, Harlem, and Century--appeared to be doing better business than the two theaters where they were employed. All three of these black theaters had white projectionists. Tankersley and Hawkins approached the manager of the Century about the possibility of putting a black projectionist in the booth. As Tankersley remembered,

He [the theater manager] stated that he had no objection to hiring Negro operators, but he had union operators. They were white, but they were union operators, and he preferred to have union operators... whenever something happens. It's not his problem. It's the union's problem to keep that job covered.²³

It was clear to Tankersley and Hawkins that the only way they would be able to get the jobs they wanted was to become unionized. To achieve this goal, they turned to John W. Rice, secretary-manager of the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce. In a letter to Rice dated November 1, 1947,

²²S. R. Tankersley interviewed by George Green, November, 1971, Special Collections, Texas Labor Archives, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX, 1-2.

²³Ibid., 3.

Hawkins volunteered to gather the men and properly train them, "provided the Chamber assume the responsibility of placing them in Theaters in Dallas that have colored patronage." Responding to the letter on November 12, 1947, Rice explained to Hawkins that the Chamber had previously attempted to place black projectionists in theaters and that "the consent of theater owners was secured after some pressure had been placed on them but that no supply of operators was found." However, Rice pledged the support of the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce and asked Hawkins for the names of anyone he knew who might want to be trained, and he asked him to begin preparations for a training course.²⁴

Concerns aside, Rice took over the crusade, soon contacting anyone he could to champion the cause on behalf of black projectionists. Rice sent Hawkins down to Houston to find out how Local 279-A had been formed, and Rice contacted the white business agent of Local 249 in Dallas, Harvey Hill, in hopes of gaining the union's support. Rice also wrote to Mr. R. W. Hilliard at Prairie View

²⁴Leroy Hawkins to John Rice, November 1, 1947, J W Rice Correspondence, 1947, Box 1, Folder 11, Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas; John Rice to Leroy Hawkins, November 12, 1947, J W Rice Correspondence Box 1, Folder 1, Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas.

University, where he knew some projectionists had been trained, asking for the names of some potential projectionists "to make certain of an adequate labor supply."²⁵

The letter to Hilliard resulted in the recruitment of one possible projectionist, and Hawkins's visit to Houston, combined with more letters to local 279-A, yielded an additional five names. With an ample supply of labor, Rice went about trying to convince the theater owners to hire these workers for their theaters. In letters sent on July 22, 1948, to the managers of the Park, Harlem, Lincoln, and State theaters, Rice emphasized that he had several projectionists "whose experience, education and training indicate they would be desired as efficient employees."²⁶

The Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce required each of the men who hoped to join the local union to fill out job applications. Eight applications have survived, and they help create a profile of who these men were. (See Appendix C)

²⁵John Rice to Mr. R.W. Hilliard, November 12, 1947, J W Rice Correspondence, 1947, Box 1, Folder 11, Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas.

²⁶John Rice to Mr. Jack Adams, July 22, 1948, J W Rice Correspondence, 1948, Box 1, Folder 12, Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas.

As for the experience to which Rice referred, only two of the eight men had less than four years experience as a projectionist. Leroy Hawkins had seven years and nine months worth of experience, and Morris Turner had managed to amass over twelve years of experience. The two men with less than four years, Samuel Tankersley (nine months) and Arthur Foston (one year and two months), pointed out that they had received extensive training as projectionists.²⁷

These men were also well-educated. Only two, Johnson Herbert and Morris Turner, did not finish high school. Of those who did graduate from high school, only Tankersley did not go on to attend college. Two of the eight, Leroy Hawkins and Arthur Foston, finished college. Foston graduated from Prairie View A&M College on August 11, 1948, with a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Education. These men ranged in age from the youngest, twenty-one-year-old Scott Watkins, to the most senior, forty-four-year-old Tankersley. All but one of the men had been born in Texas,

²⁷Johnson Herbert, Application for Projectionist, July 19, 1948; Roscoe Miller, Application for Projectionist, July 19, 1948; Leroy Hawkins, Application for Projectionist, July 22, 1948; Samuel Tankersley, Application for Projectionist, July 22, 1948; Scott Watkins, Application for Projectionist, July 23, 1948; Morris Turner, Application for Projectionist, August 3, 1948; Kenneth Harland, Application for Projectionist, August 6, 1948; Arthur Foston to Scott Watkins, August 19, 1948, J W Rice Correspondence, 1948, Box 1, Folder 12, Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas.

and all but one was married. Several of them had military experience, and four owned their own homes.²⁸

These applications also show the diversity of work experience these men had. Hawkins made \$200 a month selling insurance while also making between \$30 and \$45 per week as a part-time projectionist. He quit both jobs to take a full-time job as a projectionist, making \$47.50 a week. Before Tankersley decided to become a full-time projectionist, he had been selling insurance for \$60 a week. He had also spent three years working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture as an inspector, making \$46 per week. At the time the union was being formed, Morris Turner was washing cars for \$35 a week after having spent the previous year and a half as the chief projectionist while in the Army. As a projectionist, Turner had been making \$27.50 a week in addition to his base Army pay. Kenneth Harland had served as both a letter carrier and in shipping and receiving for the post office before deciding to become a full-time projectionist. Some of these men had been part-time projectionists, also known as swing men, as part of Houston Local 279-A, and they were hoping to find a permanent position.²⁹

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

As qualified as these men were, there was still difficulty organizing them. One problem facing Rice in organizing the black projectionists was that the white Local 249 had yet to agree to help in any way. On August 16, 1948, Rice made this issue very clear in a letter to Herbert Johnson, one of the projectionists from Houston, when he emphasized that they were establishing a black projectionists union "with the idea in mind that should the local union not feel disposed to accept Negroes as employees we would still be able to secure the jobs we have in mind."³⁰ That same day, the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce called a meeting to select officers for the union. The Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce agreed to sponsor the union and continue to work on its behalf until the union was able to gain national recognition.³¹

On October 25, 1948, Rice sent a letter to E. J. Miller, the district representative for the IATSE, praising the advantages of union membership and asking for his help

³⁰John Rice to Herbert Johnson, August 16, 1948, J W Rice Correspondence, 1948, Box 1, Folder 12, Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas. A letter from Rice to Mr. Simon King, of the Tuskegee Institute, on August 17, 1948, expresses the same concerns about the willingness of Local 249 to cooperate.

³¹Minutes from Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce meeting, August 16, 1948, J W Rice Correspondence, 1948, Box 1, Folder 12, Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas.

in gaining union recognition for the black projectionists in Dallas.³² Miller responded on November 10, 1948, with a short note saying he would soon be in Dallas and would discuss the matter with Rice at that time.³³ Evidently disappointed by the lack of response from Miller, Rice sent a letter to Richard Walsh, president of the IATSE, on February 15, 1949, asking for his intervention. According to Rice, "No satisfactory results have been obtained from these conferences" with Harvey Hill, the business manager of Local 249, and Miller. Finally, on October 21, 1949, the black projectionists met with members of Local 249 and became organized into Local 249-A. A few days later, on the first of November, 1949, they received their charter, making them an officially recognized segregated local of the IATSE.³⁴

One reason Local 249 was not entirely supportive of the organization of black projectionists to work in black theaters was that the white local had contracts with three

³²John Rice to E.J. Miller, October 25, 1948, J W Rice Correspondence, 1948, Box 1, Folder 12, Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas.

³³E.J. Miller to Rice, November 10, 1948, J W Rice Correspondence, 1948, Box 1, Folder 12, Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas.

³⁴John Rice to Richard Walsh, February 15, 1949, J W Rice Correspondence, 1949, Box 1, Folder 13, Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas.

of the black theaters --the Harlem, Century, and State theaters.³⁵ These white projectionists resented that they had to give up their position, even to a fellow union member. An agreement was reached in which Local 249-A would not take control of the theaters until the current contracts Local 249 had with the theaters expired in February, 1951. Tankersley recalled that when the time came for Local 249-A to take control of the theaters, members of Local 249 "were still hostile toward us, so much so that they refused to let us know what pay scale they were getting on all three theaters." Unlike the black projectionists in Houston, who in many cases were trained or otherwise supported by the white local, it was apparent that Dallas's black projectionists would have a less cooperative relationship with the white local there.³⁶

This strained relationship marked the entire history of 249-A. While at least a degree of harmony seemed to exist in Houston between 279 and 279-A, culminating in a peaceful merger when the locals integrated in 1969, fierce

³⁵Earlier in the interview, pages 2-4, Tankersley listed the State, Harlem and Century as having white union operators under contract until 1951 and that Hawkins was working at the Lincoln in 1948. Then, on page 10 of the interview, Tankersley lists the Lincoln, Century and State theaters as being the ones whose contracts are now expiring. Then again, on page 17 of the interview, he reverts to saying it was the State, Harlem, and Century.

³⁶Tankersley interview, 10, TLA, UTA.

competition over a limited number of jobs not only divided 249 and 249-A, but also the members of 249-A themselves. As the next chapter will show, these tensions later resulted in a merger that was anything but peaceful.

CHAPTER III

A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL:

DALLAS LOCAL 249-A, 1949-1969

Union membership in the IATSE benefited the black projectionists of Local 249-A almost immediately. A few days after receiving their charter, Local 249-A signed its first contract with the Park Theater. The contract guaranteed the union's projectionist \$1.50 per hour, or \$72 per week.¹

In keeping with the principle of home rule, members of Local 249-A negotiated directly with theater owners and managers about contracts, walked their own picket lines, ran their own meetings and elections, collected their own dues and fines, and trained new projectionists, all without outside interference from white Local 249 or any other white member of the IATSE. Outside influences exerted themselves on the union only during those times when the

¹"Contract between Local 249-A and the Park Theatre." Dallas Moving Picture Machine Operators Union Local 249-A records, AR 65-1-1, Texas Labor Archives, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX.

union would call in outside help, such as during difficult contract disputes or strikes.

