

# LET THE NORTH AWAKE!

JOURNAL  
of  
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY  
STUDENT HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

**B. M' CORMICK**  
Will Discuss the Immorality, Illegal-  
ity and Unconstitutionality of  
**AMERICAN SLAVERY,**  
And the Duty and Power of the General Government  
to Abolish it.

**IN** *Evansville*

**AT** *7 O'Clock P.M. at the Court*

Mr. M' CORMICK is the Clergyman for whom the Governor of Kentucky made a Requisition upon the Governor of Indiana, charging him with aiding in the escape of Fugitive Slaves. The Warrant was issued and Mr. M' Cormick is thereby exiled from his home. All are respectfully invited to attend.

THE JOURNAL  
OF THE  
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY STUDENT HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
Vol. I No. 2

## PREFACE

The role of the Negro in American History has been weighted by the millstones of myth and stereotype. Realizing the critical deficiencies in this field a seminar study under the direction of Fr. Charles O'Neill was instituted in the fall semester of 1966. The results of the work of that seminar offer the basis for our second journal.

As in a seminar its work is self-limiting if its results gather dust in desk drawers. The Committee on Publications, realizing the vital nature of the work in the field of Negro history, dedicates this issue of the LUSHA Journal to the work of our peers in this area. We feel that the articles presented here will be of great value to student and professor alike. The papers presented here treat the Negro as an intellectual, a historian, a legalist, and a social being. In our estimation they will become a valuable addition to the historiography of the American Negro.

A.E.H.  
H.M.M.



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\*The above students gratefully acknowledge the guidance given by Father Charles O'Neill in the preparation of these papers, but assume all responsibility for the actual texts herein.

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## SEGREGATION IN EDUCATION-THE SUPREME COURT EVOLUTION

Submitted by:

Harold Messmer, Jr. \*

In the case of Dred Scott v. Sandford Chief Justice Taney said:

The question is simply this: can a Negro, whose ancestors were imported into this country and sold as slaves, become a member of the political community formed and brought into existence by the Constitution of the United States, and as such become entitled to all the rights, and privileges, and <sup>1</sup> immunities, guaranteed by that instrument to the citizen....

The framers of the Declaration of Independence, Taney concluded, perfectly understood the language they used. They knew "that it would not, in any part of the civilized world, be supposed to embrace the Negro race, which, by common consent, had been excluded from civilized governments, and doomed to slavery."<sup>2</sup> The doctrines and principles established then were in the ordinary language of the day and no one misunderstood them, Taney held. "The unhappy black race were separated from the white by indelible marks, and laws long before established, and were never thought of or spoken of except as property...."<sup>3</sup>

The decision in this case indicates rather lucidly the attitude of the Supreme Court to the status of the Negro prior to the Civil War. But this holocaust and the subsequent passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments set the judicial stage anew. An era of evolution was now in process affecting the relationship of the Negro to the judicial branch of the United States. This paper will consider only one of the several forms of this judicial evolution--segregation in education. To begin a study of the Supreme Court decision on discrimination in education it is necessary to understand the construction and subsequent interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment, especially the all-important "equal protection clause." Consequently, before considering the seven primary decisions which concern segregation and education, one should trace the court's action in the Slaughterhouse Cases<sup>4</sup>, the Civil Rights Cases<sup>5</sup>, and especially in the Plessy v. Ferguson<sup>6</sup> case.

The Slaughterhouse Cases embodied the first judicial interpretation of the privileges and immunities clauses of the new Fourteenth Amendment. A group of independent butchers in the city of New Orleans challenged the constitutionality of a Slaughterhouse monopoly law passed by the reconstruction legislature of Louisiana. This was a challenge based on the Thirteenth Amendment as well as the privileges and immunities,

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due process, and equal protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment. However, the Court gave most attention to the immunities clause.<sup>7</sup>

Counsel for the butchers argued that the immunities clause had radically altered federal-state relations: "The States in their closest connection with the members of the state have been placed under the oversight and restraining and enforcing hand of Congress."<sup>8</sup> The phrase "privileges and immunities" was argued to apply to all persons, whether a former slave or not, within the boundaries of the state.

Mr. Justice Miller, speaking for the Court of Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase, replied by referring in prologue fashion, to the Civil War, saying, "In that struggle slavery, as a legalized social relation perished."<sup>9</sup> And, speaking of the amendments, he added that

.....no one can fail to be impressed with the one pervading purpose found in them all, lying at the foundation of each, and without which none of them would have been suggested; we mean the freedom of the slave race, the security and firm establishment of that freedom, and the protection of the newly-made freeman and citizen from the oppressions of those who had formerly exercised unlimited dominion over him.<sup>10</sup>

The ending of slavery as a legalized social relation, the admission of men once treated as property into the ranks of persons and citizens, the Court conceded. But would this new citizen be a second-class citizen, a person unequal in status to other persons? It appears that the Court opened this door when it recoiled from the plaintiff's assertion that the immunities clause had placed the States completely under the hand of Congress.

