Document # 2: The Ordeal of the Loyalty Test Arthur Drayton from It Did Happen Here: Recollections of Political Repression in Modern America, by Bud Schultz and Ruth Schultz

Background: Arthur Drayton was dismissed from government service under Truman's loyalty program after twenty-five years as a postal clerk, a position with little imaginable connection to national security concerns. His poems, plays, and associations were weighed against him by loyalty boards, the beginning of an ordeal that disrupted the life of this gentle and sensitive man for decades.

A product of the Cold War, Harry Truman's loyalty program of March 1947 *marked the onset of McCarthyism.Truman's program was designed as part of an effort to "scare" people into passing his programs for Greece and Turkey, to make the foreign threat "real." All government workers had to pass a test of their beliefs and associations. Grounds for dismissal were "membership in, affiliation with or sympathetic association with any foreign* or *domestic organization, association, movement, group* or *combination of persons designated by the Attorney General as totalitarian, Fascist, Communist or subversive" --a grand statement of guilt by association.*

Loyalty boards screened millions of employees to determine whether at some future date they might commit a disloyal act, based on books they read, friends they had, or *groups they belonged to. The inquisitors' sense of what constituted disloyalty can be gauged from some of the questions asked: "Have you ever had Negroes in your home?" "Are you in favor of the Marshall Plan?" "There is suspicion in the record that you are in sympathy with the underprivileged. Is this true?"2*

Few of the safeguards so fundamental to a fair trial were afforded the employees. Once accused, it was up to them to prove their innocence. There was no impartial judge. The board that made the charge conducted the inquiry and rendered the verdict. There was no chance to col/front and cross-examine the accusers. There was no protection from double jeopardy. Someone cleared once could be fired a second time for the same charges. No *one fired by loyalty boards was charged with committing an illegal act, but thousands of people had their lives ruined. Jobs were lost, marriages were broken, and many suffered extreme mental and emotional distress. And what of those not yet suspect? They learned to be careful.*

Drayton:

It's been so long ago, but I can tell you about my encounter with the great fear back there in the 1950s. McCarthy was riding high, and most Americans were frightened into thinking that the Communists were going to take over.

At that time, I happened to have been a postal worker. When I started out, my parents had been so proud of me. It was a great thing to have a son working in the post office. Then, in 1949, I was dismissed under the government's loyalty proceedings after twenty-five years of service. I had been an active member of the union, the National Federation of Postal Clerks_ In fact, I had been the first Black officer in the organization. But when I was discharged, they expelled me from the union, too.

I remember when it all started. In 1948, we were told to list the names of all the organizations we belonged to. So I listed the NAACP. I also listed the Philadelphia Bi-Partisan Fair Employment Practices Committee. This was a time when Blacks were fighting for fair em-ployment.

Then I listed the International Workers Order. It was an organization of Blacks, Poles, Jews, and others. And each ethnic group had its own lodge. I joined it because the insurance policy was very attractive, certainly more attractive than the Metropolitan or any of the other big insurance companies. The most a Black person in diose days could get was a five-hundred-dollar industrial policy. We were limited to those inferior policies, no matter what our income or

social standing. The IWO ggave us term insurance, at the same rates for everybody, white or Black, miner or farmer.

But what attracted me most was that the meetings were so interesting. We discussed current issues and had social hours. Those evenings were stimulating. Every year we celebrated Negro History Week, as We called it in those days. Langston Hughes came over and spoke once. As a matter of fact, he visited us in September 1948, the period of my first suspension from the post office.

I had been a struggling writer all those years. I wrote poems and plays, short plays about historical Black figures. And here, in the IWO, was an opportunity to tryout some of my plays. We would sit around and read them aloud as if they were radio dramas.

One of the historical figures that interested me, and still does, was Frederick Douglass, the great abolitionist, who defended the rights of women way back in those days. I wrote a short play about him. Another was Denmark Vesey, who took as his model Toussaint L'Ouverture of Haiti. In Charleston, back in the 1820s, Vesey organized an insurrection, but it was aborted when one of the house servants turned him in. When he and his followers were caught, twenty-two of them were hanged. There is a tree in Charleston that Black people call the Twenty Two Tree. They say it is the tree where these people were hanged. It seemed such a dramatic time that I just had to write about it. The plays about Douglass and Vesey were performed at our celebrations of Negro History Week in Philadelphia and later on were published by the New York office of the IWO. This was the organization they gave me so much trouble about.

One morning, I was sitting on our porch, reading the *Times* and drinking my coffee. We lived in a twin house with just a window separating our porch and our neighbors'. I noticed this white man going into their house. I kept on reading my paper. After a while the door opened, and Mrs. Carter came out with him. "There's Mr. Drayton," she said. "Why don't you ask him if he's a Communist?" She told him the Draytons were fine people, and who did he think he was? She bawled him out.

The white man went across the street to some friends who knew my wife when she was a child in South Carolina. Everyone on the street knew us. My wife joined me on the porch. We watched this man.go from one house to another, Mrs. Carter, my wife, and I. He looked scared and foolish; he knew everybody was watching him. Later, my friends in New York, who were neighbors when we used to live there, told me the FBI had been asking them questions about me, too.

