

A History of Minority Participation
in the Southeastern Section

A supplement to

Threescore and Ten: A History
of the Southeastern Section of
The Mathematical Association of America
1922–1992

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April, 1995

Preface

Winter, 1995

This manuscript is a supplement to *Threescore and Ten: A History of the Southeastern Section of The Mathematical Association of America, 1922–1992*, distributed at the annual section meeting in April, 1992. The Section History gave details such as where meetings were held, who the officers were, and who the main speakers were during the years 1922–1992. It also included recollections of some members of the section who had been active over many years. This narrative does not contain an important story, that of the African-American members of the Section. As no history is ever complete, even this supplementary manuscript cannot tell the whole story for the time it covers, and certainly is not the end of the story. As we continue to gather information, the entire Section history will continue to grow and reflect the Section's size, diversity, and complexity.

After the publication and distribution in Spring 1992 of the history of the Section's first seventy years, several members recalled the exclusion of minority MAA members during most of those years and felt that the experiences of African-American mathematicians in the Southeast in the MAA should be told. This manuscript includes some of these stories from the past as well as a description of the efforts the Section is making today to move from exclusion to inclusion of all members and to erase the scars of former times. In recent years the Section has reached out to all mathematicians and mathematics educators, in order to be an organization that is not only welcoming but invitational. The story of the Southeastern Section—where we were, where we are today, and the efforts we are making which will affect where we will be—may inspire other sections to follow our lead.

The Section has seen big changes and has moved to recognize the diversity of our members and their interests. In the past decade, the Southeastern Section has had female mathematicians in positions of Chair, Vice-Chair, Newsletter Editor, State Director, and Governor; many are firsts for the Section. Since 1988, the Section meeting has included a regional meeting of AMATYC (The American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges). Programs to encourage students have included TA Rush, which was started in 1989 to bring advanced undergraduates together with faculty from graduate degree granting institutions to talk about graduate study opportunities, and a pizza lunch for students and their MAA Student Chapters since 1992. It is the 1990s that have seen the real change in participation of African-Americans. A regional meeting of NAM (National Association of Mathematicians) was included in the 1992 program, with the hopes that this would become a regular feature. The nineties have seen African-American mathematicians among the major invited speakers at the annual meetings, as well as among the Section officers and committee members, and also the establishment of the section Committee on Minority Participation. These activities are further described in this document.

The glue that binds the members of the MAA is interest in mathematics and the teaching of mathematics. All who share that interest should feel a part of this organization. There

cannot be any other considerations for membership and for full participation. As mathematicians, we would like to think that we are above discrimination, that all we value is that someone shares our love of mathematics. That has not always been the case and it might not be today. But it is the ideal for which we strive. We hope that the meetings of the past few years have created an environment in which all mathematicians and mathematics educators in the five-state region feel part of the Section, and at the meetings all members find an atmosphere of belonging.

The road to reach these goals is still being traveled. We start by recognizing the incidents of the past. Today the Section members are working together to create a welcoming atmosphere in an inclusive organization. And lastly, we look to the future of a diverse and representative organization dedicated to serving the needs of all mathematicians and mathematics educators. We invite all who share the vision to join us in seeking this ideal.

Tina Straley, Chair-elect

I The Early Years: Prior to 1965

African-Americans in the Southeast were involved in the teaching of college and university mathematics and in mathematical research during the early years of the Southeastern Section of the Mathematical Association of America. However, as far as is known, no African-Americans attended meetings of the section prior to 1951. There are many reasons for the lack of participation of African-Americans in the Southeastern Section during its early years. A major reason was certainly their reluctance to attend meetings hosted by white institutions during a period of segregation and repression when there was little or no contact between the white and black institutions. In addition, those African-Americans who taught at the Black state colleges worried that their Boards of Trustees would take punitive action against them if they were involved in an “incident.” In fact, the mathematics department chair of one of these colleges said in 1951 that if an African-American attempted to attend a meeting, and even got in and was received with a pretense of politeness, “that night someone would make a phone call to someone else and soon people at [the college] would lose their jobs without ever being told why.”