Justice Miller contradicted the Plaintiff on nearly every point by distinguishing between state citizenship and United States citizenship. It is only the privileges and immunities of the latter that are protected by the Fourteenth Amendment. The privileges and immunities that accrue to citizenship in the United States do not embrace the huge catalogue of social, economic, and political rights presently regulated by the states. Rather, the Court held, they include only those protected by Article IV, Section 2, of the Constitution. Hence the rights claimed by the butchers of New Orleans, ruled Miller, were privileges and immunities of state citizenship, not of United States citizenship, and consequently were not protected by the Fourteenth Amendment.

Justice Field commented disgruntled, in dissent apparently, that if this were the case, adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment "was a vain and idle enactment, which accomplished nothing, and most unnecessarily excited Congress and the people of its passage."<sup>11</sup> At any rate the Slaughterhouse decision did emasculate the privileges and immunities clause within five years of its adoption, and this, according to the Chase Court, to preserve the federal system.

Justice Miller had feared a broad interpretation of the Fourteenth



Amendment would lead to a federal civil code which would replace state police power laws. Congress utilized, in 1875, the due process and equal protection clauses as a basis for passage of an act providing for a comprehensive federal code of individual conduct. This appears to have been its prerogative, for section V of the amendment states that "The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article." The constitutionality of the Act was questioned in the Civil Rights Cases of 1883.

The real issue involved was whether Congress could constitutionally protect the Negro from private discrimination, as distinguished from public discrimination, whether it could, through enactment of the civil rights code, supersede the states in regard to regulation of private conduct. The decision stated that Congress cannot adopt "general" legislation governing the conduct of individuals, but only corrective legislation designed to counteract state laws or actions contravening the rights safeguarded by the amendment. In other words, the individual wronged must seek retribution from the laws of the state.<sup>12</sup>

Justice Harlan issued a scathing dissent by claiming that the majority opinion proceeded upon grounds

"entirely too narrow and artificial. We shall enter upon an era of constitutional law, when the rights of freedom and American citizenship cannot receive from the nation that efficient protection which heretofore was unhesitatingly accorded to slavery and the rights of the master."<sup>13</sup>

The sequel proved the prophetic vision of Harlan, according to Rayford Logan:

This far-reaching decision thus legalized race distinctions by individuals with respect to enjoyment of facilities in carriers and places of public accommodation and amusement. In addition, it virtually assured the subsequent development of Jim Crow Laws, and other forms of race discrimination, and the passivity of the Federal government in the face of this discrimination.<sup>14</sup>

Charles Warren, whose monumental study, The Supreme Court in United States History is considered one of the most authoritative on the subject, commented with regard to the Civil Rights Cases:

Viewed in the historical perspective now (1922), however, there can be no question that the decisions in these cases were most fortunate. They largely eliminated from national politics the Negro question which had so long embittered Congressional debates; they relegate the burden and duty of protecting the Negro to the states, to whom they properly belonged; and they seemed to restore confidence in the national court in the Southern States.<sup>15</sup>

As in the Slaughterhouse Cases, an affirmative decision by the



Court would have prepared the way for a fundamental alteration of the federal division of powers, with a great reduction in state power. The Civil Rights decision differs from that of the Slaughterhouse Cases in as much as the latter practically erased the privileges and immunities clause while the former merely limited without destroying the scope of congressional enforcement power. Nevertheless, "this ruling virtually ended Federal attempts to protect the Negro from discrimination by private persons."<sup>16</sup>

Thirteen years after the Supreme Court had given sanction to discrimination by individuals in public places and on public carries, the court approved separation of the races by state action. The case of Plessy v. Ferguson involved the constitutionality of a Louisiana statute which segregated Negroes from white passengers, but which nominally provided equal facilities for both races. Justice Brown held that the "equal protection clause" of the Fourteenth Amendment was not violated; a state may act with due regard to the established customs and traditions of its people. He said:

"We consider the underlying fallacy of the plaintiff's argument to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority."<sup>17</sup>

Absolute equality of the races is intended therefore, but only of a political nature not of a social nature. "Separate but equal" accommodations are not unconstitutional.

Harlan again dissented, stating that "Our Constitution is blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens..."<sup>18</sup> Ideas of caste and inferiority would be fostered among the Negro. Harlan asserted prophetically that this decision would prove as pernicious as the Dred Scott decision.

In the first cases construing the Fourteenth Amendment, the Supreme Court interpreted it as proscribing state-imposed discrimination. The doctrine of "separate but equal" made its appearance in 1896, affecting not education as yet but transportation. Yet this doctrine became of increasing importance primarily because of six cases in the field of public education which were affected by it. In Cumming v. Board of Education<sup>19</sup> and Gong Lum v. Rice<sup>20</sup> the validity of the doctrine itself was not challenged. In four more recent cases, Missouri ex. rel. Gaines v. Canada,<sup>21</sup> Sipuel v. Oklahoma,<sup>22</sup> Sweatt v. Painter,<sup>23</sup> and McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents,<sup>24</sup> inequality was found in that specific benefits enjoyed by white students were denied to Negro students of the same educational qualifications. Not until Brown v. Board of Education<sup>25</sup> was the question as to whether Plessy v. Ferguson should be held inapplicable to public education directly presented and directly answered. The most important aspect for the American Negro in decisions was the precise interpretation given the "equal protection" clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Surprisingly enough, the Negro could not maneuver the Courts into deciding on the validity of the all-important issue itself which allowed discrimination in education - the principle of separate but equal accommodations.



