



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Pamphlet: This Is My Husband: Fighter for His People, Political Refugee

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on the subject, "Resolved: that Negroes Should Join the Communist Party" and how the galleries were packed with his colleagues from the unemployed council wildly cheering every reference that Jack made to the writings of William Z. Foster and James W. Ford to the evident dismay and discomfort of administration officials. They recall their participation with my husband in the picket lines before the A. and P. chain stores, and the "Free-the-Scottsboro-Boys" parades and "Hunger-Marches."

Receiving the degree of Bachelor of Science in Chemistry in 1934, my husband went to Washington, D.C. and entered Howard University—the Alma Mater of his mother and father. He graduated from the College of Pharmacy in 1937, completing the four year course in three years.

During his years at Howard, there was much militant activity among the students. The Young Communist League, the Marxist Study Circle and the Liberal Club were large and authoritative leadership organizations in the student body. They led anti-war strikes, and strikes against the high cost of living, and demonstrations for the passage of an anti-lynching bill. The students participated in many activities off the campus as well.

The Birth of the S.N.Y.C.

It was during his last year at Howard that Jack joined with the outstanding young leaders of the progressive Negro youth of that time in founding the Southern Negro Youth Congress. This organization, whose founding convention and first headquarters, was in Richmond, Virginia, wrote an heroic page in the organized struggles of the Negro people, and the joint struggles of Negro and white youth, in the South.

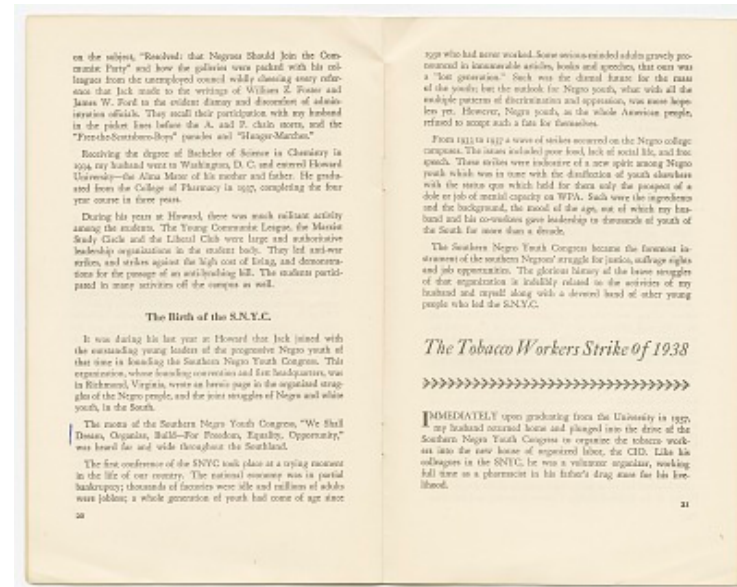
The motto of the Southern Negro Youth Congress, "We Shall Dream, Organize, Build-For Freedom, Equality, Opportunity," was heard far and wide throughout the Southland.

The first conference of the SNYC took place at a trying moment in the life of our country. The national economy was in partial bankruptcy; thousands of factories were idle and millions of adults were jobless; a whole generation of youth had come of age since

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1930 who had never worked. Some serious-minded adults gravely pronounced in innumerable articles, books and speeches, that ours was a "lost generation." such was the dismal future for the mass of the youth; but the outlook for Negro youth, what with all the multiple patterns of discrimination and oppression, was more hopeless yet. However, Negro youth, as the whole American people, refused to accept such a fate for themselves.

From 1933 to 1937 a wave of strikes occurred on the Negro college campuses. The issues included poor food, lack of social life, and free speech. These strikes were indicative of a new spirit among Negro youth which was in tune with the disaffection of youth elsewhere with the status quo which held for them only the prospect of a dole or job of menial capacity on WPA. Such were the ingredients and the



background, the mood of the age, out of which my husband and his co-workers gave leadership to thousands of youth of the South for more than a decade.

The Southern Negro Youth Congress became the foremost instrument of the southern Negroes' struggle for justice, suffrage rights and job opportunities. The glorious history of the brave struggles of that organization is indelibly related to the activities of my husband and myself along with a devoted band of other young people who led the S.N.Y.C.

The Tobacco Workers Strike of 1938

IMMEDIATELY upon graduating the University in 1937, my husband returned home and plunged into the drive of the Southern Negro Youth Congress to organize the tobacco workers into the new house of organized labor, the CIO. Like his colleagues in the SNYC, he was a volunteer organizer, working full time as a pharmacist in his father's drug store for his livelihood.

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