The record indicates that African-Americans attempted to attend an annual meeting of the Southeastern Section in 1951, when the meeting was held March 16–17 in Nashville, with Vanderbilt University and Peabody College for Teachers as host institutions. Lee Lorch, the chair of the mathematics department at Fisk University, and three Black colleagues, Evelyn Boyd, Walter Brown, and H. M. Holloway came to the meeting and were able to attend the scientific sessions. Since Fisk was a private institution, these faculty were not taking quite the risk that faculty at public institutions would. However, the meeting was not without incident. Several days before the meeting Professor Lorch had requested four reservations to the banquet, which included an address by Saunders Mac Lane, the President of the

MAA. On March 15, the day before the banquet, the chair of the arrangements committee, on learning that three of these reservations were to be used by African-Americans, declared the reservations canceled. Thus the Fisk faculty members could not attend the banquet and hear Mac Lane's talk, "What Makes Students Think?"

The request of Professors Lorch and Boyd to President Mac Lane that he withdraw from the banquet or openly state his objections to discrimination at the banquet was declined on the basis that this action would be discourteous to the hosts. The Fisk faculty then wrote to the Board of Governors of the Mathematical Association of America and the Executive Council of the American Mathematical Society requesting that the organizations place into their bylaws statements that would protect the rights of all members to participate fully in the affairs of the organizations without regard to race, creed or color. (See Appendix I.) Although the Board did not attempt to change the bylaws, it did pass a resolution at its meeting of September 3, 1951 affirming its intention to conduct the affairs of the Association without discrimination. This resolution was published in the *American Mathematical Monthly* (November, 1951, p. 661) (See Appendix II.) The resolution requested the President to consult with various section officers to "determine the best means for avoiding discrimination," and the President reported on his conversations to the Board on December 28, 1951. (See Appendix III.) One month later, the President communicated his report to all Section officers, noting that he had determined that "it is possible . . . to conduct the scientific business and social affairs of the Association without discrimination as to race, creed or color. This possibility rests upon careful planning in advance and consultation with the host institution in question." The President further charged the officers "with responsibility for these plans," and stated that he would rely upon their "cooperation and wisdom in their execution." (See Appendix IV.) The Secretary of the Association, Harry Gehman, also sent the report, along with a covering letter inviting membership applications, to "mathematicians in Colleges which are attended predominantly by Negroes." (See Appendix V.)

Meanwhile, on December 17, 1951, Professor Lorch again wrote to the Board of Governors expressing the hope that the Association would implement its resolution with "unequivocal, unambiguous action that will protect the rights of all members to full, equal participation in all aspects of the work of the Association" and making specific suggestions toward this end. (See Appendix VI.) For the remainder of the decade, however, it is not clear what the response of the Southeastern Section was to the request of the President, because African-Americans apparently did not attend Section meetings. What became clear in 1960, however, was that the leadership of the Southeastern Section had not yet reached the position of abiding by the non-discrimination policy articulated by the national organization.

On April 1, 1960 a delegation from Atlanta University (AU), consisting of Professor Abdulalim A. Shabazz (then Lonnie Cross), an African-American and Chairman of the Department of Mathematics, Professor S. C. Saxena, an East Indian, William E. Brodie, an African-American graduate student, and James D. Vineyard, a white graduate student, presented their confirmed room reservations to the receptionists at the Wade Hampton Hotel

in Columbia, South Carolina, site of the 1960 annual meeting of the Southeastern Section. Initially, the hotel officials said that the rooms were not ready, but, after a brief consultation among themselves, they told the AU delegation that the hotel would not honor the room reservations of the non-white delegates. The officials further stated that they had made it clear to the officials of the Section making arrangements for the meeting that all non-white attendees would be excluded from sleeping in the hotel and attending the banquet.

Professor Shabazz and the AU delegation then conferred with Professor C. L. Seebeck, Secretary-Treasurer of the Section, and Professor W. L. Williams, Chair of the Department of Mathematics at the University of South Carolina and chair of the arrangements committee, and reminded them of the non-discrimination policy of the national MAA. However, the Section officials only reiterated what the hotel officials had said and expressed their regrets and their hope that the AU delegation would remain at the meeting. Thereupon, in spite of Professor Shabazz's scheduled presentation of a paper during the first general session of the meeting, he and the entire AU delegation left the meeting in protest of the continued manifest discrimination against non-white attendees. (See Appendix VII.)