Some weeks later, I was called up to the postmaster's office. In those days the post office was rigidly segregated. When I stepped into the room, I was the only black face there. Apparently, they all knew why I had come. I had to pass down this long aisle of white people, who stopped typing to watch me. I think they were expecting a show. At the 'back of the room, the inspector in charge handed me this envelope.

".That's for you, Mr. Drayton."

I took the envelope. I said, "Thank you." I knew it was my suspension notice. He said, "Aren't you going to open it?" And I said, "No. I don't have to open it." I didn't intend to give them the satisfaction. And I walked on out.

At the same time I was suspended, friends of mine were being dropped from the post office. It was a very disturbing time. Then one morning I received a notice to appear at a hearing before the local loyalty board. I knew now it was my turn to be on the carpet. Mr. Morris Shaffitz, the IWO lawyer, came with me. The board was made up of five or six people, all white, of course.

They asked why I joined the International Workers Order. I told them of the liberal insurance policy and no discrimination. Also that it provided an outlet for me to discuss social issues with Black people like myself and to present programs on Negro history and that sort of thing. I liked the organization, and I liked the people in it.

So they said, "Did you know this was a subversive organization?" I told them I didn't think it was. "If we're telling you it is, don't you think you should get out of it?" "No," I said. "1 will not get out of it, because I don't believe it is a subversive organization."

At the end, they asked if there was anything I wished to say in summation. I remember I had this outraged feeling about having to testify in this manner in a free country. Was it because I was Black? Most people I knew who had been expelled from the post office were Blacks or Jews.

I thought of Socrates having to testify. I told them that being called disloyal sickened my heart and weighed on my soul. ThenI quoted these lines from *Othello:*

> "Good name in man or woman, dear my lord,
> Is the immediate jewel of their souls;
> Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
> 'Twas mine, 'tis his; and has been slave to thousands; But he that filches from me my good name,
> Robs me of that which not enriches him,
> And makes me poor, indeed."

They all looked shocked. My lawyer certainly was. But he said nothing about it when we were outside. '

There were two appeals I could make: one to the Office of the Postmaster General and the final one to the Loyalty Review Board. Some of the people who had to walk the plank, as I called it, didn't go to hearings at all. They left town or just gave up. I decided to appeal and. applied for a second hearing at the Postmaster General's Office in Washington. And, in due time, they told us to come down.

The first thing I noticed about this hearing in the nation's capital was that it was in a big, beautiful room. There was a mahogany table' with armchairs around it and three or four executives of the post office, sitting there waiting for me. On the walls were disgusting pictures of Black men with razors in their mouths, playing poker and threatening each other. Some were crooks with cards between their toes and cards up their sleeves. I had heard about it from other Blacks who had been in that room. They had told me about those racist paintings around the walls, Black people eating watermelons, and all the old stereotypes in this beautiful, dignified room. I've never forgotten that. I can't remember anything else at that hearing because of those pictures. They have stuck with me. "

I "flunked" that hearing, too. And all the while, I was not working,_ I couldn't get work in Philadelphia. By now, I realized that old friend_ were avoiding me. They would pass me on the street and be afraid speak to me. We no longer received invitations. Our phone did not ring anymore. My wife was becoming upset and nervous, and I was at my wits' end. So I decided to go to New York.

I had a hard time getting work there, too. They'd ask me where I last worked. If I told them I worked in the post office for years, they'd want to know why I was without a job. You can see what a situation I was in. So I bought a newsstand for six hundred dollars at 134th Street and Seventh Avenue. A nephew of mine helped me run it". But I couldn't make any money. I found that the guys who ran it befor_7 me used to take numbers to make the thing work. And there were newsstands on practically every corner. I'd have to work from five o'clock in the morning to around midnight because I wanted to sell every paper I could. I was fast losing money, so after three months I sold it for three hundred dollars.

Then I went to the Urban League. They were on 136th Street and. Seventh Avenue in those days. I told them my story, and they tried to place me in a position where I wouldn't be questioned too severely about my past. They found me a job in a mailing shop. The bosses were very progressive-minded. They distributed mail for like-minded organizations. The *Daily Compass* was one of them. I got to talking to my fellow workers about what happened to me in

the post office. Somehow or other, it got back to the *Daily Compass.* That's when Mr. Dan Gillmor, a columnist for the paper, took down my story. It was printed as a series in three issues.

In June 1950, I was scheduled for my last appeal, the one before the Loyalty Review Board. It was held in the Customs House in Philadelphia. This was the president's own board. On that board were Mr. Seth Richardson, Senator Harry Cain, and a third gentleman whose name I can't recall. Mr. Richardson, a Republican and a corporation lawyer, in 1946 had been the chief counsel for the joint congressional committee investigating the Pearl Harbor attack. They came into the room laughing and joking. They must have read the article by Mr. Gillmore that had just been published. They commented on it and said: This is the gentleman who quoted Shakespeare to the loyalty board.