In 1899 the Court managed to avoid a direct ruling on the equal protection clause in the case of a Negro taxpayer, Cummings, against the board of education in Richmond County, Georgia. Cummings complained that an order of the school board suspending the maintenance of a high school for colored children, while continuing that of a white high school, was racially discriminatory and therefore invalid under the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The reason for the suspension given by the board and accepted by the state court was economic.

Harlan, speaking for the court of Chief Justice Fuller, declared that the County Board had not abused its legal discretion and that the granting of the requested injunction to close the school for whites would not afford the Negro additional opportunity. Furthermore,

the education of the people in schools maintained by state taxation is a matter belonging to the respective States, and any interference on the part of Federal authority with the management of such schools cannot be justified except in the case of a clear and unmistakable disregard of rights secured by the supreme law of the land.<sup>26</sup>

Was the reason for suspension economic or racial? The Supreme Court

"evidenced no interest in determining the facts for itself. And further, it asserted a respect for state autonomy that was generally absent in its determination involving conflicts of corporations with state regulatory authority."<sup>27</sup>

While "The rationale (of Cumming v. County Board of Education) was that Negro children are done no good by taking education away from whites, that case presupposed some other remedy."<sup>28</sup> But the Court suggested no such remedy to the Negro and refused to suggest the abolition of "separate but equal" as the cure for the Negro's educational ills.

In 1927, in the case of Gong Lum v. Rice, the validity of the doctrine of "separate but equal" still went unchallenged in the field of education. As a matter of fact Chief Justice William Howard Taft "stated expressly that separate but equal educational facilities do not conflict with the requirement of equal protection of the laws."<sup>29</sup>

This case involved the right of the state of Mississippi to require Martha Lum, daughter of Gong Lum, both citizens of the United States, to attend a segregated school, which had been assigned to Negroes, because of her Chinese extraction. Taft asserted:

The question here is whether a Chinese citizen of the United States is denied equal protection of the laws when he is classed among the colored races and furnished facilities for education equal to that offered to all, whether white, brown, yellow, or black. Were this a new question, it would call for very full argument and consideration, but we think it is the same



question which has been many times decided to be the constitutional power of the state legislature to settle without intervention of the federal court the Federal Constitution.<sup>30</sup>

The Chief Justice then cited a number of decisions of Federal judges and asked that this decision, like the others, be left to the discretion of the state in regulating its affairs and not in conflict with the Fourteenth Amendment. The Court gave the state full discretionary authority to sustain its action in this case as reasonable under the Constitution.

One of the far-reaching developments in the interpretation of the equal protection clause came in Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada. In four cases, all on the graduate school level, the Court held that specific benefits enjoyed by white students were denied to Negro students of the same educational qualifications. In these cases it was necessary to re-examine the "separate but equal" to grant relief to the Negro plaintiffs.

In Gaines, Hughes delivered the opinion of the Court that no qualified Negro citizen of the state admitted to the basis of race was void "in the absence of other proper legal training within the State."<sup>32</sup> A state-operated law school did not have a law school and a Missouri statute providing for education for Negroes outside the state was struck down to remedy the defect. According to the Court, the equal opportunities afforded persons within the state.

The decision did not, of course, modify the doctrine, which permitted state-provided separate, but equal facilities, but it gave notice upon states having segregated systems that they must provide equal facilities for both races within their boundaries.<sup>33</sup>

Later, in 1948, the case of Sipuel v. University of Oklahoma affirmed the Court's Missouri decision. The Negro School of Law to offer the conceded law school; her application for admission to the law school was denied, solely because of color.

Every person is entitled to secure a legal education afforded by a state institution. The state must provide it for her in conformity with the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and provide it as soon as it does for members of any other group.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, this decision did not alter the "separate but equal" doctrine.



interpretation of the equal protection clause either, but it did force the states to see the Court-instilled necessity of emphasizing "equal" as much as "separate" in the future.

The Supreme Court had consistently applied the doctrine that where facilities were provided which were "substantially" equal, racial segregation enforced by state laws in such fields as education did not violate the equal protection clause. Undoubtedly the Court often seemed blind in its evaluation of what was substantially equal. "However, in 1950, in the important case of Sweatt v. Painter the Court looked beyond formal provisions to consider the practical effect of a Texas law."<sup>35</sup> Chief Justice Vinson stated the opinion of the court, saying that the establishment of a separate law school for Negroes did not fulfill the requirements of the equal protection clause because in terms of physical and less tangible matters the Negro school was not "substantially" equal to the law school (Texas University) provided for the whites. Vinson pointed out that the school for white possessed

"to a far greater degree those qualities which are incapable of objective measurement but which made for greatness in a law school. Such qualities, to name but a few, include reputation of the faculty, experience of the administration, position and influence of the alumni, standing in the community, traditions and prestige."<sup>36</sup>

The Sweatt decision put the states on ever more active notice that the Court intended to scrutinize actual conditions wherever states adopted segregation policies under the separate but equal doctrine of the Plessy v. Ferguson case.

In McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents, which appeared before the court in the same year as Sweatt v. Painter, and was based on virtually the same question, the Court held void an attempt by Oklahoma to segregate Negroes who had been admitted to the state university. Chief Justice Vinson, speaking of the Sweatt case said:

This case and McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents present different aspects of the same general question: to what extent does the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment limit the power of a state to distinguish between students of different races in professional and graduate education in a state university?<sup>37</sup>

Vinson again handed down the majority opinion, stating that a Negro admitted to a white graduate school should be treated like all other students. Otherwise, the state violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The Court again resorted to intangible consideration: "...his ability to study, to engage in discussions and exchange views with other students, and, in general, to learn his profession."<sup>38</sup>

Sweatt v. Painter, involving the University of



Texas Law School, and McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents, involving the University of Oklahoma Graduate school, while neither rejecting nor considering the question of separate-but-equal's validity, measured factors which make it impossible for a colored school to equal a white one: tradition, prestige and the opportunity to associate in school with members of the dominant (white) group.

Considered, too, were the tangibles of wealth, size, and facilities, in which Negro higher education also was patently inferior but in which, perhaps, theoretical equality could be achieved.<sup>39</sup>

After these two cases, which did not directly discuss the validity of the Plessy doctrine, states could, of course, continue to separate races; but because the Court was prepared to apply sternly the requirement that "substantially" equal facilities be provided where segregation is state-enforced, "the traditional segregating states faced severe financial tests in their attempts to meet this vitalized requirement. The question might have been raised whether segregation is feasible under the Sweatt doctrine."<sup>40</sup>

The balancing of impalpable, though meaningful qualities, was prophetic and the necessity of raising this question of feasibility never arose. In 1954, the Supreme Court at last met the "separate but equal" doctrine squarely and rejected it completely as applied to the field of public education in Brown v. Board of Education. The Journal of Negro Education had virtually as early as 1949 predicted that the evolution of the Court decision must soon result in just this reversal of Plessy v. Ferguson.<sup>41</sup>

Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered this momentous decision for a unanimous Court, holding that separation in education on the basis of race is inherently unequal and as such is in violation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Stating that segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children, the Court ruled that by no means can the sanction of law be given this system. "Any language in Plessy v. Ferguson contrary to this finding is rejected."<sup>42</sup>

Thus the Court held unanimously that segregation in public education was a denial of the equal protection of the laws. The Court directed, in 1955, the lower courts to admit Negroes to public schools on a racially nondiscriminatory basis "with all deliberate speed."<sup>43</sup>

"Reactions ranged from compliance in some border states to hostile gestures toward the Court."<sup>44</sup> On January 19, the Alabama Senate passed a "nullification" resolution. The Virginia legislature adopted, on



February 1, 1955, an "interposition" resolution asserting the right of the state to "interpose its sovereignty" against the decision of the Court.<sup>45</sup> And on March 12, 1955, nineteen senators and eighty-one representatives issued a "Southern Manifesto" declaring their purpose to use all lawful means to reverse the desegregation decision. Spokesman for this group was Senator Samuel J. Ervin, Jr. from North Carolina. He said:

We regard the decision of the Supreme Court in the school cases as a clear abuse of judicial power. It climaxes a trend in the Federal Judiciary undertaking to legislate, in derogation of the authority of Congress, and to encroach upon the reserved rights of the States and the people.<sup>46</sup>

The Court held fast to its decision however and in Aaron v. Cooper (1958) held that no scheme of racial discrimination against Negro children in school attendance can stand the test of the Fourteenth Amendment if "there is state participation through any arrangement, management, funds or property."<sup>47</sup>

The Court had fully evolved now and to the point of reversing its Plessy verdict. Controversy raged as to whether it was justified in designating "separate-but-equal" incompatible with the Fourteenth Amendment, when, in Gong Lum v. Rice and several other cases, the doctrine's validity was allowed to stand. Indeed, Taft had said in the Lum case that,

The decision (to segregate) is within the discretion of the state in regulating its public schools and does not conflict with the Fourteenth Amendment.<sup>48</sup>

In 1956 Senator Harves of Georgia followed the "Southern Manifesto" with "A Memorial to Congress to Declare the 14th and 15th Amendments Null and Void,"<sup>49</sup> in which he based his plea on the grounds that the Southern States were unjustly excluded from the 39th, 40th, and 41st Congresses.

The same year Paul A Freund, Fairchild Professor of Law at Harvard, urged the merits of the Brown decision, though he did not really base his argument on legal so much as social grounds.

If the Court was wrong in the school cases it is because the Court misjudged our present-day ideal of equality in law. To judge the decision, therefore, is to judge ourselves, all of us, for the Constitution sets a common, not a sectional standard for the country. That is why it is supremely important, too, that those who believe the Court judged rightly, as well as the critics, should let their voices be heard.<sup>50</sup>

In 1960, Virginia published a study of Brown case and the judicial



right of the Court to issue the decision. Looking back on the Gong Lum v. Rice case and citing ample quotations from several other previous court decisions and opinions, the Virginia commission summarized:

The Court thus performed its interpretive function. In the field of public education, the Constitution stood clearly defined and, so far as education is concerned, the people have changed it not one iota. Did the Supreme Court have the right to issue the opinion it did in Brown?<sup>51</sup>

The Virginia commission did not answer this question with a categorical yes or no, but the reasoning it presented admits of only one conclusion - that the Court opinion should not have outlawed racial segregation in education because in so doing it either violated the Constitution or amended it.