The action of the Fisk faculty in 1951 in attempting to participate fully in the meeting of their Section and their subsequent protest to the Board of Governors marked the beginning of the banning of discrimination and other measures that prevented full participation by all mathematicians in the MAA. The action almost ten years later by Professor Shabazz was also significant in breaking down barriers. This was the first time that it was clear that African-Americans would not accept partial participation in the meetings.

There were many actions by others that followed which opened more doors, such as the establishment of the National Association of Mathematicians (NAM) in 1969. NAM provided a professional organization for those mathematicians interested in the promotion of the mathematics education of African-Americans, an area of little interest at the time to the national body and its sections. NAM also provided an organized effort for representation on MAA committees and the Board of Governors.

II Participation during 1965–1989

African-American mathematicians attended Southeastern Section meetings in the late 1960s but it took many years before they fully participated as speakers and organizers. For example, in 1966, Etta Falconer of Spelman College attended the meeting held at Emory University in Atlanta. She recalled that there was only one other African-American present, Dr. Joseph Dennis of Clark College, and that he was the only person who had anything to do with her at the meeting. (Etta Falconer went on to receive her doctorate from Emory in 1969, under the direction of Trevor Evans.)

During the early seventies a few African-American mathematicians, primarily from institutions in North Carolina, attended the section meetings. Professor David L. Hunter,

who was chair of the Mathematics Department at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, North Carolina, was one of the most active. He served as Vice-Chair of the Section during 1972–1974 and says, “I thoroughly enjoyed my tenure with the Association. The Board members were very congenial and unstrained by having a minority member.” As a consequence of Professor Hunter’s involvement on the Section Executive Board, the 1976 Section meeting was held at Central Piedmont Community College.

By 1974, Dr. Wilbur Smith of North Carolina A&T University began a tradition of attending the Southeastern Section meetings. Dr. Falconer recalled that he was the only other African-American at the 1974 meeting in Knoxville and that his presence was very important to her. Comments from Professors Smith and Falconer on the atmosphere encountered by African-Americans at these meetings ranged from “cordial” to “chilly; people did not speak . . . I was essentially ignored” However, through the 1970s few minorities appeared on the programs or were actively involved in the section. For example, Dr. Falconer was a member of the Nominating Committee and, later, the Site Selection Committee.

At the 1980 meeting at Appalachian State University, Dr. Sylvia Bozeman of Spelman College presented a paper, “Finite rank modifications and generalized inverses of Fredholm operators.” During the remainder of the 1980s, other African-Americans spoke at Southeastern Section meetings. Professors Bozeman and Falconer became a part of annual delegations of Spelman faculty and students at the meetings. And activities of mathematics departments of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the section began to appear regularly in the Section Newsletter.

III The State of Affairs During the 90s

With the 90s came evidence of a changing environment. The section meeting at the University of South Alabama in Mobile, April 5–6, 1991, was the first one at which an African-American member of the Section gave a plenary address. Dr. Daphne Smith, a graduate of Spelman College and a faculty member at the University of Georgia, was warmly received for her talk, “Classes of Sets with VC Dimension” In the audience were current Spelman students, who were also there to support one of their classmates giving a talk in the session of student papers.

Strategic planning for the Spring 1992 meeting at Kennesaw State College resulted in increased program participation and attendance by African-American students and faculty from several institutions. Dr. Sylvia Bozeman, as Governor-at-Large, had encouraged participation from traditionally minority institutions, for the Mobile meeting, with personal letters of invitation. However, these letters resulted in only small attendance by members from the local area. Clearly a more welcoming and inclusive environment was needed, with a larger effort by the Section officers and host institution organizers.

