



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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Time of Decision
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ALL of these activities my husband conducted in his spare time, after a full day in the store. It was already apparent to his parents that the time had come when he had to choose the main course of his life's work. Would he continue in his profession and make his contribution to society in the scientific field of chemistry and pharmacy, for which he had spent seven years in the university preparing himself? He knew it would please his father and mother if he would elect to do so.

His father said that whatever his decision, it must be honestly made and definitive; that one dare not live a life of ease and assume the postures of a leader among the workers; that history is replete with the case histories of such two-faced hypocrites.

His father said that if he wanted the comforts that go with a high income, he must choose a profession that would give a promise of it. He spoke of the hard lot of his own working parents and boyhood and impressed upon his son that the lot of the workers was a hard and unenviable one.

Experience Strengthens Conviction

One day my husband received an invitation to make a field study for a year of various aspects of the status of the Negro in several southern states as a part of the Gunnar Myrdal Study of the "Negro in America." This offer proved to be the bridge my husband needed for the solution of his dilemma. They Myrdal Study job gave him the opportunity for a year of intensive study and testing of his own abilities over the broader canvas of the whole South. He traveled throughout the South, talking with the people and studying the program and leadership technique of all the leaders there of any importance.

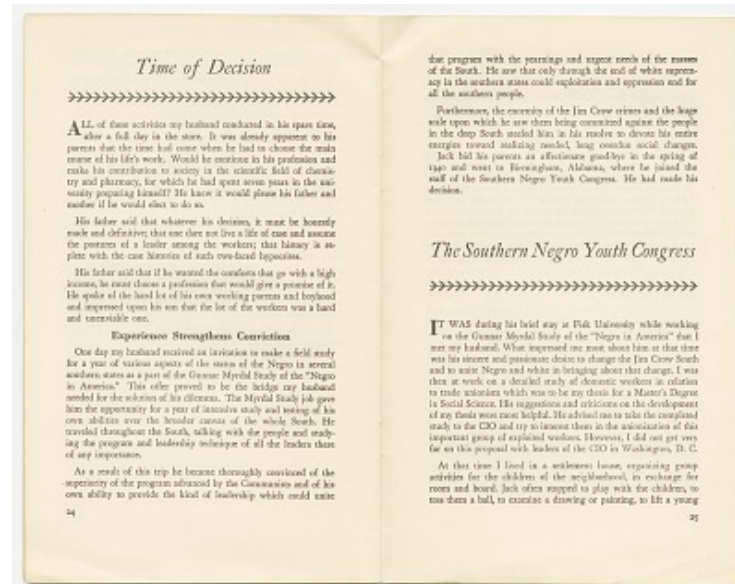
As a result of this trip he became thoroughly convinced of the superiority of the program advanced by the Communists and of his own ability to provide the kind of leadership which could unite

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that program with the yearnings and urgent needs of the masses of the South. He saw that only through the end of white supremacy in the southern states could exploitation and oppression end for all the southern people.

Furthermore, the enormity of the Jim Crow crimes and the huge scale upon which he saw them being committed against the people in the deep South steeled him in his resolve to devote his entire energies toward realizing needed, long overdue social changes. Jack bid his parents an affectionate good-bye in the spring of 1940 and went to Birmingham, Alabama, where he joined the staff of the Southern Negro Youth Congress. He had made his decision.

The Southern Negro Youth Congress



IT WAS during his brief stay at Fisk University while working on the Gunnar Myrdal Study of the "Negro in America" that I met my husband. What impressed me most about him at that time was his sincere and passionate desire to change the Jim Crow South and to unite Negro and white in bringing about that change. I was then at work on a detailed study of domestic workers in relation to trade unionism which was to be my these for a Master's Degree in Social Science. His suggestions and criticisms on the development of my thesis were most helpful. He advised me to take the completed study of the CIO and try to interest them in unionization of this important group of exploited workers. However, I did not get very far on this proposal with leaders of the CIO in Washington, D.C.

At that time I lived in a settlement house, organizing group activities for the children of the neighborhood, in exchange for room and board. Jack often stopped to play with the children, to toss them a ball, to examine a drawing or painting, to life a young

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