While the argument of the Virginia commission is well presented and tends to make one speculate whether the grand evolution of the Supreme Court in the field of segregation in education was not an unjustified revolution after all, this student adopts the rationale of Robert J. Harris with regard to the Brown v. Board of Education discussion.

By all standards, however, the decision in the Segregation Cases was a great decision. The opinion, on the other hand, was not a great opinion.<sup>52</sup>

Harris points out that the opinion was outside the context of Supreme Court history. All that was necessary for the Court to do here

was to hold that the 'equal but separate' formula when applied by a state or its officials was not in accord with precedents before and after 1896, and that accordingly Plessy v. Ferguson was reversed.<sup>53</sup>

This would have combined both the concept of constitutional growth through judicial interpretation and an adherence to precedent in the orderly evolution of the Court. It would certainly have rendered the Court less vulnerable to any of the criticisms claiming the decision was sheer judicial legislation.

This paper has attempted to sketch the judicial evolution of the Supreme Court as it has affected segregation in education. The pre-eminence of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment became clear very early in this study. While the Dred Scott case showed the attitude of the Court to the Negro prior to the Civil War, the Slaughterhouse Cases and the Civil Rights Cases demonstrated the Courts' concept of the Negro and his rights when Congress tried by legislative action and in pursuance of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to safeguard some of these individual rights. In Plessy v.



Ferguson the "separate but equal" doctrine was accepted as the basic principle with which to deal with the Negro. In Cumming v. Board of Education and Gong Lum v. Rice the validity of the doctrine itself was not challenged. In more recent cases, Missouri ex rel Gaines v. Canada, Sipuel v. Oklahoma, Sweatt v. Painter, and McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents, all on the graduate school level, "substantial" inequality was found in that specific benefits enjoyed by white students were denied to Negro students of the same educational qualifications. In none of these cases was it absolutely necessary, nor had the Court evolved to the necessary degree yet, to re-examine the doctrine of "separate but equal" to grant relief to the Negro plaintiff. Yet an increasing reliance on intangible factors in Court decisions was obvious. In Brown v. Board of Education the cycle of evolution was complete; Plessy v. Ferguson's construction of the equal protection clause was overthrown.

Robert J. Harris wrote an admirable parting thought to the 1954 decision of the Court:

The decision of the Court in the Segregation Cases by looking upon the Constitution as a process of growth, and by bringing constitutional interpretation nearer to the American ideal of the equality of all men in the enjoyment of legal privileges and immunities, is bound to occupy a prominent place in constitutional history long after analysts have ceased to write about it and the strident voices of the neo-nullificationist have been stilled...<sup>54</sup>



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3 Ibid.

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- 30 275 U.S. 78 1927. This is a particularly relevant passage to the question of the constitutionality of the 1954 Supreme Court decision.
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- 34 332 U.S. 631 1948
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- 51 Virginia Commission on Constitutional Government, Did the Court Interpret or Amend, p. 43.
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## THE IMPAIRMENT OF THE AMERICAN NEGRO DURING SLAVERY

Submitted by:

Barbara Henry\*

"No more sickness,  
No more sorrow,  
When I lay my burden down."<sup>1</sup>

The Negro bondsman was burdened by impairments wrought by the white master class during the slavery period. This impairment was fourfold: psychological, moral, religious, and intellectual.

Slaveholders wished to develop the ideal slave as they trained and governed their workers. In attempting to mold a human being to this model, the master class in many ways impaired the slave psychologically. To approach this ideal pattern, the master had to first establish and maintain a strict discipline. One South Carolina Slaveholder believed that

...in order to develop a perfect relationship between the slave and his master, "...the slave should know that his master is to govern absolutely, and he is to obey implicitly. That he is never for a moment to exercise either his will or judgment in opposition to a positive order."<sup>2</sup>

A slave was

"...trusted as little as possible to use his own discretion and it is taken for granted that he will never do anything desired of him that he dares avoid."<sup>3</sup>

A feeling of personal inferiority was another desired attribute in the formation of the model slave. The Negroes were forced to "...know and keep their places," to "...feel the difference between master and slave," to "...realize that slavery was their natural status," and to feel that "...their color was a badge of degradation."<sup>4</sup> This feeling of inferiority was strengthened by the slave codes. The slave codes differed from state to state, but were designed to achieve due subordination of the slaves. A slave had no standing in the court. He could not be a party to a suit at law; and he could not offer legal testimony except against another Negro. Since he had no legal responsibility, his oath was not binding. Thus he could not make a contract, and therefore his marriage was not legal. His children were not legitimate. The ownership of property by a slave was forbidden. A slave could not strike a white person, even in self-defense; but the killing of a slave was rarely regarded as

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murder. The rape of a female slave was a misdemeanor because it involved "trespassing on the property of another person."<sup>5</sup> Laws such as these were at the same time oppressive and harmful to the psychological well-being of the slave.

Slaveholders attempted "...to awe them (the slaves) with a sense of their master's enormous power."<sup>6</sup> The owners were successful in this attempt, for few Negroes could free themselves from the notion that their masters were "...invested with a sort of sacredness. Fear, awe, and obedience... are interwoven into the very nature of the slave."<sup>7</sup> There was a general belief, born of a defense of slavery, that Negroes were a childlike race and should be punished just as children were punished. The excessive use of the lash was an outstanding abuse of the institution of slavery. As Thomas Jefferson pointed out in his Notes on Virginia, the whole master-slave relationship was "... a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism of the one part; and degrading submission on the other..."<sup>8</sup> The power over the slave that the master enjoyed all too frequently brought out the worst in the master, and consequently, in the slave.