Since the members of Local 249-A were restricted to signing contracts only with minority theaters, only a limited number of jobs were available to them. As a result, the union suffered from internal turmoil and fighting over these jobs that threatened to tear it apart. In spite of these problems, however, Local 249-A set out to place members in the projection booth of every black theater in Dallas.²

The initial contract with the Park Theater, which called for wages of \$72 per week, also guaranteed projectionists who worked at the theater two weeks paid vacation, time and a half for overtime, double time, as well as a flat rate of \$6 per performance of midnight shows and morning matinees. This contract, and every subsequent contract the union signed with all other theaters, also stipulated that the theater would provide "ice water in a sanitary condition," and that the projectionist "shall not be required to carry film or supplies to or from the projection room." According to Tankersley, the owner of the Park, Joseph Lysowski, "Squawked and said that they

²Tankersley interview, 4, TLA, UTA.

couldn't afford to pay that much money," but they signed the contract anyway.³

After the signing of the initial contract with the Park, the Local went after the Lincoln Theater, where they faced stiff resistance. The owners, G.L. Griffin and E.W. Conrad, did not want to put a union operator in the booth. With permission from the international representative, Local 249-A put up a picket line in front of the theater. The picket was so effective at first that Griffin sought, and eventually received, a restraining order against the union to stop picketing. Griffin charged that the union was intimidating customers, and that using "the word 'Negro' on placards was inflammatory." District court Judge Sarah Hughes initially issued a temporary restraining order, but then granted a permanent restraining order thirty days later and fined the union \$100.⁴

Not long after, Griffin opened a white theater in the area where Local 249 was working. Local 249 used a successful picket line to get a projectionist in that theater, and forced Griffin to use Local 249-A in the

³"Contract between Local 249-A and the Park Theatre." TLA, UTA; Tankersley interview, 5, TLA, UTA.

⁴Tankersley interview, 6-8, TLA, UTA; "Pickets Ordered To Take 'Negro' From Placards," The Dallas Morning News, December 30, 1949, Part III, 18.

Lincoln. Griffin signed a contract with Local 249-A for \$50 a week, the smallest pay scale at any theater under contract with Local 249-A, but at least they had another theater under contract.⁵

The next contract attempt, which targeted the Wheatley Theater, was a learning experience for the union. In a "case of chiseling," as Tankersley recalled, the owner of the Wheatley, E.J. Jobe, stood his ground with the manager of the Park, refusing to sign a contract with the Local unless the wages at the Park were adjusted, too. To sign the Wheatley to contract, the Local agreed to lower the wages at the Park to \$1.25 an hour instead of the agreed upon \$1.50. While it cost the union wages, Tankersley observed that "not being as experienced and unified as we learned to be later, we just went through with it and put up with that kind of a situation." A short time later, Jobe leased the theater to a Mr. Burrel, who, rather than employ union labor, used a relative to operate the projectors. Burrel adamantly refused to discuss the issue with Local 249-A. The union attempted to contact him

⁵Tankersley interview, 15-16, TLA, UTA; Tankersley states that the reason their picket was unsuccessful was because they did not have a man working at the Lincoln before they set up the picket, but no reason is given for why Local 249's picket was successful other than that the new theater was open "where 249 formerly had members working." It is can be assumed that Griffin took over a theater that previously had employed union operators.

through their law firm, Mullinax, Wells, and Morris, but before anything could be done, Burrel closed the theater due to lack of attendance.⁶

As stated in the last chapter, Local 249-A had an agreement with Local 249 that they would gain control of the State, Harlem, and Century--all minority theaters--when the contracts with Local 249 expired. When the contracts expired, however, Local 249 refused to provide Local 249-A with copies of the contracts they had been working under. As a result, Local 249-A signed contracts with the theaters for much lower wages than what Local 249 had been earning. However, a few years later, the attitude of Local 249 had changed a bit. When the White Theater, where Local 249 was working under contract, changed its name to the Elite Theater and switched to black patronage, Harvey Hill, business agent for Local 249, provided a copy of their contract to Local 249-A. Tankersley, who had become business agent for Local 249-A, signed a contract with the manager of the Elite for \$97.50 per week, the same salary which the white projectionists of Local 249 had been earning.⁷

⁶Tankersley interview, 8-10, TLA, UTA.

⁷Ibid., 10.

Unfortunately for Local 249-A, switching to black patronage did not prove to be profitable for the managers of the Elite Theater, who soon leased it to Father J. Vaughn Brown. Brown then hired a manager, Wendell Henry, who in turn hired his union-trained cousin to operate the booth as non-union for \$25 per week, thus negating Local 249-A's contract with the Elite. Tankersley and Local 249-A immediately obtained permission from the IATSE's international representative, E.J. Miller, to set up a picket in front of the Elite Theater. This picket ended up lasting six weeks.⁸

Initially, Local 249-A received support during the strike from businesses that surrounded the theater, but, due to the long duration of the picket, that changed when those businesses started losing patrons. Tankersley recalled that a local barbershop owner yelled at the union to quit walking in front of his business and "came up one day with a gun sticking out of his pocket--the butt of it sticking out of his pocket." The Elite Theater manager also managed to "employ" some local kids to harass picketers by stepping on their heels and assaulting them

⁸Ibid., 11-12.

with rocks. The picketing continued, however, in part due to some surprising support from the Dallas police.⁹

Again, in an action contradictory to earlier and later actions, Harvey Hill, of Local 249, introduced Tankersley and some other members of Local 249-A to the Dallas chief of police. The chief pointed out to the union that "the property line was two feet out from the wall," noting that they "didn't have to walk out there on that curb." This allowed the union to carry out their picket while being protected from the weather, and it reassured them that the police would not interfere with their right to be picketing. After six weeks, Brown and his manager finally signed a contract with the Local to put a union projectionist in the booth.¹⁰

Financial troubles at the Elite soon jeopardized the arrangement, however. When Brown and the men from whom he was leasing the Elite apparently engaged in a dispute, Tankersley went to the owners of the building and attempted to buy the theater on behalf of Local 249-A. Members of the Local formed the United Business Enterprise, agreed to sell stocks to their members and trainees, set aside \$2,000 of the Local's funds, and various members pledged

⁹ Ibid., 11-14

¹⁰ Ibid.

additional amounts totaling \$1,950, all for the purpose of buying the Elite. Before they purchased the theater, however, Brown bought it, instead, and then leased it to the union for a down payment of \$2,500 and \$400 per month. The Elite lasted for six months under the management of the United Business Enterprise before, according to Tankersley, "all our money was gone." The union then closed down the theater, paid off its debts, divided the remaining money among the members, and "called it a bad deal." Brown attempted to reopen the theater but closed it down after a month because of poor business. He never attempted to open it again.¹¹

Because of financial pressures and numerous changes in management, the signing of a contract had represented a somewhat hollow victory for Local 249-A. According to the Local's monthly meeting records from January 9, 1950, through November 10, 1957, for example, there were fifteen management changes, or the closing and re-opening of various theaters under contract with the Local. At the same time, there were numerous requests for a reduction in wages. In June, 1952, for example, the Star sought to cut wages by \$15 per week, but Local 249-A voted instead to

¹¹"Monthly Meeting of Local 249-A, Nov. 11, 1955," "Special Meeting of 249-A Local, Nov. 14, 1955," Dallas Moving Picture Machine

offer the manager a pay cut of \$5.00 per week in exchange for being allowed to use the booth at the theater for training, to which the manager agreed. On May 14, 1953, the membership voted down granting a wage reduction at both the State and Century, and on October 15, 1953, the manager of the Lincoln agreed to a wage increase, only to back down two months later and threaten to use non-union labor. The man he wanted to hire, Mr. Francis Cannon, had formerly been a trainee of the Local.¹²

These contract disputes were bound to have an adverse impact on any union, and Local 249-A was no exception. Almost from the outset, members of Local 249-A fought among themselves. Many members quit, did not attend mandatory monthly meetings, did not pay dues and fines, and verbally attacked each other. According to Tankersley,

We had many problems, even internal problems, with our members. We had more members than we had jobs for them, and some of the men got displeased and wouldn't pay their dues on time, and so many things came up to discourage somebody where somebody was determined... We had a terrible time, but there were enough of us to remain on the right side to keep the charter.

Operators Union Local 249-A records, AR 65-1-1, TLA, UTA; Tankersley interview, 14-15.

¹²Unfortunately, these records stop on November 10, 1957, and are filled with large gaps. At the March 15, 1954, meeting it is announced that 23 meeting records were missing: November and December, 1949, March - October 1950, January - November 1951, and November 1953.

To maintain their charter, the Local had to maintain an active roster of seven members, all in good standing with the union. Although the union's roster never dropped below the required number of seven, mostly due to an active training program, the stress put on these men by the lack of jobs and low pay nearly tore the union apart at times.¹³

One of the first signs of trouble was the departure of founding member Leroy Hawkins. Hawkins, who had encouraged and trained Tankersley as a projectionist and who had been very active in the organization of Local 249-A, stopped paying his dues even while he was serving as president of the Local. After leaving the office and the union, Hawkins refused to return records and property belonging to the Local, and he refused to leave his job at the Park Theater. For three months, from December, 1951, through February, 1952, the Local struggled to find a way to get back the property that was still in his possession. At first, Hawkins refused to return the property, but then he returned only part of it, retaining the emblems and by-laws book. An even greater problem was his refusal to give up his swing-man position at the Park. It was not until January 9, 1953, that Tankersley convinced the manager of

¹³Tankersley interview, 8-9, TLA, UTA.

the Park that Hawkins was working under an expired union card and therefore should be dismissed from the theater.¹⁴

In addition to the problems created by Hawkins's exit from Local 249-A, the meeting records are littered with references to members who were delinquent in paying their dues, fines, or loans. On February 12, 1950, the local voted to raise the monthly dues to \$4.00, up from \$2.50, or 3% of a member's monthly earnings, whichever was greater. Four years later, after the dues had been raised to 5%, E.J. Martin began a three-month campaign to get the dues lowered. On January, 1954, he proposed a vote, which was defeated, to lower the dues from 5% back down to 3%. The next month, he again asked that the dues be lowered because of "economic conditions." Tankersley, Secretary-Treasurer and Business Agent at the time, reminded Martin that "we are trying to build this local and it took money and everyone must sacrifice."¹⁵

Apparently undeterred, Martin returned to the issue of dues at the Executive board meeting held on March 15, 1954. Martin first pointed out that members of the Local received

¹⁴Ibid., 8-9; "Monthly Meeting Records, Local 249-A," December 15, 1951, January 12, 1952, February 8, 1952, January 9, 1953, TLA, UTA. Hawkins would later reappear in the meeting records of Local 249-A, on July 9, 1953, as the owner of the Star Theater requesting operators from the Local.

¹⁵"Monthly Meeting Records, Local 249-A," February 12, 1950, January, 1954, February 24, 1954, TLA, UTA.

"less than any local in Texas per hour and per week," and he insisted that the dues were not justified by the salary they were earning. He then pointed out the rising cost of living as another reason for lowering the dues, reminding fellow members why they had created the union in the first place:

The conditions of this local thrive off the condition of the members. So the members should come first. That is why we bonded together, to protect ourselves from low wages in our craft and to tax as heavy as we presently is taxation without representation.¹⁶

Martin then pointed to the requests of theater managers for lower wages and asked why the membership were not entitled to receive the same concessions. He said that if the dues were to be lowered, then maybe more people would pay their dues and fines. For all of Martin's arguing, however, there was no indication that the dues were lowered. Various members remained delinquent, and Martin's dissatisfaction with the union only increased.¹⁷

Contract disputes and fights over dues aside, the most hostile fight occurred between Tankersley and Roscoe S. Miller. In a union with hundreds of members, the likelihood that a disagreement between two members would

¹⁶"Monthly Meeting Records, Local 249-A," March 15, 1954, TLA, UTA.