For the Spring 1992 meeting, the Kennesaw State College organizers personally invited African-American mathematicians to be speakers and session chairs. In addition, the meet-

ing included a regional meeting of the National Association of Mathematicians (NAM), a panel presentation concerning encouraging minority students in mathematics, and a SUMMA (Strengthening Underrepresented Minorities Mathematics Achievement) workshop presented by Dr. William Hawkins of the MAA. With a grant from the national MAA, a pizza lunch was held for students and MAA Student Chapter advisors. This activity and TA Rush, a graduate school fair for undergraduates, were well attended by African-American students who were encouraged by their faculty mentors to attend the meeting. This combination of activities and efforts resulted in greatly increased program participation and attendance by African-American students and faculty from several institutions.

Participation of African-American members on Section Committees and in Section offices has greatly increased in the nineties. Dr. Etta Falconer, of Spelman College, co-chaired in 1991–92 and 1992–93 the section's first committees to determine the recipient of the Distinguished Teacher Award. These committees chose the section's first two award recipients. Dr. Ronald Biggers, of Kennesaw State College, joined the section nominating committee in 1992–1993 and chaired this committee in 1993–1994. Dr. Melvis Atkinson, of Kennesaw State College, joined the committee in 1994. In 1992, the Section Committee on Minority Participation was established. Dr. Wanda Patterson, of Spelman College and chair of the committee, meets with the Executive Committee of the Section as an ex officio member. In 1993, Dr. Robert Bozeman, of Morehouse College, became a Section Officer upon selection as State Director of Georgia.

Efforts to encourage African-American attendance and full participation in section meetings have continued. Dr. Amassa Fauntleroy, of North Carolina State University, was an invited, major speaker at the Spring 1994 meeting at Carson-Newman College; he was introduced by Dr. Wanda Patterson. His timely address concerned the proof of Fermat's Last Theorem.

The Southeastern Section has been the birthplace of protest against discrimination on the basis of race. Confrontations here have helped to move the MAA forward in the elimination of barriers in the mathematics community, not only for African-Americans, but for women, gays and lesbians, and other minorities. Today the Southeastern Section stands as a leader and a model in its determination to encourage and promote the full participation of all of its members.

Copies of *Threescore and Ten: A History of the Southeastern Section of the Mathematical Association of America; 1922–1992* can be obtained for \$3 to cover mailing costs from

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Appendix I

April 20, 1951

Executive Council, American Mathematical Society
Board of Governors, Mathematical Association of America

Gentlemen:

The Fisk Mathematics Department hereby requests the American Mathematical Society and the Mathematical Association of America to insert into the respective bylaws of the two organizations explicit and effective protection of the rights of all members to participate fully, freely and equally in the affairs of the organizations without regard to race, creed or color. It should be stated flatly that meetings, and teas, receptions, luncheons, dinners, etc., associated with meetings, shall be held only at institutions, hotels, etc., where prior assurance is given that there will be no discrimination. In keeping with such a policy, it should also be voted that persons holding office shall not participate in any way in any meeting of the organization until they have been assured of full compliance with the letter and spirit of this bylaw, failure in this respect to be construed as resignation from office.

The adoption of such bylaws is necessary for the protection of the rights of members and of the mathematical community generally, as the episode related below will establish. It is also necessary for the growth of membership and participation among Negro mathematicians, nearly all of whom teach in Southern schools and who will need such specific assurances before they will feel inclined to participate in the work of these organizations. It would follow the lead of other professional societies which have already codified this basic policy, for example, the American Psychological Association (*Am. Psychol.*, 5, 548 [1950]).

One of the events which demonstrate the need for such official action occurred in connection with the annual meeting of the southeastern region of the Association, March 16–17, 1951, with Peabody and Vanderbilt as hosts. The official program of the meeting announced a dinner at which the national President of the Association would be the speaker. The chairman of the Fisk department requested four reservations in a note handed personally, on March 10, to the individual specified on the announcement. On March 15, the day before the banquet, the chairman of the arrangements committee telephoned Fisk to inquire if any of the four reservations would be used by Negroes. On receiving an affirmative reply, he declared the reservations cancelled, stating that the arrangements committee would issue no tickets to Negroes.