To complete this overall pattern of the ideal Negro, the master tried to train the slave to accept the master's code of good conduct and to instill in the Negro a feeling of complete dependence. Skilled workers were dangerous because they tended to become more independent. A Virginian was shocked to find that his slaves, while working at an iron furnace, "...got a habit of roaming around and taking care of themselves."<sup>9</sup>

A spirit of independence was less likely to develop among slaves kept on the land, where most of them become accustomed to having their master provide their basic needs, and where they might be taught that they were unfit to look out for themselves.<sup>10</sup>

This sense of dependence that grew in the mind of the Negro is exemplified in this statement by a slave:

"I's black and just a poor old nigger, but I reverence my white folks-pay 'tention and listen to what the white folks tell you, and the world would be a heap better off. Us old niggers knows that's the truth, too..."<sup>11</sup>

The childishness resulting from this dependence incurred by the white master class is evident in the Negro slave:

Yes, sir, white folks, you ain't never seed nothing like it, so you can't tell the joy you gits from looking for dewberries and hunting guinea eggs and setting in the shade of a peach tree, reaching up and pulling off a ripe peach and eating it slow... You ain't never walked acrost a frosty field in the early morning and gone to the big house to build a fire for your mistress and when she wake up slow have her say to you: Well, how's my little nigger today? <sup>12</sup>



"It is one of the damning characteristics of the slave system," said Frederick Douglass, "that it robs its victims of every earthly incentive to a holy life."<sup>13</sup> Due to the laws of our country during the slavery period and the attitudes taken by the master class, the bondsmen experienced a definite moral degradation and degeneration. In rendering the decision in the case of Gregley v. Jackson in 1882, Justice Jones Eakin of the Arkansas Supreme Court wrote:

There were no valid marriages amongst that class (the slaves), in the slave states of America before the general emancipation near the close of the civil war, nor after that did any of the States take cognizance of marriages amongst slaves, until provisions were made by statute.<sup>14</sup>

Slave marriages did not exist in a legal sense in the South. The slaves' conditions were only a form of concubinage. In law fornication and adultery did not exist between the slaves; nor was there any bastardy, for the father of a slave was "unknown" to the law.<sup>15</sup> This situation fostered moral degeneration and loose family ties among Negro slaves. Also bringing family life to a lower level was the practice of selling husbands and wives separately without any regard to their relationship. Therefore slavery offered many obstacles to a normal family relationship because no real condition of marriage was possible and bondage prevented parental control of children.

Because marriage did not legally exist, the slaves were without a great curb to sexual promiscuity.

"It would require a high degree of social and moral consciousness for an uneducated slave to distinguish between acceptable relations where no such marriage existed."<sup>16</sup>

This was especially true when a slave might pass into the ownership of different men with varying requirements and standards regarding the marital relationships of their slaves.

The majority of slaves were sexually promiscuous by white standards at some time in their lives, partly because of the general lack of social restraint to such practices, and partly because in relation to other members of the slave class there was, legally speaking, no such thing as promiscuity.<sup>17</sup>

Frederick Douglass, despairing on the evils of the slavery system, said,

"The fear of God, and the hope of heaven, are found sufficient to sustain many slave-women, amidst the snares and dangers of their strange lot; but, this side of God and heaven, a slave-woman is at the mercy of the power, caprice, and passion of her owner. Slavery provides no means for the honorable continuance of the race. Marriage--as imposing obligations on the parties to it--has no existence here, except



in such hearts as are purer and higher than the standard morality around them."<sup>18</sup>

In spite of all attempts to crush it, a slave had a will of his own, which was actively, as well as passively, opposed to the master's. The slaves formulated legal and moral codes of their own. It was considered a merit to be able "...to steal and not to be detected."<sup>19</sup> Theft was universal among slaves. Taking things from the master meant simply taking part of his property for the benefit of another part. Thus, a female slave scolded for theft replied,

Law, mam, don't say I's wicked; ole Aunt Ann says  
it allers right for us poor colored people to  
'popiate whatever of de white folk's blessings de  
Lord puts in our way.<sup>20</sup>

The slave also expressed his hatred of enslavement by suicide, infanticide, and homicide. Through the slavery system, the bondsmen were inevitably demoralized and brutalized.

I am no priest of crooks nor creeds,  
For human wants and human needs  
Are more to me than prophets' deeds;  
And human tears and human cares  
Affect me more than human prayers.