¹⁷Ibid.

hinder operations of the union would be minimal, but in a union with only ten members, such conflicts could potentially have a disastrous effect on day-to-day operations. The battle between these two men nearly ripped the local apart, threatening to undo all the hard work that had gone into creating the union.

The origins of the dispute are a little obscure. Based on the Tankersley interview and the Local's records, it appears that the conflict grew out of a rivalry between Tankersley and Miller that deepened with the election of Tankersley to replace Miller as the Business Agent and Secretary-Treasure in January, 1954. Over time, many of the members, including Tankersley, had become dissatisfied with Miller's performance.

The first indication of unhappiness over Miller's performance surfaced on December 14, 1952, when Miller expressed his displeasure at paying another member, O.L. Harris, for eight minutes of overtime. Miller wanted to refuse payment because he believed "we will feel the affects [sic] of this move at a later date." An argument then erupted, and someone accused Miller of showing favoritism to the theater owners at the expense of the Local. Miller was so upset that he threatened to resign, but Tankersley responded that Miller's resignation would be refused

because the Local did not have the personnel to replace him. Although Miller threatened to resign "weather [sic] accepted or not," he did not resign his post as Business Agent. It was clear nevertheless that some members had lost faith in him.¹⁸

Tankersley later recalled that Miller was a "very poor business agent," and that on most contract negotiations, Tankersley went with him because "I didn't trust him to negotiate properly." Tankersley shared the same views about Miller as did many of his fellow projectionists, who believed, namely, that Miller was "too soft--too eager to agree with the managers of the theaters" during contract negotiations. Tankersley was encouraged to run against Miller in the elections held in 1954 and won. At the same election, Miller, apparently upset about losing to Tankersley, refused to accept his election to the position of Recording Secretary.¹⁹

The animosity between Miller and Tankersley deepened at the Local's meeting on January 9, 1955. At that meeting, Miller requested that his life insurance policy, carried by the Local, be given to his wife in the event

¹⁸Ibid., December 14, 1952, TLA, UTA.

¹⁹Tankersley interview, 31-33, TLA, UTA; "Monthly Meeting Records, Local 249-A," January, 1954, TLA, UTA.

something were to happen to him. When questioned why, Miller responded that "in case something happened to him, he didn't want his wife to have to come in contact with Tankersley." Miller then ranted that "Tankersley was dirty, low down, that the rest of the fellows didn't know how dirty Tankersley was, that he would do anything, he was a dirty liar." When asked why he was so angry at Tankersley, Miller responded that in the Spring of 1953, Tankersley, as Secretary-Treasurer, had refused to accept Miller's dues, causing him to become delinquent and therefore ineligible to be elected as a delegate to the International Convention. Tankersley denied the accusation, however, and the matter was dropped for a short time.²⁰

The waves created by the fighting between these two rippled throughout the Local in several ways. For the first few years, the Local had held its meetings at 2506 Metropolitan Ave, a barber shop owned by Miller. However, at the meeting on May 6, 1954, Miller announced that the Local must find another place to use as a meeting hall because of the disagreements between him and Tankersley. From then on, the local was forced to pay \$2.00 per meeting

²⁰"Monthly Meeting Records, Local 249-A," January 9, 1955, TLA, UTA.

for use of the Crawford Hall. At the next month's meeting, while members were discussing the vacation schedule, Tankersley refused to discuss the matter with Miller, who did not attend at the meeting. The minutes of the meeting noted, however, that "there is quite an indifference between them."²¹

The rift between Tankersley and Miller exposed cliques and factions within the small union. At the meeting on February 13, 1955, an argument erupted over Miller's proposal that the Local form a financial planning committee to explore money-making opportunities. E.J. Martin, who also had trouble with Tankersley over the payment of dues, seconded Miller's plan. However, Tankersley, who did not see a need for such a committee, opposed the motion, and it was voted down. This action prompted Martin to unleash a personal attack on Tankersley. According to Martin, and probably supported by Roscoe S. Miller, it:

Seems as though nothing is done right unless he (TANK) does it or says that is what should be done. This makes one very disinterested in any organization regardless what it might be. We aren't supposed to be under a dictator - only communist like such government, in a Democracy each and everyone has a voice and his or her ideas are tried until proven wrong.

²¹Ibid., May 6, 1954, June 13, 1954, TLA, UTA.

At the following meeting, the Local voted to strike these comments from the record, but the Recording-Secretary failed to remove the attack on Tankersley.²²

Miller started to miss monthly meetings, but when elections were held again in December, 1956, he defeated Tankersley in the election for Business Agent, by a margin of 6 votes to 5. According to Tankersley, Miller and several other members who were not in good standing with the union because they had not kept up with paying their dues, had been holding meetings separately from the union and worked together to get Miller elected as Business Agent. However, according to the by-laws of the international union, an elected official must attend the next meeting in order to be installed into office. When Miller did not show up on January 13, 1957, new elections were held and Tankersley regained the office of Business Agent.²³

Clearly upset with the decision, Miller filed charges against Tankersley and Local 249-A in a letter to IATSE international president Richard Walsh. According to Tankersley, the bulk of Miller's complaint was that Tankersley, and not Miller, himself, was the business

²²Ibid., February 13, 1955, March 13, 1955, TLA, UTA.

²³Ibid., December, 9, 1956, January 13, 1957, TLA, UTA.

agent, and that Miller had contested the use of union money to buy the Elite Theater. At the monthly meeting on February 10, 1957, when the letter was brought before the membership, Miller threatened to bring more charges against Tankersley the next day.²⁴

On April 14, 1957, after a discussion of the charges Miller had filed against the Local and Tankersley, the members voted by a margin of 6 to 1 to place Miller on probation for one year. In a resolution dated April 17, 1957, the union agreed to put Miller on probation, effective May 12, 1957, because, since he failed to prove true any of his claims against the union, he was "guilty of conduct unbecoming a union man." According to the terms of Miller's probation, he was forbidden to vote at any meeting, had to ask permission to speak, could not attend any social functions, was declared not to be in good standing, and yet must meet all other obligations required of other members. On May 10, 1957, district representative E.J. Miller met with members of Local 249-A to review the decision to place Roscoe S. Miller on probation. After questioning all the members, including Miller and Tankersley, the district representative ruled that the

²⁴Ibid., January 13, 1957, February 10, 1957, TLA, UTA; Tankersley interview, 33, TLA, UTA. Miller, obviously upset with the local, was

Local had acted correctly and that Miller had failed to prove any of the charges he had filed with the International.²⁵

This struggle, and all of the other internal fighting, did not go unnoticed by the rest of the membership. Local 249-A's monthly meeting records contain many calls for peace and brotherhood. On March 14, 1954, Roscoe S. Miller, an obvious participant in the Local's struggles, reflected that "most of our trouble has been with ourselves not doing jobs properly so lets try to correct this everyday in everyway." Other members pointed out that if they were divided, it would be easy for theater managers to use that as a way to keep wages down. One member suggested that the membership attend church together as a community building activity. On November 11, 1956, Tankersley motioned, perhaps in an effort to end his feud with Miller, that Miller be allowed to pay his past three months dues but not the \$25 fine he had been hit with for being so delinquent.²⁶

fined, not only for missing the previous meeting, but also for "useing bad lanugher (sic) in this meeting by Pres."

²⁵Ibid., April 14, 1957, April 17, 1957, May 10, 1957, TLA, UTA.

²⁶Ibid., March 14, 1954, March 13, 1955, April 17, 1955, November 11, 1956, TLA, UTA.

Despite such gestures, the fighting and struggling nevertheless continued. At a meeting on October 13, 1957, it was announced that Miller was being relieved of his position at the Century Theater, effective the 19th. The following month, Miller refused a job at the Harlem Theater. When asked his intentions, Miller responded that he was "willing to work with local No. 249-A although he is doing business satisfactorily for him self." At a special meeting held on November 17, 1957, Miller said that he refused the job at the Harlem because "he wanted to rest up awhile, because he didn't know what he was going to do." In response, the membership voted to place Miller at the bottom of the seniority list.²⁷

Unfortunately, this is where the meeting records end, and Tankersley did not discuss the conflict with Miller any further in his oral history. It is telling, however, that Miller did not appear when a photograph of Local 249-A members was taken in January, 1969, right before the union integrated with Local 249. As a matter of fact, of the original members who formed Local 249-A, only Tankersley and David Williams remained. Some of the members in the photograph had joined the union in 1953 or 1957, but only

²⁷Ibid., October 13, 1957, November 10, 1957, November 17, 1957, TLA, UTA.

Tankersley and Williams remained from those who had struggled with the help of the Dallas Negro Chamber of Congress to organize the black projectionists in 1949.

As shown in the previous chapter, racial segregation and the subsequent opening of black theaters provided black projectionists an opportunity to receive the protection and benefits of union membership. However, segregation imposed restraints on members of Local 249-A that nearly destroyed the union. Difficult contract disputes, membership defection, and constant internal fighting were the result of a very limited number of jobs available, and this created a sense of desperation among the remaining members. When the issue of integration with Local 249 did arise later, members of Local 249-A were willing to give up their seniority for the chance to have a job. The next chapter will show how the end of segregated theaters in the 1960s forced the integration of Local 249 and 249-A, and will examine a lawsuit, brought forth by Tankersley, over the union's seniority system.