Two of the undersigned, acting for the department, then requested the national President to act against this discrimination. He spoke to the arrangements committee chairman and then reported that the latter was determined to exclude Negroes. Thereupon our committee requested the President to withdraw from the dinner in order to avoid giving the impression that the national officers sanction or tolerate such discrimination or, if unwilling to withdraw, to make his disapproval of discrimination clear in his speech at the dinner. He felt

that he could not do either, holding the view that such acts would be discourteous to his hosts.

Some further clarifying remarks may be in order. There is no state law or city ordinance which prohibits interracial dinners. Of this we have been assured by local attorneys with long experience in such matters. There is substantial precedent for such dinners, which have been held even in some local hotels, which are frequent in some churches and other semi-private dining halls and which are daily events at Fisk.

On November 6–7, 1950, Peabody and Vanderbilt were hosts to the Southern College personnel Association. This organization's banquet was nonsegregated.

The point here is not that the hotel at which the Association held its banquet discriminates against Negroes. The point is that it was up to the arrangements committee to find a place, on the campus of one of the host institutions or elsewhere, where all mathematicians could participate.

Sincerely yours,

EVELYN BOYD
Associate Professor

WALTER BROWN
Assistant Professor

H. M. HOLLOWAY
Assistant Professor

LEE LORCH
Associate Professor and Chairman

APPENDIX II

The Board of Governors of the Association affirms its steady intention to conduct the scientific meetings, social gatherings, and other affairs of the Association so as to promote the interests of Mathematics without discrimination as to race, creed, or color. The President of the Association is authorized and requested to determine the best means for avoiding discrimination, by consultation on this subject with the various chairmen and secretaries of the sections and other appropriate members of the Association and to report the results of this consultation to the Board.

Adopted by the Board of Governors of the MAA, September 3, 1951

APPENDIX III

MATHEMATICAL ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Report of President Saunders Mac Lane to the Board of Governors, Providence, Rhode Island, December 28, 1951

At its meeting in September 1951, the Board of Governors passed the following resolution:

The Board of Governors of the Association affirms its steady intention to conduct the scientific meetings, social gatherings, and other affairs of the Association so as to promote the interests of Mathematics without discrimination as to race, creed, or color. The President of the Association is authorized and requested to determine the best means for avoiding discrimination, by consultation on this subject with the various chairmen and secretaries of the sections and other appropriate members of the Association and to report the results of this consultation to the Board.

In accordance with this resolution your president has written letters to 54 people, including the sectional officers and governors from the regions most directly affected and a number of other members of the Association chosen to represent differing opinions on this topic. There are 32 replies at hand, expressing various shades of opinion, but all helpful and designed to build up realistic means of carrying out the intention of the Board.

A number of answers have discussed some of the problems involved. For example, it is properly observed that in its national and sectional meetings, the Association is guest of a host institution. One southerner writes:

An indispensable item in the effectiveness of the Association and Society in promoting mathematical development in any section of the United States is that these organizations receive invitations to hold meetings at strategic locations within the regions. The role of host institution is not an easy one, particularly under present budgetary strains.

Another member writes:

When a section meets at an institution, the section is not the host, but is a guest. A guest is obligated to work for the welfare of the host as long as he is a guest.

Another southerner writes:

I believe that it would be possible now, in most places, for members of the Negro or any other race to attend business and program meetings of the organization. In view of this, we might consider the matter of discontinuing the social functions and holding only meetings to which anyone could be admitted.

The same suggestion of canceling the banquet was made by several others. In this connection, another southern mathematician from the same section writes:

I have heard that there have been suggestions for canceling the banquet at . . . I do not think this is a good way to face the issue and have expressed myself in that way. It seems to me a retreat. I was born in . . . , have lived here all my past life, and all my teaching has been in this state. I am eager that we go forward.

It is your president's suggestion that the decision between these two alternatives be left to the discretion of each section, which would then be able to take into account current circumstances at the host institution, it being understood that a banquet held in the name of the Association is arranged to follow the expressed intentions of the Board of Governors.

About 20 replies said in essence "I heartily approve the resolution passed by the Board of Governors at its September meeting."