Go, cease your wail, lugubrious saint!  
You fret high Heaven with your plaint.  
Is this the "Christian's joy" you paint?  
Is this the Christian's boasted bliss?  
~~Avails your faith no more than this?~~

Take up your arms, come out with me,  
Let Heav'n alone; humanity  
Needs more and Heaven less from thee.  
With pity from mankind look 'round;  
Help them to rise--and Heaven is found."<sup>21</sup>

--Paul Lawrence Dunbar

This poem expresses the frustrated attitude of a Negro slave toward Christianity. The Negro potential of a deep, fervent faith in God was impaired by the institution of slavery. The colonial legislatures provided that conversion would not give the slaves a claim to freedom. Thereafter some masters encouraged conversion among their bondsmen. Some, however, continued to be indifferent. In the Nineteenth Century a southern clergyman complained that "...in extensive districts thousands of bondsmen never heard the voices of those who brought the glad tidings of salvation to perishing men."<sup>22</sup> A Louisianian thought that attempts to convert slaves was the "greatest piece of foolishness: the only way to improve them was through proper discipline." Some newspapers expressed opposition to religious teaching to the Negro population. The Baton Rouge Gazette placed the blame for murder and insurrection on "incendiary preachers who appealed to the worst passions of human nature."<sup>24</sup> The editor of a Franklin,



Louisiana, Planters Banner said of a Baptist baptismal service, "There was really nothing interesting in the ceremony," and added, "There is something ludicrous in this thing of ministers taking niggers so lovingly in their arms and ducking them by way of securing their salvation."<sup>25</sup>

The advantage of giving religious instruction to slaves was to inspire them to submit to their superiors.

...the religious teaching consists in teaching the slave that he must never strike a white man; that God made him for a slave; and that, when whipped, he must not find a fault,--for the Bible says, "He that knoweth his master's will and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes!" And slaveholders find such religion very profitable to them.<sup>26</sup>

The following anecdote illustrates what was quite probably the major extent of religious teaching to the slaves:

Uncle Jasper...recalls that...in the old days, the preacher made one sermon do for both races. A big long shed served as meeting house. Into it the white people went to hear the preacher in his powerful exhortations to right living. "Us servan's stayed outside, an' set down on de logs close by. When de preacher git all warm' up, an' had de white folks inside de shed thinkin' on de way ter glory, he stick his haid out do window now an' den ter exhort us serven's: 'You cullud people out dar--lissen at me! De way ter make good slaves, is ter obey yo' Massa an' Missis! Obey 'em constant-- Den he stick his haid back in, and preach till he had some mo' words fo' us-all."<sup>27</sup>

One of the dominant features of such a religion among the Negroes was the resulting prevalence of superstition. It almost seems that in their ignorance they adopted every form of supernatural fear that was ever known among our ancestors. "The peculiarity of the Negro slave as compared with other races was his own sinister imaginative productions."<sup>28</sup> The slaves related some of the tales of ancient mythology, but with tales of goblins, witches, and ghosts--the results of their own dreams and fancies.

The number of slaves formally affiliated with the various denominations was only a small minority of the total slave population at any given time. Taking Arkansas as an example--only 20,000 slaves out of a total slave population of 111,115 were affiliated with churches in Arkansas in 1860.<sup>29</sup> This is only an indication of the extent of religious interest, but it must be remembered that the primary function of the slave was to work for his master, and only the especially religious and considerate master concerned himself with the spiritual welfare of his slaves.

Deep in my heart that aches with the repression,



And strives with plenitude of bitter pain,  
There lives a thought that clamors for expression,  
And spends its undelivered force in vain.

What boots it that some other may have thought it?  
The right of thought's expression is divine;  
The price of pain I pay for it has bought it,  
I care not who lays claim to it--'tis mine!

And yet not mine until it be delivered;  
The manner of its birth shall use the test.  
Alas, alas, my rock of pride is shivered--  
I beat my brow--the thought still unexpressed.'<sup>30</sup>

--Paul Lawrence Dunbar

The author of this poem feels the weight of the chains of slavery both physically and mentally. This intellectual bondage was a direct result of the slavery system as practiced in the United States. John C. Calhoun asserted that "...if a Negro could be found capable of giving the syntax of a Greek verb, only then would he be disposed to call him human."<sup>31</sup> The supposed fact that Negroes could not be educated was a vital issue from the beginning of slavery for upon it rested the justification of the peculiar institution itself. The conscience of the country could not comfortably condone the denial of an education to people like themselves, and the needs of the economic system prompted rationalization of the inferiority of Negroes. Besides, it was economically sound to control the interests and desires of the slaves. Education tended to make them less useful as workers, fostered discontent and insurrection, and disturbed the social order. In 1831, Nat Turner, an educated Negro preacher, led a slave insurrection in Virginia. It was rumored that Turner had been "led to revolt through reading the Bible and identifying himself the 'Moses' chosen to lead his people out of bondage."<sup>32</sup> This reaffirmed the slaveholder's belief that if slaves never learned to read the Bible, they could never be misled as Turner was.

The slaveholder asserted his belief in the mental incapacity of the Negro, but advertised his lack of faith in his assertion by making laws to prevent the education of slaves. The legislature of South Carolina in 1740 made it an offense "...punishable by a fine of 100 lbs. to teach or cause to be taught any slave, or to employ one as a scribe in any matter of writing whatever. Georgia made a law in 1770 modelled after South Carolina, adding imprisonment and whipping of the Negro instructed. Similar laws were enacted in all Southern states. In 1800 the City Council of Charleston, South Carolina, stated that, "...the laws heretofore enacted for the government of slaves...have been found insufficient for keeping them in due subordination," and it gave authority to the police to "break doors, gates, or windows in dispersing any gatherings for the purpose of mental instruction of the Negroes."<sup>34</sup> Therefore, from a legal standpoint, the slave had no rights or privileges in the attainment of even a meager education. This is shown in the fact that in 1860, only five percent of the 4,441,830 Negroes in the United States were literate.<sup>35</sup>