CHAPTER IV

INTEGRATION AND THE LOSS OF INDEPENDENCE

The 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, not only called for the end of segregated schools, but also led to the eventual eradication of all Jim Crow institutions. The *Brown* decision, combined with a pledge of support for the decision from the now merged AFL-CIO leadership, sent shock waves through the labor movement. While Local 249-A initially resisted these changes, as did many of the IATSE's segregated locals, the lack of employment opportunities because of the integration of theaters, and direct mandates from the AFL-CIO and IATSE leadership, forced all segregated locals to merge with their city's white local, a decision that cost black members of Local 249-A most of their seniority.¹

¹On the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, see Richard Kluger, Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality (New York: Knopf, 1976); Mark V. Tushnet, Making Constitutional Law: Thurgood Marshall and the Supreme Court, 1961-1991 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); James T. Patterson, Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and its Troubled Legacy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). For information on the AFL-CIO merger, see Joel Seidman, "Efforts toward Merger, 1935-1955," Industrial and Labor Relations Review 9 (April

Beginning in 1960, students, both black and white, staged a series of sit-in demonstrations at segregated theaters throughout Texas and the nation. The students' method, a "revolving line," consisted of forming lines of students leading up to the box office, often stretching around the corner. A black student would then approach the box office and request a ticket. Upon refusal, the student returned to the end of the line, and the process would restart with the next student. The white students who participated in the protests asked the box office attendant if they would be allowed to sit with a black friend in the theater. When their request was rejected, they also returned to the end of the line.²

On December 3, 1960, an integrated group of 200 students from the University of Texas staged the first of several demonstrations, calling for the integration of the Texas Theater located near the campus. The next night, another 200 students resumed the demonstration at the theater, owned by Trans-Texas Theaters. At both demonstrations, students utilized the revolving line,

²Artis Hill, "'Jim Crow-ism' in Several Areas of Twentieth Century Texas Life Relative to the Negro: Transportation, Eating and Lodging Places, Public Parks, and Movie Theaters" (Master's Thesis, Abilene Christian College, Abilene, TX, 1969), 90-96; "Negro Students Begin Stand-Ins at Theaters," The Dallas Morning News, February 2, 1961, sec 1, p. 3.

clogging up the box office line and forcing the theater to close its box office and sell tickets to white patrons from inside the theater lobby. According to reports, both demonstrations lasted approximately one hour and were peaceful. In both cases, theater manager Leonard Masters told the group he was simply enforcing the policy of the theater owners.³

On February 1, 1961, the first anniversary of the lunch counter sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina, Edward B. King Jr., administrative secretary of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, announced that "We have called for stand-ins at theaters throughout the South as our first move in the second phase of the student protest movement." At segregated theaters throughout the South, students used the same "revolving line" method used by the students of the University of Texas at theaters in Austin. A few days later, on February 12, 1961, Abraham Lincoln's birthday, another round of student protests at segregated theaters appeared across the nation in cities such as New York City, Boston, and Chicago.⁴

³"Collegians Protest Ban at Theater," The Dallas Morning News, December 3, 1960, sec 1, p. 1; "UT Students Demonstrate at Segregated Theater," The Dallas Morning News, December 4, 1960, sec 1, p. 17.

⁴Edward B. King Jr., quoted in "Negro Students Begin Stand-Ins at Theaters," The Dallas Morning News, February 2, 1961, sec 1, p. 3; "Group Stage 'Stan-Ins,'" The Dallas Morning News, February 13, 1961, sec 4, p. 1.

Back in Texas, students in Austin, Houston, and San Antonio also participated in their own demonstrations. In Dallas, a group of black high school and college students began demonstrating outside the Palace and Majestic. About an hour later, they were joined by an integrated group of students from Southern Methodist University outside the Majestic Theater. When told that their black friends would not be allowed to sit with them, the students simply returned to the back of the line. The only threat to peace on this day came in San Antonio, where a bomb threat had been called in to that city's Majestic Theater. Upon a thorough search, however, no bomb was discovered.⁵

Demonstrations at the Dallas Majestic Theater soon took on a relatively "cooperative" nature. On February 26, 1961, about 40 black students lined up behind a barricade set up by the theater. According to The Dallas Morning News:

When there were no whites at the box office, the usher lowered the ropes, allowing several Negroes to go to the window. When they were refused admission, they returned to the end of their line. When whites approached to buy tickets, the usher would raise the velvet rope and the Negroes waited until the window was again clear and the rope again lowered.

⁵"Group Stage 'Stan-Ins,'" The Dallas Morning News, February 13, 1961, sec 4, p. 1.

While The Dallas Morning News may have labeled this demonstration "cooperative," it clearly could not have been as effective as the earlier protests. Although the black students established a visible presence in front of the theater, the demonstration did little to disrupt the business of the theater in the same manner as the earlier demonstrations.⁶

The demonstrations in Texas gained national attention in June, 1961, when 15 white students were arrested in New York outside the headquarters of the American Broadcast-Paramount Theaters, owners of the Interstate Theaters chain which operated segregated theaters throughout Texas. In Dallas, John Adams, executive vice-president of Interstate Theaters, reaffirmed the company's policy on segregation, saying, "We do have a policy [of segregation] and it has not changed." However, only three months later, the policy did change when Interstate Theaters announced the integration of the Varsity Theater. At the same time, Trans-Texas Theaters integrated the Texas Theater. Both theaters were located near the University of Texas campus.⁷

⁶"Negro Youths Hold Stand-In at Majestic," The Dallas Morning News, February 27, 1961, sec 1, p. 19.

⁷"Theaters Affirm No-Mixing Policy," The Dallas Morning News, June 7, 1961, sec 1, p. 13; "15 Integrationists Arrested in N.Y.," The Dallas Morning News June 8, 1961, sec 1, p. 25; "Theaters Near UT Campus Adopt Policy of Integration," The Dallas Morning News, October, 6, 1961, sec 1, p. 9.

According to Charles Root, head of Interstate Theaters in Austin, the chain had always planned on integrating "when the time was right, when people were ready." Earl Podolnik, President of Trans-Texas Theaters, announced that the integration of the Texas Theater would serve as a testing site to see if integration "is a feasible and workable arrangement." Both executives also confirmed that no other theaters in the state owned by the two companies would be integrated at that time. Clearly, this new strategy by both companies at the Varsity and Texas Theaters was an attempt to stonewall integration, because only blacks who showed their UT student identification would be allowed to purchase tickets. Of course, at that time, the University of Texas did not admit a large number of black students.⁸

Demonstrations at other segregated theaters in Texas also had mixed results. Jesse Ritter Jr., an English professor at North Texas State University, was dismissed for his work with students attempting to integrate local theaters. The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals upheld the

⁸"Theaters Near UT Campus Adopt Policy of Integration," The Dallas Morning News, October, 6, 1961, sec 1, p. 9. On the integration of higher education in Texas, see Almetris Marsh Duren, Overcoming: A History of Black Integration at the University of Texas at Austin (Austin: University Printing Division, 1979); Amilcar Shabazz, Advancing Democracy: African Americans and the Struggle for Access and

conviction of 44 people arrested for unlawful assembly and unlawful demonstrations in Houston, where they had participated in theater demonstrations. In San Antonio, efforts by the Students for Civil Liberties resulted in all theaters in the city being integrated by 1963. And in Amarillo, after large demonstrations at the Paramount and State Theaters, two black students were admitted into the theaters at the suggestion of theater manager Jack King, an employee of Interstate Theaters. King believed that "they might get a different reception if they came in small numbers."⁹

Although the segregation of theaters in Texas had never been codified, Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ordered the integration of all theaters throughout the nation. This had clear implications for black projectionists such as those in Local 249-A. Unless they merged with the white local in their city, they would soon be out of a job.¹⁰

Equity in Higher Education in Texas (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

⁹"NTSU Professor Lays 'Ouster' to Racial Work," The Dallas Morning News, December 21, 1961 sec 1, p. 14; "Court Again Upholds Stand-in Convictions," The Dallas Morning News, May 3, 1962, sec 1, p. 16; "Business Desegregation in San Antonio Noted," The Dallas Morning News, June 23, 1963, sec 1, p. 12; "2 Negroes Admitted to Amarillo Show," The Dallas Morning News, June 26, 1963, sec 1, p. 8.

¹⁰Civil Rights Act of 1964, online at <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/civilr19.htm>.

At the first convention of the recently merged AFL-CIO in 1955, President George Meany announced the organization's support for the *Brown* decision, but in return was flooded with calls and letters from members who opposed the desegregation of schools. Once again, labor leaders were caught in a dilemma: to support civil rights and promote the unionization of black workers and risk losing the support of some of their more racist members. While some members did support Meany's stance, others joined independent unions or supported White Citizens's Councils, located in most cities throughout the South. One particular issue facing the AFL-CIO was that of how to balance their support for the *Brown* decision with several Southern states's insistence on holding segregated conventions. However, the IATSE, even though it played "Dixie" at the start of every convention, and would continue to do so at every convention, had already integrated its international conventions.¹¹

The IASTE's first integrated convention was held in 1948. At the previous convention, in 1946, representatives

¹¹International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the U.S. and Canada, Combined Convention Proceedings, 1946-1958 (New York, New York, 1960). For information on the desegregation of AFL-CIO conventions, see, Alan Draper, "Do the Right Thing: The Desegregation of Union Conventions in the South," Labor History 33 (Summer 1992): 343-356.

from five of the segregated locals, including Lee Lewis, of Houston's Local 279-A, appeared before the General Executive Board and asked for their own representatives to be sent to the international conventions. Rather than force the segregated locals to allow the white locals to continue representing them, the Board granted their request, and 16 segregated locals appeared on the roll call at the 1948 convention.¹²

Even after the *Brown* decision, the issue of integrating the locals did not surface at the International convention for several years. However, in 1955, members of New York Local 1-A and Local 1, comprised of theatrical stage hands unable to settle jurisdictional disputes, took it upon themselves to integrate their locals. Resulting from Local 1-A's demands to be allowed to work in theaters outside Harlem to combat rising unemployment, the merger allowed black stage hands to gain employment in theaters from which they had historically been barred. After the merger of Local 1-A, 16 segregated locals still remained on the books at the IATSE conventions, and it would be only a

¹²IATSE, Proceedings, 1946-1958, 1946, 692. Dallas Local 249-A was the seventeenth and final segregated local, created on November 1, 1949.

matter of time before IATSE president Richard Walsh began a movement to integrate all segregated locals.¹³

At the 1964 International Convention, a three-member committee, including Samuel Tankersley, representing segregated locals of the IATSE, appeared before the General Executive Board in response to a directive in August, 1963, ordering segregated locals to create independent committees to discuss their merger with white locals in their respective cities. In November of 1962, President Walsh signed the Fair Employment Practices Pledge with other labor leaders and then issued the directive for all segregated locals to begin merging. The committee that appeared before the Board in 1964 expressed their members' preference to stay segregated, and made clear that "they do not consider their members segregated or discriminated against." The members of the committee expressed concerns that they would lose their identities and leadership roles

¹³"Stage Unions Confer: Harlem Local of Theatrical Alliance Seeks Extension," New York Time, January 16, 1948, 25; "Union to Admit Negroes: Theatrical Affiliate to Offer Membership to Stagehands," New York Time, June 28, 1955, 23. For additional information on Local 1-A, see, Kathy Anne Perkins, "Black Backstage Workers, 1900-1969," Black American Literature Forum, 16 (Winter 1982): 160-163. In her article, Perkins quotes Doll Thomas as saying that the first black local formed was Local 224-A in Washington D.C., but, according to the 1952 IATSE official bulletin, Local 224-A was not formed until November 5, 1937. Perkins also writes that a local in Chicago was the first to integrate "in the Twenties," but she does not offer any source for this information, and I have been unable to locate any supporting evidence for her claim.