One letter, from a negro mathematician, pointed out in vigorous terms that the matter of suitable living accommodations at a meeting is of real importance to members of his race, and is essential, in order that these members be able to attend a meeting and to feel that they are welcome. Your president suggests that, at meetings where living accommodations are arranged, the local arrangements committee should make appropriate plans for all members. The character of these plans depends on the circumstances. For example:

First, the problem of color is too big for us to solve on any general scale; we can at most solve it for ourselves. My suggestion for its solution is for us to hold our Meetings, regional and national, only at those places or institutions which will make satisfactory arrangements. These arrangements would pertain to (1) eating (including the banquet) and (2) attendance at the meeting place; they would not include (3) dormitory facilities. I believe it better to work on the first two items now, and the third might eventually come about in time. . . . At the section meeting here; we arranged to accommodate the colored registrants at houses in town.

Many letters made encouraging reports of meetings held by other organizations. Examples:

Only recently has membership in the . . . Academy of Sciences been opened to negroes. Last week that organization had its annual meeting in . . . , and several negroes attended.

I belong to a professional group which has members of both the white and colored races. We solve our problem by meeting in an office conference room and having lunches sent in.

Two negroes came to the meeting, took their places in the room, and remained to the end of the meeting. At the end of the session they remained in the room and several members engaged in conversation with them. From the meeting place, the members went to the home of the President, and the two Negroes went with them. At the door the guests were greeted by the lady of the house. During the tea some members insisted that the two men should come to the banquet . . . the Negroes declined. . . The secretary of . . . Academy of Science this year is a Negro.

On several special occasions the University accepted Negroes at banquets and luncheons in the Student Union. I believe there were two colored persons present at the annual dinner of the . . . Academy of Science held here last year. . . . Negro representatives from some of our colored schools were included in the luncheon held here for the College Presidents and Representatives of the State institutions.

One member made the excellent suggestion that it would be most effective to have each section concerned discuss at a meeting the ways and means of realizing the Board's intention. Your President would welcome such discussions.

The most succinct statement of the situation comes from a distinguished southern mathematician, who says:

I feel that such discrimination should end, and that the way to stop it is just to stop.

APPENDIX IV

THE MATHEMATICAL ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Saunders Mac Lane
President
February 1, 1952

Eckhart Hall
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

To the Section Officers of the Mathematical Association of America.

Dear Colleagues:

At its meeting in September, 1951, the Board of Governors passed the following resolution:

The Board of Governors of the Association affirms its steady intention to conduct the scientific meetings, social gatherings, and other affairs of the Association so as to Promote the interests of Mathematics without discrimination as to race, creed, or color. The President of the Association is authorized and requested to determine the best means for avoiding discrimination, by consultation on this subject with the various chairmen and secretaries of the sections and other appropriate members of the Association and to report the results of this consultation to the Board.

Your president has carried out the consultation authorized and deeply appreciates the care and thought which the various members consulted have devoted to the question. As a result of this consultation, your president, with the concurrence of the Board of Governors, has determined that it is possible to carry out effectively the expressed intention of the Board to conduct the scientific, business and social affairs of the Association without discrimination as to race, creed or color.

This possibility rests upon careful planning in advance and consultation with the host institution in question. The president and the Board of Governors charge you with responsibility for these plans, and rely upon your cooperation and wisdom in their execution, in pursuit of our common purpose of the advancement of Mathematical Education.

Sincerely yours,

Saunders Mac Lane

President

APPENDIX V

THE MATHEMATICAL ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

H. M. Gehman
Secretary-Treasurer

University of Buffalo
Buffalo, New York

February 5, 1952

To Mathematicians in Colleges which are attended predominantly by Negroes:

Dear Colleagues:

The officers of the Mathematical Association of America are attempting to eliminate any discrimination in the conduct of its scientific and social affairs. Enclosed are a letter from President Mac Lane addressed to the Section Officers of the Association and a report of the President to the Board of Governors. Both of these have been approved by the Board of Governors and the Secretary has been directed to send the letter and the report to all Section

Officers, all members of the Board of Governors, and to all other interested persons. Both President Mac Lane and I shall be glad for any comments which you may wish to send us on this topic.

The Association is anxious to extend its membership to all those who are interested in mathematics at the collegiate level. Enclosed is a booklet describing the activities of the Association and a membership application blank for the use of those who may wish to become members of the Association.

