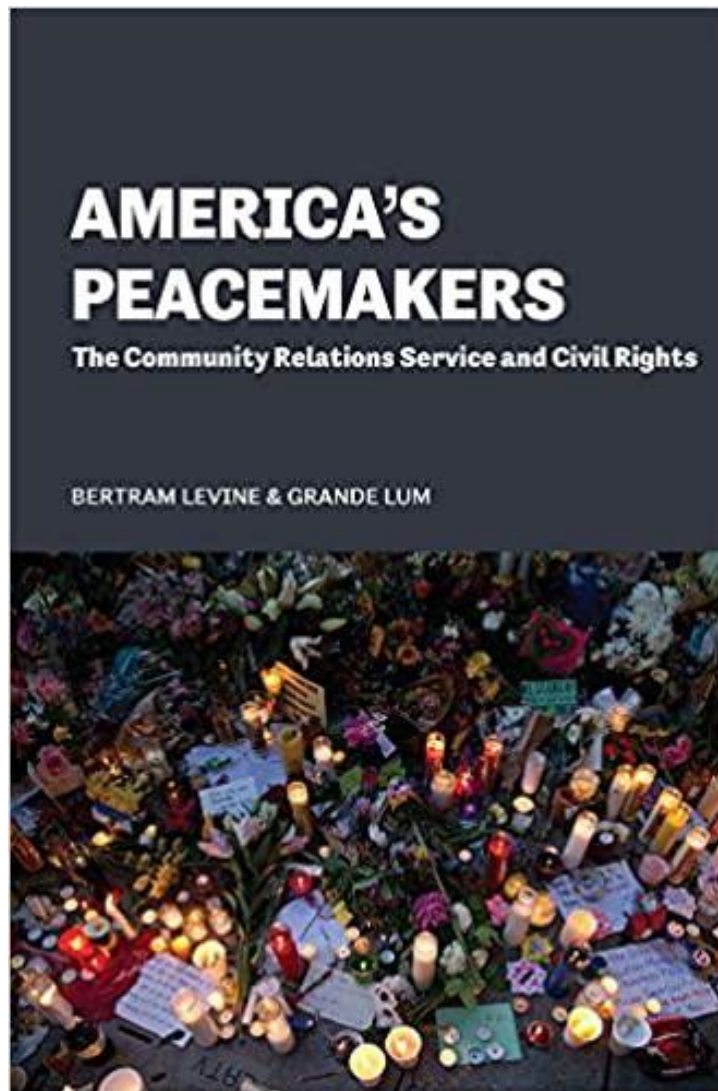


America's Peacemakers: The Community Relations Service and Civil Rights by Bertram Levine and Grande Lum, University of Missouri Press, 2020



America's Peacemakers: The Community Relations Service and Civil Rights tells an important part of the story of the ongoing struggle to advance the cause of civil rights, seen

through the prism of a small, unique federal agency dedicated to the resolution of community conflict. The original idea for the Community Relations Service (CRS) came from then-Senator Lyndon B. Johnson. As president, he ensured its creation as Title X of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Johnson believed the agency could play a vital role in easing the potentially explosive tensions of desegregating public accommodations, schools and workplaces.



LBJ signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title X created the Community Relations Service.

Title X charged the agency with helping communities resolve “disputes, disagreements, or difficulties relating to discriminatory practices based on race, color, or national origin which impair the rights of persons in ... communities under the Constitution or laws of the United States ...”. The law mandated that the agency provide its conciliation and mediation services “in confidence and without publicity,” a charge CRS faithfully honored, ensuring that until this book its story remained largely untold.



Co-Authors Bertram Levine (1919 -2006) and Grande Lum

Bertram Levine, our father and a former Associate Director of CRS, wrote *Resolving Racial Conflict: The Community Relations Service and Civil Rights, 1964–1979* (published in 2005). **Grande Lum**, former CRS Director and the current Provost at Menlo College authored this revised edition, updating the narrative through five new chapters. The new version covers the expansion of the CRS mandate to include cases of discrimination due to gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion and disability.

The new, expanded edition will find an audience in four increasingly overlapping communities of interest: historians and political scientists, conflict resolution practitioners, policymakers and scholars concerned with governmental efficacy, and citizens searching for greater racial justice.



CRS Director Leroy Collins with Andrew Young and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. , Selma to Montgomery March, 1965. John Lewis is at far left; Coretta Scott King and Ralph Abernathy at right.

As civil rights history, the book provides a new angle of vision on critical episodes, notably the stories of Bloody Sunday in Selma and its aftermath and the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. CRS's work often focused on the flashpoints of desegregation struggles in the South, but also encompassed conflicts through the U.S. — from urban rebellions in the north, to the armed stand-off at Wounded Knee, to the Boston's school desegregation case and later, the emergence of hate crimes against immigrants and gay people, and the 2012 murder of Trayvon Martin.

As a practitioner's guide to conciliation and mediation, the book provides invaluable knowledge developed as the field became more fully established and professionalized.

Academic programs in peace and conflict studies, alternative dispute resolution and related fields grew in academia at a distance from the real-world application of the “healing arts” in thousands of cases of community conflict handled by CRS. The work of the CRS staff, which at its height fielded a staff of over 300, deployed across 10 regional offices, represents a treasure trove of case studies in conflict resolution techniques.

As an in-depth analytical study of a mission-driven public agency, this book provides insight into the challenges of creating and sustaining government entities that are principled, competent, and impactful. The CRS experience reflects all the highs and lows of public service, the pressure to document results for human behavior that defies quantification, the tensions between headquarters and independent-minded field managers, the forging of durable relationships among key constituencies inside and outside of government and the promise and pitfalls of congressional engagement. At a time when the federal government is being demonized as a malign and conspiratorial “deep state,” *America’s Peacemakers* provides a clear-eyed and balanced assessment of the difficult work of dedicated public servants, and their meaningful accomplishments.



CRS Mission: Educate-Communi-ate-Conciliate-Mediate-Facilitate: Its motto: Justitia Omnibus Gens or “Justice for All People

As a portrayal of government trying to grapple with issues of racial justice, this book speaks to today’s reckoning with enduring white supremacy. CRS was at the heart of efforts to implement more enlightened policies on police use of deadly force and to mediate intense racial conflict. *America’s Peacemakers* chronicles little-known efforts to address these issues, offering insights germane to understanding why they remain so profoundly unresolved. Finally, the book suggests that given its history, experience and unique mandate, CRS is well-positioned to offer its service to front-line actors involved in addressing legacies of racism and efforts to promote understanding, healing and reform.



U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and CRS Director and Grande Lum at town hall meeting following the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri

Now in its sixth decade, CRS and its story make for compelling reading and active consideration of a pressing current day policy challenge.

David and Neil Levine, December 2020