if they were forced to merge. They also referred to "differing wage scales and dues structures" as potential problems that might arise in the event of a merger. They all agreed that if the mergers were forced, then the executive board should work to ensure the protection of black members by insisting that the segregated locals be granted some leadership roles in the merged locals and a combined delegation to the International Conventions. The Board informed the committee that they were aware of the potential problems raised by integration, but the Pledge, combined with "the new Civil Rights law," necessitated the merger of all locals. The Board then encouraged the members to iron out any potential problems between the locals themselves.¹⁴

By the next convention, Miami Local 316-A had merged with white Local 316. On April 4, 1966, "an important date in the history of the Alliance," according to President Walsh, the two locals merged, allowing the members of Local 316-A to join Local 316 without having to pay any initiation fees or lose any of their seniority. According to President Walsh, one of the main causes for the merger was the trouble with jurisdiction over newly integrated

¹⁴International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the U.S. and Canada, Combined Convention Proceedings, 1960-1974 (New York, New York, 1974), 1964, 286.

theaters, an issue that would arise for all the segregated locals with the passage of the Civil Rights Act. The merger also gave the former Business Agent of Local 316-A a voice, but not a vote, on the Local's Executive Board, and stipulated that the former members of Local 316-A would all be allowed to participate in the next elections. Walsh, in his opening address at the 1966 convention, encouraged the remaining 15 segregated locals to follow the lead of Local 316-A and merge with their white locals. While Walsh encouraged merger talks between the locals to continue "in a spirit of determination," he also cautioned the locals to avoid "shotgun weddings."¹⁵

At the same convention, Allie Laury, a delegate from Local 370-A in Richmond, Virginia, stood before the convention and pleaded for support from the International body with the mergers. Echoing the same fears expressed by the committee who had appeared before the General Executive at the prior convention, Laury expressed concerns that upon any merger, members of the black locals would lose their identity. Where Laury's plea differed was that he admitted, "we still nurse the feelings of discrimination, we know it is there." According to Laury, that discrimination had impeded merger talks on the local level

¹⁵IATSE, Proceedings, 1960-1974, 1966, 311, 335.

and he requested help from the Convention body. Laury believed that a change to the International Constitution or laws at the local level were necessary to protect the rights of minority members of the IATSE. Otherwise, mergers would likely not be peaceful. President Walsh expressed his appreciation to Laury, and pledged that the General Office was doing everything it could to help the mergers. He pointed to the merger of Miami as a model for other locals to follow when merging. He admitted that "constant pressure is being put on our organization" to merge the segregated locals.¹⁶

While Walsh, on the one hand, talked about the need for segregated locals to merge, he again repeated his desire to avoid "shotgun weddings." As a result of his mixed message, by the next convention, only one additional segregated local had merged. On April 25, 1967, Philadelphia Local 307 and 307-A merged, leaving 14 remaining segregated locals. The merger followed the plan laid out by Miami Local 316-A's merger, with Local 307-A's Business Agent receiving a position on the Local's Executive Board, no loss of seniority, and a promise that no member would lose his job as a result of the merger. Again Walsh expressed the need for the other segregated

¹⁶IATSE, Proceedings, 1960-1974, 1966, 356.

locals to merge, pointing out that due to the end of segregated audiences, "it becomes a matter of good economics as well as of social justice" for there to be an end to the segregated local.¹⁷

By the 1970 convention, maybe a reflection of the "good economics" Walsh mentioned at the previous convention, five more locals had merged, including Dallas's Local 249-A and Houston's Local 279-A. By the 1972 convention, two more locals had merged. Two years later, an additional three had merged, leaving four segregated locals on the 1974 convention roll call. At this convention, the General Executive Board ordered the merger of New Orleans, Local 293-A, but the order was tabled because, according to Bennie Francis, Sr., a member of Local 293-A, the merger issue "still lies in the confines of the courts." The Board also appointed Assistant International President Walter F. Diehl to help with the merger of Local 224-A in Washington D.C. The convention records do not show any mention of the remaining two segregated locals, Philadelphia Local 8-A and Local 589-A in Jackson/Vicksburg, Mississippi.¹⁸

¹⁷IASTE, Proceedings, 1960-1974, 1968, 400.

¹⁸IASTE, Proceedings, 1960-1974, 1970, 493, 560; IASTE, Proceedings, 1960-1974, 1972, 574-583; IASTE, Proceedings, 1960-1974, 1974, 734-742, 845, 848. In her article, Perkins writes that

The merger between Local 249-A and Local 249 offers some insight into why all of these mergers perhaps did not occur sooner. As the previous chapter explained, Local 249-A was in complete disarray. Constant contract negotiations and financial pressures from theaters, the refusal of many members to pay their dues, the exodus of other members from the local, and personal grudges all threatened the existence of Local 249-A, even before the issues of integration arose. After receiving the mandate from the International Union to end the segregated locals, Local 249-A and Local 249 spent the next five years trying to agree to a merger that would benefit all. Unfortunately, that is not what happened.

As a result of the *Brown* decision and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the number of theaters under contract with Local 249-A had fallen to three--the Lagow, the Cinderella, and the Starlight. Many of the remaining ten members of Local 249-A were forced to find other employment to supplement the little money they were earning as projectionists. Tankersley, for example, began selling real estate to make a living. President Walsh's take on the mergers, that they made "good economic" sense, proved

Washington D.C. Local 224-A was the last segregated local to merge, but again she does not offer any supporting evidence. Perkins, "Black Backstage Workers, 1900-1969," 162.

to be true for the members of Local 249-A. Whereas segregation had provided black projectionists with the opportunity to organize and work under the protection of the IATSE's banner, the integration of theaters took away those job opportunities and forced the members to look elsewhere for employment.¹⁹

There were several issues that stalled the merger of Local 249-A and Local 249. While Walsh praised the merger created by Miami Local 316-A, and pledged that it should be the model for all mergers, this was not what happened with the merger in Dallas. The first issue of contention was that in addition to taking all of Local 249-A's money, about \$5,000, Local 249 also expected the black projectionists to pay an additional initiation fee of \$500. After some time, the issue was dropped, but other issues remained, most importantly the issue of seniority.²⁰

There is no indication in the convention records than any of the other black projectionists whose locals had merged were forced to give up their seniority. Miami's merger agreement even specified that the seniority for all members would be ranked according to "the established dates when they began working as projectionists in Dade County."

¹⁹Tankersley interview, 30, TLA, UTA.

²⁰Ibid., 47.

In Dallas, however, Local 249 was willing to accept members of Local 249-A only if black projectionists were willing to accept spots at the bottom of the seniority list, below every white member of Local 249.²¹

For members of IATSE locals, their placement on the seniority list is a top priority. When a new job opens, the local allows interested members to bid on that job. The person with the most seniority is the one who usually is granted permission to take the job. This provides members a way to increase their wages by getting jobs at the higher paying theaters. By forcing the members of Local 249-A to the bottom of the seniority list, Dallas's white unionists limited black unionists to the lowest paying jobs, or jobs at theaters where no one wanted to work.²²

Marshall Rose, a member of Local 249 who had befriended Tankersley, laid things out very clearly for Tankersley. After another failed merger meeting between the two locals, Rose phoned Tankersley and told him, "They

²¹IATSE, Proceedings, 1960-1974, 1966, 335; IATSE, Proceedings, 1960-1974, 1968, 400; Tankersley interview, 47-48, TLA, UTA.

²²For the studies of seniority, see, Dan H. Mater and Garth L. Mangum, "The Integration of Seniority Lists in Transportation Mergers," Industrial and Labor Relations Review 16 (April 1963): 343-365; Maryellen R. Kelly, "Discrimination in Seniority Systems: A Case Study," Industrial and Labor Relations Review 36 (October 1982): 40-55; Alison L Booth and Jeff Frank, "Seniority, Earnings and Unions," Economica 63 (November, 1996): 673-686.

[Local 249] don't intend for you all to come in, unless you come in behind them." The lowest member of Local 249 on the seniority list had 15 months of experience. For someone like Tankersley, to be put at the bottom of the list meant giving up almost 19 years of seniority. But at the same time, he and other members of Local 249-A realized that they were quickly running out of jobs. At least if they merged, they would have an opportunity to work.²³

After receiving a written merger agreement from Local 249, members of 249-A voted to accept the reduced place on the seniority list in exchange for a guaranteed job. The members of Local 249-A saw their years of seniority reduced to only months of seniority. For Tankersley and David Williams, who, as founding members of Local 249-A, had nearly 19 years of experience, their adjusted seniority put them below the lowest member of Local 249, who had only 15 months of seniority. At the last minute, Local 249 tried to lower the seniority even more by making several apprentices full members, but when Tankersley and other members of Local 249-A refused to come in behind the apprentices, Local 249 dropped the issue. On January 30, 1969, the ten

²³Tankersley interview, 47-51, TIA, UTA.

members of Local 249-A merged with the 109 members of Local 249²⁴ (See Appendix D).

The biggest impediment to merging the two locals had been the seniority list. Tankersley, aware that "in another year, the jobs we had might be even less," convinced the other members of Local 249-A that the merger was the only option available to them. He went to each member individually and convinced him to vote in favor of the merger. Tankersley, as the business agent for Local 249-A, had also been present at all the meetings between the two locals and he had been the principal spokesman over the committee.²⁵

In January, 1969, therefore, both sides seemed to have come to an agreement and the merger had taken place, but it took only eight months for a problem to arise in the form of a lawsuit filed by Tankersley against Local 249 over the seniority system.

In June, 1969, a temporary position opened at the Majestic Theater in Dallas. The position was put up for bid, as a temporary position, and Tankersley was the only person who bid on the job. After some time, it appeared

²⁴Ibid., 52-53, 62-65.

²⁵"Operators Union Faces Racial Suit," The Dallas Morning News, December 30, 1970, sec D, p. 4.

that the person who left the Majestic temporally was not returning, however, and Tankersley assumed that the job was his because the business agent for Local 249 had told him that "you may be there [at the Majestic Theater] from now on." ²⁶

Tankersley's assumptions proved to be untrue, however. One of three recently unemployed projectionists who had lost their job because of automation at a General Cinema Theater now asked to bid on the job at the Majestic. The union then put the job up for bid, and when Tankersley lost, this forced him to move to another theater.²⁷

After losing his position at the Majestic, Tankersley filed charges against the Local, first with the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission in October, 1969, and then with the District Court in Dallas in December, arguing that the racist seniority system created when the two locals merged not only cost him his job at the Majestic, but was a blatant act of discrimination in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Neither court's ruling denied that the merger cost the members of Local 249-A considerable seniority. Judge William Taylor, presiding judge of the District Court in Dallas, admitted that at

²⁶Tankersley interview, 55-56, TLA, UTA.