Yours,

Harry M. Gehman

Secretary-Treasurer

APPENDIX VI

December 17, 1951

Board of Governors

Mathematical Association of America

Gentlemen:

The Fisk mathematics department has directed me to communicate our views concerning the resolution against discrimination adopted by your Board last September and published in the *Monthly*, November 1951, p. 661.

We are pleased at the anti-discrimination affirmation constituting the first sentence. It is our hope that you will now proceed to implement this with unequivocal, unambiguous action that will protect the rights of all members to full, equal participation in all aspects of the work of the Association. The protection of such rights is an inescapable obligation upon the officers and Board in particular, for nothing less than full and equal participation is the right of each member, regardless of race, creed or color.

An absolutely essential prerequisite to this protection is to require, as we requested in our original letter of April 20, 1951, later published in *Science* (August 10, 1951), p. 161, that no meetings be held at any place unless prior assurance is received that there will be no discrimination, in the meeting rooms, eating places, teas, banquets, social functions, etc. This was put forth as the result of the exclusion of Negro mathematicians from the banquet of the southeastern region of the Association last spring. The national President of the Association was the speaker and the Vice Chancellor of Vanderbilt University was toastmaster.

How can it be said that discrimination is being avoided if we do not take the elementary step of holding meetings only where such assurances are forthcoming?

This is not a matter of “legislating welcome.” This has to do solely with the right of every mathematician, regardless of his color, to participate as fully as any other mathematician in the Mathematical Association. The very acceptance of dues, which are the same for all members, is an act which binds the Association to provide non-discriminatory treatment for all.

We believe that the by-laws we requested earlier should be adopted.

It is of the utmost importance that the action be a matter of clear record so that everybody knows that all aspects of all meetings must be non-discriminatory.

Experience in the south has demonstrated quite dearly that the sharp, definite elimination of racial restrictions is not only the just way but is also the easy way. The more you drag things out, the vaguer you are, the more room you leave for doubts and misunderstanding, the more trouble you have.

Further, the Association has the task of promoting the interests of collegiate mathematics, which includes bringing teachers of collegiate mathematics into active participation in the work of the Association.

Here it should be realized that nearly all Negroes teaching collegiate mathematics are employed in the segregated schools of the south. There are few exceptions. Without dwelling here on the reasons for such limited employment, I note merely that the meetings that these mathematicians (like other southern mathematicians) would be expected to attend most numerous are those held in the south. When the Society met at the University of Georgia in 1947, not one Negro was present. At the Annual meeting, held at the University of Florida in 1950, only one Negro attended. The Secretary of the southeastern region of the Association told me that no Negro had ever attended an Association meeting in that region in the twenty years he has been Secretary until some Fisk faculty and graduate students went last spring (and were excluded from the banquet). I suspect that a similar report could be made in respect to the Society.

Negro mathematicians are naturally reluctant to attend meetings held at schools with which they have virtually no other contact. They feel concerned lest they be excluded, segregated, restricted in their activities, or otherwise humiliated. Those who teach in the state colleges for Negroes have the additional worry that their Boards of Trustees would take punitive action against them if they are involved in an “incident”.

The southern meetings seem to have been organized around the assumption that no Negroes will attend. The arrangements committee for the Association’s southeastern regional meeting held last spring at Vanderbilt and Peabody listed only housing facilities restricted to white patrons.

The Society meeting held at the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, November 23–24, 1951, is another illustration. No housing or dining facilities were provided by the host institution and the printed program listed only places which are restricted to white patrons. One Negro mathematician did attend. He had to eat by himself. Since he is a Professor at Tuskegee

(less than twenty miles away), he was able to return home to sleep. Had he come from a more distant institution and desired to remain over for the second day of the meeting there is no telling where he might have had to sleep.

The program listed a Social Hour, details to be announced at the meeting. He asked at the registration desk for further information. A member of the Arrangements committee told him that “technically” he could attend, but that he “probably would not want to do so as it was being held in one of the girls’ dormitories.”

Precise by-laws are needed to extend to all members the full benefits restricted to some by present practices. Moreover, they must be so unmistakably phrased that no confusion can arise.