They asked me only one or two questions. They were very friendly. They certainly weren't scared out of their wits that I was going to destroy the United States government or that I was a bomb thrower or anything of the sort. That board cleared me.

I returned to work in September and received ten months' back pay. It was around the Jewish holiday, and I always thought it was a nice thing for me, Rosh Hashanah. I remember the year, 1950, because my father died that December. I have such warm memories of him.

Around this time, I started writing again. I wrote a play about Richard Allen. Bishop Richard Allen led the first organized Black protest, peaceful protest in America. This was after the Revolutionary War, in 1788 or 1789. In those days Blacks and whites worshipped in the same church there, in Philadelphia. One day, the Black people were told that they would have to sit upstairs in the balcony. The next Sunday, Bishop Allen and one of his friends sat at the front as they had been doing all along. The white deacons and elders pulled them up from their knees while they were saying their prayers and told them they couldn't sit downstairs. Allen and the Black elders then led their people out of the white Methodist church and formed their own, called the African Methodist Episcopal church. There was this revolutionary spirit then in the Black church, and there still is.

This play about Richard Allen was more ambitious than the others. I wrote it to be acted, rather than just to be read aloud. When Jasper Deeter, who ran Hedgerow Theater, saw it on the stage, he said, "Arthur, you have one act, that first act is a really good one:" It went to my head, you know. I felt pretty good.

By that time, the Republicans had come to power. They were not satisfied with the Truman Loyalty Order. According to them, too many had escaped the net. They planned to throw a wider net. The new catchall was called the Eisenhower Security Risk Order, issued in 1953. And I was one of the first persons called. So there I was, in double jeopardy. I had already been cleared once by the loyalty board, but now I could be thrown out of the post office a second time.

My birthday falls on February 22, on the old George Washington's birthday. Each year, two friends and I would throw a party on three different nights. I'd have a party on my night, a Black friend of mine *ill* would have a party on his birthday, and a Jewish friend would have one _ on his. This particular year, one friend and I were planning a joint party at his house.

I worked all day that Saturday. I had gotten home and eaten and I bathed and was dressing to go to the party, when my bell rang. There was a Western Union boy with a telegram. I opened it. It was a message. from the post office, notifying me of my immediate suspension from; 111 duty on grounds of my being a "security risk." They would notify me when to come for a hearing. There would only be one hearing this time, from which there could be no appeal. I went to the party with that bad news. You can imagine what an awful time it was. ,_

The charges, as usual, were that I belonged to this organization, the IWO, got members to join it, and that I wrote these plays and presented. them. At each of my past hearings, I had been ordered to present to the board copies of every play or poem I had written as evidence to be used against me. They wanted it all again.

The hearing took place in May. The board members looked to me like people who hated Blacks and Jews. They gave me the creeps. After they listened to my testimony, they told me I'd hear from them soon. I didn't hear from them for about four or five months. I knew that I was through then. I was through, apparently, forever.

I moved to New York, as I'd done before. I worked in a mailing basement for a firm right opposite the Waldorf-Astoria. It paid forty .1 dollars a week, much less than my old job. It was hard for me to live on that, I can tell you. But on the whole, it was a pleasant environment, and they didn't mind my being thrown out of the post office.

In 1956, I read about the decision the Supreme Court had made on the Eisenhower Security Risk Order. It said that civilian employees could not be charged with being security risks, or something to that effect. Finally I was cleared under that decision. After my lawyer wrote to the post office, they told me I was now eligible to return. But they also advised me that if I had a job I should stay on it because the administration would be sure to pass another law that would be applicable to me. My lawyer said, "No, we're not going to take that advice. We're going to get you back into the post office." I had been out about sixteen months.

When I got back in 1956, I decided that I'd had enough of the post office. As soon as I reached the earliest retirement age, at fifty-five, I would retire. I did that. I worked from 1956 to 1959. On my birthday, I put in my retirement, that same day.

But the harassment continued all through the sixties and seventies. I lived down in the East Village. I can remember coming home and finding a manuscript I had typed, gone. Once my suitcase was ransacked. All my personal papers were missing. Every scrap. Then, my retirement checks, which were to go to the bank, would be delayed. It was a time when the IRS began hounding me on my income tax forms. My can celed checks would be held in the bank. And I'd get some checks back marked "Red Squad." I had no idea what it meant. I know now what it means. They were really intimidating me. I think they continued to punish me because of what I said in the article by GiIlmor. Mr. Hoover was a vengeful man, you know.

They did frighten the hell out of me. They were hounding me so. And I'd complain to my friends and relatives. Nobody believed what I was telling them in those days. That drove me to despair. Nobody believed it until things came out later about what was happening to people all over the country, how government agencies were harassing people, isolating them, and then getting them into all sorts of trouble.

I decided that I had to live with this thing. I decided I wasn't going to be afraid anymore. What's more, the common use of these dirty tricks had become public knowledge by that time. I found more people were beginning to be understanding. I got over the fear because now I learned that this harassment was directed against people who, having some thing to say, said it.

Yes, my life had been disrupted-but not destroyed. And I some how feel like a survivor. Maybe it was because of my stubbornness.