²⁷Ibid., 56.

face value, the arrangement did appear to be discriminatory. However, he ruled that several factors contributing to the merger agreement negated any act of discrimination on the part of Local 249.²⁸

Tankersley's active role in the original negotiations was the first issue the judge pointed out. The judge ruled that since Tankersley had represented Local 249-A in the merger, having even written the new seniority dates, himself, he and the other members of Local 249-A had "voluntarily" agreed to the merger and the "negotiated" seniority dates. According to Judge Taylor, "It appears that Tankersley and the union members of 249-A entered into the negotiations with their eyes open, obtained the fruits of the bargain, and now find they dislike the taste." Also, because Tankersley was given a position on the Executive Board of Local 249, and because other measures had been taken to "insure that members of 249-A would have a voice in policy," the judge ruled that Local 249 had not acted in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, since

²⁸Ibid., 56-57, 66-67; *Samuel R. Tankersley v. International Alliance Theatrical Stage Employes, AFL-CIO, Moving Picture Machine Operators Local 249*, copy in Dallas Moving Picture Machine Operators Union Local 249-A records, AR 65-1-1, Special Collection, Texas Labor Archives, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX.

"whatever rights the Plaintiffs might have had were voluntarily waived by them."²⁹

Judge Taylor then ruled on Tankersley's complaint that he had lost his job at the Majestic because of the racist seniority system. First, the judge pointed out that Tankersley was aware that the job at the Majestic was temporary and he that might have to surrender the position. When the job became permanent, Tankersley lost the bid to J.H. Leslie, a member of Local 249 since July 8, 1947. Since Tankersley had not joined Local 249-A until November 1, 1949, he would have lost the bid any way, even if the seniority system had been ruled discriminatory. Even Commissioner Williams of the EEOC agreed that because the person who defeated Tankersley in his bid to keep the job at the Majestic had more seniority, even when considering actual seniority dates, race had not played a role in Tankersley's loss.³⁰

Lee A Lewis, founding member of Houston's Local 279-A, whose own Local merged with Local 279 on June 6, 1969, believed that Tankersley was making a big mistake with his lawsuit. According to Lewis, "He has created a very sore

²⁹*Tankersley v. International Alliance*

³⁰*Tankersley v. International Alliance*; Tankersley interview, 67, TLA, UTA.

spot up there." Lewis believed that Local 249 should have worked the issue out among themselves, and that by going to court, Tankersley created a situation in which no one would win. Commenting on his own Local's merger, Lewis said "we have people who have common sense, and we sit down and work our problems out." Lewis believed that Tankersley and the other black members should have been happy to have jobs, especially since they were on the verge of losing all their jobs before the merger: "Now every one of them is working."³¹

Racism clearly played a role in making the members of Local 249-A surrender their years of seniority, but from the perspective of Tankersley and the other members, by agreeing to the merger, they were only doing what was necessary to secure employment. Tankersley, when asked if racism existed in Local 249, said, "It was then, and I think it still is." Although he admitted that there were some members of Local 249 who were "sympathetic," he pointed to the voting results on union issues as a symbol of racism. According to Tankersley, every time black members introduced a motion, it was defeated by a vote of the membership.³²

³¹Lewis interview, 39-41, TLA, UTA.

³²Tankersley interview, 65, TLA, UTA.

The former members of Local 249-A had gone from having complete control over their own affairs to the status of minorities in a Local in which their voice was ignored, but they did have jobs and were protected under the union banner. The end of segregated theaters had left black projectionists with a limited number of options for employment. The AFL-CIO merger and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 complicated the issue even further by forcing the IATSE to rid itself of the segregated locals. There may have been efforts to protect the "identity" of the members of segregated locals, but as the merger of Local 249-A shows, desperation forced some locals to agree to merger terms which returned to haunt them.

CONCLUSION

On August 14, 1937, the Negro Labor News carried the headline, "Houston Theaters 100 Percent Union." This headline referred to the organization of six black projectionists in Houston, Texas, into Local 279-A of the IATSE. Not until twelve years later did ten black projectionists organize Local 249-A in Dallas. For the next twenty years, these two segregated locals provided projectionists for the black movie theaters in both Houston and Dallas.¹

This thesis has explored the economic, political, and racial issues surrounding the unionization of black projectionists in Houston and Dallas. An important remaining question is: Why was there a twelve-year difference between the formation of Local 279-A in Houston and the formation of Local 249-A in Dallas? While there are numerous factors, it is clear that the unique development and political and racial climate of each city

¹Negro Labor News, 14 August 1937.

played an important role in the organization of each projectionists' local.

One simple answer to this question might be simply a matter of population. While it was not until 1930 that Houston surpassed Dallas in total population, the Houston black population during the period from 1910 to 1950 always constituted a larger proportion of the overall population than its counterpart in Dallas. Simply put, there was a larger black population in Houston than in Dallas. In 1930, there were 63,337 blacks in Houston but only 38,742 blacks in Dallas.² Twenty years later, the black population in Houston had grown to 124,760, whereas the black population in Dallas had reached 57,825.³

Fueled by the 1901 discovery of oil near Beaumont, Texas, and by the linkage industries created to support this oil boom, as well as by its role as an important railroad center, Houston saw its population explode. At the front of this migration were black sharecroppers and tenant farmers who moved to Houston in hopes of employment and better wages offered as the result of these expanding

²U.S. Bureau of the Census, Negroes in the United States, 1920-1932. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935), 54.

³U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population: 1950; a Report of the Seventeenth Decennial Census of the United States. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952-1957), 45.

industries. Forty years later, Houston ranked as one of the largest cities in the state and "held the distinction of employing more black Americans in manufacturing jobs than its southern rival cities of Memphis, New Orleans, and Atlanta."⁴

Houston is a city that always appeared to have contained some degree of strong union organization. However, while white workers understood that a large black population could pose a threat to their future employment, as stated earlier, it was not until the arrival of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and communist organizations that blacks had an opportunity to organize into unions. In Houston, the CIO made headway in organizing black workers in several occupational fields where they comprised the majority of workers.⁵

Black workers in Houston also benefited from an active black middle class, which, although at times at odds with black workers, nevertheless often worked on behalf of them. An active NAACP chapter and active black churches also worked to gain support for black workers by inviting

⁴Ernest Obadele-Starks, Black Unionism in the Industrial South (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2000), xv-xvi, xviii; Don Carleton, Red Scare: Right-wing Hysteria, Fifties Fanaticism, and Their Legacy in Texas. (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1985), 7.

⁵David McComb, Houston: the Bayou City (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), 118; Starks, Black Unionism, 20, 23.

speakers from various organizations to present their ideas. All of these factors help explain why, in 1937, when the CIO appeared in Houston to organize black projectionists, the white IATSE Local 279 was willing to help organize them into Local 279-A, an AFL affiliate.⁶

Labor in Dallas, on the other hand, developed in a much different urban context. Although Dallas was also an important railroad center, and although oil was discovered in East Texas in the 1930s, Dallas never developed similar types of industries, with the exception of the Ford motor plant, that warranted a large pool of unskilled labor. However, Dallas did have a varied economy which proved to be very stable. This meant that for black workers, while wages might be lower than in a city such as Houston, there was less chance of being laid off the job, and for many who were toiling away in the country side, this was enough incentive to move to the city. As a result, the Dallas black population grew steadily, but did not ever reach the numbers found in Houston. In 1910, blacks had accounted

⁶Starks, *Black Unionism*, 23, 33. In his dissertation "The NAACP in Texas, 1937-1957" (University of Texas at Austin, 1984) p. 3-12, 148-153, 161-167, Michael Lowery Gillette contends that black unions and the NAACP were hoping for the same goals, just going about it in different ways. Rather than provide leadership to the NAACP, the unions often provided the plaintiffs for legal cases. Also, in both Houston and Dallas, the local NAACP chapters of each city were in disarray when the black projectionists' locals were formed in 1937 and 1949 respectfully.

for 19.6% of the total population in Dallas, but by 1940, they represented only 17.1% of the total population. The Dallas black population, similar to Houston's, found itself scattered into pockets of concentration throughout the city.⁷

The political leaders of Dallas and Houston were comprised of those who were making millions off the growth of the cities. In Houston, oil men such as Will Hogg, Ross Sterling, and Joseph Cullinan were the unofficial leaders of the city. In Dallas, bankers such as Fred Florence and Robert Thornton were the leaders and designers of the city. These business leaders, among others, in both cities, allowed for the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s and an extremely conservative government in the 1930s, reinforced by a very conservative ruling clique that controlled the state after 1939 --a clique which historian George Green has referred to as the "Establishment." These business leaders also provided a great deal of stability to the cities. Even during the years of the Great Depression,

⁷Robert B. Fairbanks, For the City as a Whole: Planning, Politics, and the Public Interest in Dallas, Texas, 1900-1965 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), 10, 172; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population: 1950, 45; McComb, Houston, 158; William H. Wilson, Hamilton Park: A Planned Black Community in Dallas (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 10.

both cities showed stability and population growth--Dallas, 13.2% and Houston, 31.5% growth.⁸

While business leaders of both cities excused the formation and growth of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s as a product of the growing pains of any expanding city, leaders of both cities knew that it was time to end the influence of the Klan when its activities became bad for business. It was this emphasis on what was good or bad for business that dominated the decisions and actions of leaders in both cities. The leadership in Dallas believed that every decision should be based on what benefited the 'city as a whole,' rather than on the needs of individuals or minority groups. Only when forces hindered the growth of the city or made the city look bad, such as in the cases of the extreme violence of the Klan, did the city leadership act to curb them.⁹

Another difference between the two cities can be seen in the responses of various groups normally ignored by government. As discussed earlier, Houston had active

⁸Carleton, Red Scare, 8; Wilson, Hamilton Park, 1; George Green, The Establishment in Texas Politics: The Primitive Years, 1938-1957 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979), 3, 6, 12; Carleton, Red Scare, 10-11; Jim Schutze, The Accommodation: The Politics of Race in an American City (Secaucus, New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1986), 5, 54; Patricia Hill, Dallas: The Making of a Modern City (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1996), 115.