Only thus can they encourage Negro mathematicians to participate in Association meetings, secure in the knowledge that any announced meeting is one whose hosts have assured the Board that there will be no discrimination.

Interracial arrangements committees for southern meetings would also help, since they would anticipate (and could therefore eliminate) a number of problems that might otherwise prove bothersome.

Sincerely yours,

Lee Lorch, *Chairman*
Mathematics Department

APPENDIX VII

PRESS RELEASE—Issued by the Department of Mathematics,
Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia

ATLANTA UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS AND A GRADUATE STUDENT LEAVE SOUTH CAROLINA MATHEMATICS MEETING IN PROTEST OF DISCRIMINATION

Atlanta, April 4 [1960]—Two Atlanta University professors and a mathematics graduate student left the spring meeting of the Southeastern Section of the Mathematical Association of America Friday, April, in protest of the failure of the management of the Wade Hampton Hotel to honor their room reservations (which were confirmed on March 26, 1960) and their exclusion from participating in the Friday evening banquet of the Association.

The occasion was the annual meeting of the Southeastern Section of the MAA which was held April 1–2 with the University of South Carolina as host at the Wade Hampton Hotel in Columbia, South Carolina.

Professor Lonnie Cross, Chairman of the Department of Mathematics at Atlanta University, Professor S. C. Saxena of New Delhi, India and Mr. William E. Brodie presented their reservations to the room clerk upon their arrival at the Wade Hampton Hotel early Friday afternoon. They were first told that the rooms which had been reserved for them would be ready later on that afternoon, but about thirty minutes later they were told by an assistant manager that the hotel could not honor their reservations. The assistant manager further stated that “this” was made clear to Professor W. L. Williams, Head, Department of Mathematics, University of South Carolina, when he made arrangements for the meeting at the hotel. Professor Cross pointed out that he and his associates from Atlanta University came to the meeting under the impression that the enunciated policy of the national body would prevail—that there “will be no discrimination as to race, color, religion, or nationality, and that when accommodations and other facilities are provided these shall be provided to all attending the meeting.” The assistant manager then stated, “You can attend all the sessions of the meeting of the Association at this hotel, but we cannot honor your reservations. We can try to get accommodations for you at the Nylon (colored) Hotel.” Professor Cross said, “Such arrangements are unsatisfactory to us.”

Professors Cross and Saxena and Mr. Brodie then conferred with Professor W. L. Williams and Professor C. L. Seebeck, Jr., Secretary-Treasurer of the Southeastern Section of the MAA. Both Professor Williams and Professor Seebeck said in essence what the assistant manager had said. Professor Seebeck added, “We regret that South Carolina’s law prevents your full participation in our meeting. We want you to attend and participate to the extent you can. About 90% of the membership feels as you do and is with you but times are such that they cannot openly say so.” Professor Cross, who was scheduled to present a paper at 3:24 P.M. during the first general session of the meeting said, “In view of the fact that the Southeastern Section of this Association is operating contrary to enunciated national policy and, in particular, in view of the management’s refusal to honor our reservations, we cannot remain at this meeting. We would be less than human beings to do so. We are leaving in protest, and we are asking you, Professor Seebeck, as secretary of the Southeastern Section of the Association to explain to those at this meeting our reason for leaving and the necessity of our having to do so.” Professor Cross concluded, “As a member of the Association I shall continue to do all I can to make the policy of the national body a reality in the Southeastern Section.”

Typesetter’s Notes

At the September 24, 2004 Executive Committee Meeting, several of the Section’s officers asked me if I could post John Neff’s history of the Section as well as the history of minority participation in the Section by Etta Falconer et al.

As no electronic versions of these documents were available, I scanned printed versions of them, converted the documents to L^AT_EX (preserving as best I could the original formatting

of the documents), and then used `pdflatex` and `latex2html` to produce PDF and HTML versions respectively.

Scanning is an inexact technology. While I have endeavored to correct all typographical errors that scanning has introduced, please let me know if you spot any that I have missed.

Jeffrey Clark
Section Webmaster
January 24, 2005