⁹Carleton, Red Scare, 11; Hill, Dallas, 91-93; Fairbanks, For the City, 147.

unions almost from the outset of the city and the black population was supported by an active black middle class and supportive black churches. In Dallas, however, both labor leaders and black leaders were willing to take whatever scraps were thrown their way by the conservative government. Both black leaders and labor leaders in Dallas bought into the idea that whatever was best for the city was best for them.¹⁰

Another factor that helps to explain the time lapse between the formations of the two unions was the extreme anti-unionism of Dallas. In an attempt to keep costs down and encourage new business, Dallas established itself early as an anti-union city. This image was reinforced by two events of the late 1930s, a 1935 strike by garment workers and the violent anti-labor tactics employed by the Ford Motor company.¹¹

Beginning in 1935, dressmakers, who belonged to 'sewing clubs' associated with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), began a year-long strike over wages, working conditions, and collective bargaining rights. Local business leaders used the newspapers, which they controlled, to run stories that manipulated public

¹⁰Fairbanks, For the City, 160-169.

¹¹Hill, Dallas, 131.

opinion against the strikers. The daily newspapers, such as the Dallas Morning News and Dallas Times Herald, focused on the violence of the strike rather than on the issues the women were striking over. Violent confrontations between the strikers and the Dallas police were sensationalized in the newspapers, which ran photos of the women strikers in jail, degrading them and encouraging public opposition to the strike. After ten months, the women, unable to continue the strike because of stiff resistance from the manufacturers and negative public opinion created by the newspapers, were forced to end their walkout.¹²

Dallas's reputation as an anti-union city grew even more when the Ford Company's goon squads became active in 1937 in response to an organizing drive by the CIO. Ford, hoping to avoid the organization of its plant in Dallas, paid for the creation of both an internal and external goon squad whose sole purpose was to prevent unionization of the plant. While originally formed to keep the CIO out of the Ford plant, the members of the goon squad took it upon themselves to attack any labor organizer. Any stranger in the city with a union card was subjected to beatings, whippings, and a trip to the city limits. These goon squads unleashed a reign of violence and intimidation in

¹²Hill, Dallas, 132-145; Fairbanks, For the City, 99.

the city that finally ended when it appeared that the adverse publicity had become bad for business.¹³

On the same day the Negro Labor News proclaimed the formation of Local 279-A in Houston, the paper also carried a headline about two CIO organizers who had been hospitalized in Dallas. George Baer, vice-president of the United Hat and Cap Millinery Workers of America, had been kidnapped and severely beaten. Herbert Harris, a projectionist, had been tarred and feathered while showing the film, Millions of Us, at a local park. The overall anti-labor atmosphere, which encouraged violence against organized labor, strongly suggested that it would require more than the intervention of the CIO to organize black projectionists in Dallas.¹⁴

While the unique environment of each city affected the time frame for the organization of Local 279-A and Local 249-A, common legal and social forces influenced their history. Segregation allowed the black projectionists of each city to seek union representation under the banner of the IATSE. Racism relegated both groups to the status of segregated locals and limited them to working in "Jim Crow" theaters. However, those same segregated locals allowed

¹³Hill, Dallas, 148-161.

¹⁴Negro Labor News, 14 August 1937.

men such as Lee A. Lewis and Samuel Tankersley to ascend to positions of leadership to which they would have never been allowed to ascend in an integrated local.

Like every other local, the geographical restraint of being allowed to work only in the segregated theaters of Dallas and Houston limited the number of jobs available to the membership. In the case of Local 249-A, internal strife and financial pressures constantly threatened to destroy the Local.

The job squeeze only worsened with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the integration of all movie theaters. The end of segregation also forced the merger of white and black locals. Although members of the black and white locals of Houston and Dallas were reluctant to end segregated locals, broader economic and civil rights concerns and mandates from the International forced the issue.

Although the merger between Houston's Local 279 and Local 279-A appeared to be amicable, Dallas's Local 249-A, on the other hand, suffered when it was forced to merge with Local 249 as the number of theaters under contract with the Local shrank. Tankersley was instrumental in the merger agreement, which required members of Local 249-A to

surrender their seniority, but he was also the first to take Local 249 to court over the racist seniority system.

Dallas's Tankersley always enjoyed his work as a projectionist. As he later recalled, "I enjoyed relaxing in a booth,... sometime I'd work here in the yard and get tired; I'd go to work and be relaxing in a booth."

Although projectionist work might have been relaxing for Tankersley and the other men who learned the skills required to operate the projectors, it is clear that the struggle of black projectionists of Local 249-A and 279-A to win and maintain union recognition proved to be anything but relaxing and enjoyable.¹⁵

¹⁵Tankersley interview, 30, TLA, UTA.

APPENDIX

Appendix A¹

List of Black Theaters in the state of Texas as of June 24, 1948.

<u>City</u>	<u>Theaters</u>
Abilene	Grand, Star
Amarillo	Harmony, Ritz, Cactus
Cleveland	Harlem
Colorado	Starlite
Conroe	Harlem
Corsicana	Starlite
Corpus Christi	Harlem
Dallas	Star, Harlem, Century, State, Park, Lincoln
Fort Worth	Grand, Ritz
Galveston	Dixie, Carver
Greenville	Flat
Houston	Lyons, Pastime, DeLuxe, Park, Lincoln, Clinton Park, Roxy, Rainbow, Dowling
Lubbock	Ritz
Lufkin	Lincoln
Navasota	Harlem
Orange	Dragon
Paris	Dixie
Port Arthur	Hollywood
Prairie View	Prairie View College
San Antonio	Cameo
San Angelo	Rex
Temple	Dunbar
Tyler	Palace
Waco	Alpha

¹W.E. Mitchell to Rice, June 24, 1948, J. W. Rice Correspondence, 1948, Box 1, Folder 12, Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas.

Appendix B²

List of segregated projectionist and mixed craft locals of the IATSE, and theie founding dates, as of Autumn, 1952.

236-A Birmingham, Alabama - projectionists - 6/28/41
 224-A Washington D.C. - mixed crafts - 11/5/37
 316-A Miami, Florida - projectionists - ????
 163-A Louisville, Kentucky - projectionists - 8/19/36
 293-A New Orleans, Louisiana - projectionists - 9/21/39
 181-A Baltimore, Maryland - projectionists - 7/23/48
 589-A Jackson/Vicksburg, Mississippi - mixed crafts -
 6/5/41
 143-A St. Louis, Missouri - mixed crafts - 8/1/35
 170-A Kansas City, Missouri - projectionists - 9/26/45
 1-A New York, New York - stage workers - ????
 327-A Cincinnati, Ohio - projectionists - 2/20/36
 8-A Philadelphia, Pennsylvania - stage workers - 12/15/37
 307-A Philadelphia, Pennsylvania - projectionists - ????
 249-A Dallas, Texas - projectionists - 11/1/49
 279-A Houston, Texas - projectionists - 6/10/37
 370-A Richmond, Virginia - projectionists - 12/9/37
 550-A Norfolk, Virginia - projectionists - 3/5/40

List of all IATSE projectionists locals in Texas as of Autumn, 1952.

249 Dallas
 249-A Dallas
 279 Houston
 279-A Houston
 305 Galveston
 330 Forth Worth
 407 San Antonio
 597 Waco

²IATSE Official Bulletin, no. 393, Autumn, 1952, IATSE Local 330, Fort Worth, Texas, Records, 1914-1984, Special Collections, Texas Labor Archives, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX.

Appendix C³

The original members of Dallas Local 249-A.

Name	Date of Birth	Place of Birth	Marital Status	Children	High School	College	Experience as Projectionist	Home Ownership
Johnson Herbert	4/16/1910	Houston, Texas	Separated	2	3 years	None	5 years 7 months	Rent
Morris Turner	12/16/1915	Greenville, Texas	Married	1	1 year	None	12 years several months	Rent
Scott Watkins	6/10/1927	Houston, Texas	Married	0	4 years graduated	2 years	6 years 9 months	Own
Kenneth Harland	3/27/1914	Houston, Texas	Married	2	4 years graduated	2 ½ years	6 years 3 months	Own
Samuel Tankersley	10/16/1903	Chatfield, Texas	Married	0	4 years graduated	None	9 months	Own
Leroy Hawkins	1/28/1907	Waskom, Texas	Married	0	4 years graduated	4 years	7 years 9 months	Own
Roscoe Miller	1/9/1910	Murfreesboro Tennessee	Married	3	4 years graduated	3 years	4 years 2 months	Rent
Arthur Foston	1925	Unknown	Single	0	4 years graduated	4 years	1 year 2 months	Unknown

³Johnson Herbert, Application for Projectionist, July 19, 1948; Roscoe Miller, Application for Projectionist, July 19, 1948; Leroy Hawkins, Application for Projectionist, July 22, 1948; Samuel Tankersley, Application for Projectionist, July 22, 1948; Scott Watkins, Application for Projectionist, July 23, 1948; Morris Turner, Application for Projectionist, August 3, 1948; Kenneth Harland, Application for Projectionist, August 6, 1948; Arthur Foston to Scott Watkins, August 19, 1948, J W Rice Correspondence, 1948, Box 1, Folder 12, Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce Collection, Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas.

Appendix D⁴

Original and "constructive" seniority dates for the members of Dallas Local 249-A at the time of the merger with Dallas Local 249.

Samuel R. Tankerlsey	November 1, 1949	August 1, 1967
David Williams	November 1, 1949	August 1, 1967
Coys Gene Raye	November 11, 1953	October 1, 1967
Odis Elam	February 10, 1957	February 1, 1968
James C. Gindratt	February 11, 1962	July 1, 1968
Charleston R. White	November 10, 1963	August 1, 1968
J.B. Greer	February 14, 1965	September 1, 1968
T.C. Austin	April 17, 1966	October 1, 1968
Frederick Alexander	August 13, 1967	November 1, 1968
J.B. Hill	October 18, 1967	November 15, 1968

⁴*Samuel R. Tankersley v. International Alliance Theatrical Stage Employes, AFL-CIO, Moving Picture Machine Operators Local 249*, copy in Dallas Moving Picture Machine Operators Union Local 249-A records, Special Collections, Texas Labor Archives, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX.

WORKS CITED

Primary Sources

Archival Sources

Special Collections Division, University of Texas at
Arlington, Libraries, Arlington TX:

Dallas Moving Picture Machine Operators Union Local
249-A Records.

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees
and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the United
States and Canada, Local 330, Fort Worth, Texas,
Records, 1912-1928.

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees
and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the United
States and Canada, Local 330, Fort Worth, Texas,
Records, 1914-1984.

Lewis, Lee A. (Lee Andrew) Papers.

Oral history interview with Lee Andrew Lewis.

Oral history interview with Samuel R. Tankersley.

Dallas Public Library, Dallas, TX:

Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce, Records, 1940-1970.

Interstate Theater Collection, 1905-1977.

Census Records

U.S. Bureau of Census. Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Population. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942-43.

_____. Negroes in the United States,
1920-1932. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing

Office, 1935.

. Census of Population: 1950; a Report of the Seventeenth Decennial Census of the United States. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952-1957.

Convention Records

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the U.S. and Canada. Combined Convention Proceedings: 1893-1926. Newark, N.J.: The Musicians' Press Print, 1926.

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the U.S. and Canada. Combined Convention Proceedings: 1928-1944. New York: NP, 1946.

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the U.S. and Canada. Combined Convention Proceedings: 1946-1958. New York: NP, 1960.

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the U.S. and Canada. Combined Convention Proceedings: 1960-1974. New York: NP, 1972.

Newspapers

Dallas Morning News

Houston Informer

Negro Labor News

New York Times

Procedural Manuals, Examinations, and Occupational Handbooks

- Brown, John. Projectionist's Handbook. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Michigan Audio-Visual Association, 1970.
- Bureau of Naval Personnel. Projectionist's Manual. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954.
- Cameron, James. Examination Questions and Answers on Motion Picture Projection. Coral Gables, Fla.: Cameron Publishing Company, 1953.
- _____. Examination Questions and Answers on Motion Picture Projection. Coral Gables, Fla.: Cameron Publishing Company, 1970.
- Mannino, Philip. ABC's of Visual Aids and Projectionist's Manual. State College, Pa: M.O. Publishing, Rev. ed., 1948.
- Michigan Employment Security Commission. "Motion Picture Projectionists, Occupational Guide No. 34," Michigan Occupational Guide Series. Detroit, Mich.: Michigan Employment Security Commission, Employment Service Division, 1958.
- Motion Picture Operator. Plainview, N.Y.: National Learning Corporation, 2000.
- Occupational Outlook Handbook, 1976-1977 ed. Washington, D.C.: The Bureau: For sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O., 1978.
- Pitchford, R. and F. Coombs. The Projectionist's Handbook: A complete guide to cinema operating. London: The Watkins-Pitchford Technical Publications, 1933.
- Richardson, F.H. F.H. Richardson's Bluebook of Projection. New York: Quigley Publishing Company, Inc, 6th ed., 1935.
- The 1946 Audio-Visual Projectionist's Handbook: A pictorial manual for the guidance of the student operator in schools, industry and the community. Chicago, Ill.: Business Screen Magazine, 1946.

World Wide Web

Civil Rights Act of 1964. Available from
<http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/civilr19.htm>.

I.A.T.S.E.. Available from <http://www.iatse-intl.org>.

The Handbook of Texas Online. Available from
<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/>.

Oscar Michaeux Home Page Available from
<http://www.shorock.com/arts/micheaux>.

Secondary Works

Books

Bernheim, Alfred L. The Business of the Theatre: An Economic History of the American Theater, 1750-1932. New York: Benjamin Bloom, Inc., 1932. Reissued, 1964.

Carder, Geoffrey H. The Man in the Box: Memoirs of a Cinema Projectionist. Cornwall: United Writers Publications Ltd., 1984.

Carleton, Don. Red Scare: Right-wing Hysteria, Fifties Fanaticism, and Their Legacy in Texas. Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1985.

Duren, Almetris Marsh. Overcoming: A History of Black Integration at the University of Texas at Austin. Austin: University Printing Division, 1979.

Fairbanks, Robert B. For the City as a Whole: Planning, Politics, and the Public Interest in Dallas, Texas, 1900-1965. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998.

Fielding, Raymond, ed. A Bibliography of Theses and Dissertations on the Subject of Film: 1916-1979. Houston: University of Houston, 1979.

- Foley, Neil. The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Green, George. The Establishment in Texas Politics: The Primitive Years, 1938-1957. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979.
- Hartsough, Denise. "Crime Pays: The Studios' Labor Deals in the 1930s," In The Studio System, edited by Janet Staiger, 226-248. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995.
- Honey, Michael K. Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.
- Hill, Patricia. Dallas: The Making of a Modern City. Austin, University of Texas Press, 1996.
- Horne, Gerald. Class Struggle in Hollywood, 1930-1950: Moguls, Mobsters, Stars, Reds, and Trade Unionists. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.
- Kluger, Richard. Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality. New York: Knopf, 1976.
- Marshall, Ray F. The Negro and Organized Labor. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965.
- Mast, Gerald. A Short History of the Movies. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 2d ed. 1978.
- McComb, David. Houston: The Bayou City. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969.
- Moseley, Earl. The Reel Mose: An Autobiography of a Motion Picture Theater Projectionists. Denver City, Texas: Reel Graphic, 1986.
- Northrup, Herbert R. Organized Labor and the Negro. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishing, 1971.
- Obadele-Starks, Ernest. Black Unionism in the Industrial South. College Station, Texas: Texas A&M Press, 2002.

- Patterson, James T. Brown V. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Quinn, Germain. Fifty Years Backstage. Minneapolis: Stage Publishing Company, 1926.
- Rhode, Eric. A History of the Cinema: From its Origins to 1970. New York: Hill and Wang, 1976.
- Roediger, David. The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class. London: Verso, 1999.
- Ross, Murray. Stars and Strikes: Unionization of Hollywood. New York: Columbia University Press, 1941.
- Schroeder, Richard. Lone Star Picture Shows. College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2001.
- Schulze, Suzanne. Population Information in Twentieth Century Census Volumes, 1900-1940. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1985.
- Schutze, Jim. The Accommodation: The Politics of Race in an American City. Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel Press, 1986.
- Shabazz, Amilcar. Advancing Democracy: African Americans and the Struggle for Access and Equity in Higher Education in Texas. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Tushnet, Mark V. Making Constitutional Law: Thurgood Marshall and the Supreme Court, 1961-1991. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Wilson, William H. Hamilton Park: A Planned Black Community in Dallas. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
- Zieger, Robert H. The CIO, 1935-1955. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1995.

Dissertations and Theses

- Alexander, Phillip Andrew. "Staging Business: A History of

the United Scenic Artists, 1895-1995 (Stage Design, Labor Unions)." Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1999.

Baker, Robert Osborne. "The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the United States and Canada." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1933.

Cauble, John Russell. "A Study of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employes and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the United States and Canada." Masters Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1964.

Gillette, Michael Lowery. "The NAACP in Texas, 1937-1957." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1985.

Hill, Artis. "Jim Crow-ism in Several Areas of Twentieth Century Texas Life Relative to the Negro: Transportation, Eating and Lodging Places, Public Parks, and Movie Theaters." Master's Thesis, Abilene Christian College, 1969.

Justice, Ellen Rowan. "IATSE in Texas: One of the Factors Contributing to the Growth of the Feature Film Production Industry in Texas." Master's Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1978.

Nielsen, Michael Charles. "Motion Picture Craft Workers and Craft Unions in Hollywood: The Studio Era, 1912-1948." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1985.

Polakoff, Murray. "The Development of the Texas State C.I.O. Council." Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1955.

Articles

Bloch, Herman D. "Craft Unions and the Negro in Historical Perspective." The Journal of Negro History 43 (January 1958): 10-33.

Booth, Alison L. and Jeff Frank. "Seniority, Earnings and

- Unions." Economica 63 (November 1996): 673-686.
- Cole, David L. "Jurisdictional Issues and the Promise of Merger." Industrial and Labor Relations 9 (April 1956): 391-405.
- Dewey, Donald. "Negro Employment in Southern Industry." The Journal of Political Economy 60 (August 1952): 279-293.
- Draper, Alan. "Do the Right Thing: The Desegregation of Union Conventions in the South." Labor History 33 (Summer 1992): 343-356.
- Engerrand, Steven. "Black and Mulatto Mobility and Stability in Dallas, Texas, 1880-1910." Phylon 39 (3rd Quarter 1978): 203-215.
- Goldfield, Michael. "Race and the CIO: The Possibilities for Racial Egalitarianism During the 1930s and 1940s." International Labor and Working-Class History 44 (Fall 1933): 1-32.
- Halker, Clark. "A History of Local 208 and the Struggle for Racial Equality in the American Federation of Musicians." Black Music Research Journal 8 (Autumn 1988): 207-222.
- Hartsough, Denise. "Film Union Meets Television: IA Organizing Efforts, 1947-1952." Labor History 33 (Summer 1992): 357-371.
- Hill, Herbert. "Racism Within Organized Labor: A Report of Five Years of the AFL-CIO, 1955-1960." The Journal of Negro Education 30 (Spring 1961): 109-118.
- _____. "Unions and the Negro Community." Industrial and Labor Relations Review 17 (July 1964): 619-621.
- Hoyman, Michele M. and Lamont Stallworth. "Participation in Local Unions: A Comparison of Black and White Members." Industrial and Labor Relations Review 40 (April 1987): 323-335.
- Kelley, Maryellen R. "Discrimination in Seniority Systems: A Case Study." Industrial and Labor Relations Review 36 (October 1982): 40-55.

- Korstad, Robert and Nelson Lichtenstein. "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement." The Journal of American History 75 (December 1988): 786-811.
- Leonard, Jonathan S. "The Effect of Unions on the Employment of Blacks, Hispanics, and Women." Industrial and Labor Relations Review 39 (October 1985): 115-132.
- Marks, Carole. "Black Workers and the Great Migration North." Phylon 46 (2nd Quarter 1985): 148-161.
- Marshall, Ray. "The Negro and Organized Labor." The Journal of Negro Education 32 (Autumn, 1963): 375-389.
- _____. "Unions and the Negro Community." Industrial and Labor Relations Review 17 (January 1964): 179-202.
- Mater, Dan H. and Garth L. Mangum. "The Integration of Seniority Lists in Transportation Mergers." Industrial and Labor Relations Review 16 (April 1963): 343-365.
- Obadele-Starks, Ernest. "Black Texans and Theater Craft Unionism: The Struggle for Racial Equality." Southwestern Historical Quarterly 106 (April 2003): 353-348.
- Perkins, Kathy Anne. "Black Backstage Workers, 1900-1969." Black American Literature Forum 16 (Winter 1982): 160-163.
- Seidman, Joel. "Efforts Toward Merger, 1935-1955." Industrial and Labor Relations 9 (April 1956): 353-370.
- Summers, Clyde W. "Admission Policies of Labor Unions." The Quarterly Journal of Economics 61 (November 1946): 66-107.

VITA

Hugh O'Donovan was born in Portland, Oregon, on July 28, 1976 to Adrienne and Tony O'Dononvan. In 1983, the family moved to Carrollton, Texas. He graduated high school from Jesuit College Preparatory School in 1994. In the fall of 1997, he entered Texas State University-San Marcos where he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in August of 2001. He entered the History Department of the Graduate College of Texas State University-San Marcos, where he was employed as a teaching assistant.

Permanent Address: 1640 Aquarena Springs Dr. #1006
San Marcos, Texas

This thesis was typed by Hugh O'Donovan.