The belief of the master class that the slave could not be educated communicated itself to the Negro. A slaveowner's daughter gave up the job of educating a slave in disgust when,

"...after a whole winter, he still did not know the alphabet. A second daughter tried her hand and finally steered Charley through the first reader. The education stopped there. Charley was a bright boy, could tell the time, count money, and do errands intelligently, but "book learning" was beyond him. Charley himself said that "God did not make niggers to learn books." 30

Thus, through the laws of the States and the attitude of the whites, the Negroes of the slave era were psychologically, morally, religiously, and intellectually impaired. The Negroes became dependent on the whites, developed an inferiority complex, were morally degraded and degenerated, and had loose family ties. The growth of Negro conversions was stunted by the peculiar institution, and the American Negro slave's intellectual development came to a standstill. Here are the tragic beginnings of slavery's legacy of race prejudice and hatred, which have left their mark on the entire country.



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## NEGRO THOUGHT IN AMERICA, 1880 - 1910

Submitted by:

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Slavery was finished and there was a prospect of a new status for all Negro Americans; what then were the goals of the Negro to make himself a political factor in a democratic society? Unsurprisingly, they wanted full equality at the polls for without this they would actually not be free. The Fifteenth Amendment accorded to all, regardless of race, color, or creed, the right to vote. Even before Reconstruction had ended, marked by the withdrawal of the last of the federal occupation troops, the Republican party had abandoned them. Reaction on the part of the whites and disillusionment on the part of the Negroes followed. Some of them tried fusion with white Populists in the 1890's, while others became Democrats rather than lose their voting power altogether. Because no party served the Negro, however, he interested himself more and more in class and race problems instead of those more general ones which were national and regional in scope.

As acceptance of white hegemony became general in the South, Negroes in that area, 5,900,000 out of a total Negro population of 6,580,000, were without effective defense of their political and civil rights. Therefore, if whites grew more hostile to Negroes, then Negroes must band together and help themselves; if whites believed that Negroes were inferior, then Negroes must show themselves the equals of whites. An equality, their leaders reasoned, gained only by successfully running the Social Darwinist race with whites and by encouraging a fierce pride in their own color. R. H. Cain wrote about the changing attitude toward political activity:

Twenty years have passed; the North is quiescent, the South is rejoicing, the negro is docile, the Anglo-Saxon is master of the situation, the negro has lost all of his aspirations for political preferment. . . He seems to have changed his course of procedure, has left the political arena, turned his attention to. . . acquiring wealth by his industry and thus becoming a full-fledged ~~American citizen~~ through the only just and proper methods which gave success in developing his manhood.<sup>1</sup>

Negro conventions of the late 1870's placed their strongest emphasis on racial solidarity, self-help, and economic advancement. Most of the distinguished Negro leaders were more concerned with self-help and economic development than with the decline of political and civil rights. Booker T. Washington and his followers hooted down the decreasing minority for whom economics continued to be subordinate

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to politics. T. Thomas Fortune was one of those who felt that the franchise would always be of more strategic advantage than the envisaged elevation of Negroes through a subscription to a philosophy of thrift and industry.

What Fortune was advocating was heresy to many colored men, and a storm of protest raged among Negro leaders. Frederick Douglass considered the movement ridiculous.<sup>2</sup>

However, after the betrayal of the Negro by radical agrarians and labor movements, Fortune veered away from his early radicalism and preached a program more in keeping with the American middle class tradition.

Along with the ideas involving self-help, race pride, and group solidarity all of which grew greatly in popularity during the 1880's and 1890's was an interest in race history. Race pride was necessary and could be cultivated by a history movement. The need to assert and prove their equality as one means of convincing whites of their worthiness for political and civil rights, and the need for a sense of dignity to offset the inferiority doctrines taught by the whites spurred historical interests. Negro historians pointed to such European writers as the ex-slave Juan Latino, Alexander Pushkin, Alexander Dumas, and Robert Browning. Toussaint L'Ouverture and the history of Liberia proved the Negroes' ability for self-government. Some made wild claims, others reported the facts accurately.

The early 1880's were devoted to the creation of a Negro middle class and this theme would continue throughout the remainder of the century until it was finally put to rest, symbolically, when the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was founded in 1909. While all did not hold to the entire complex of ideas of race pride, solidarity, and economic development, each of these viewpoints received growing popularity. Booker T. Washington was the notable proponent of that philosophy but often these ideas were admittedly nothing more than a detour, an indirect approach to the goal of rights and integration. Racial unity and pride were to be used as immediate means in the struggle for civil rights. The end was seen just as clearly as had the Reconstruction leader viewed it but greater emphasis was now laid on economy and the means to attain it. D. A. Straker, in his *New Spathy Investigated* (1888), as guided by Meter, said;

By being industrious like the Jews, the Negro could be the architect of his own future in the New South. As long as whites discriminated, Negroes should create their own business opportunities by enjoying and patronizing only members of the race.<sup>3</sup>

Though the major answer in vogue for the Negro of the 1880's and 1890's was the philosophy just explained, it was not the only recourse. Southern Negroes gave considerable thought to migration but only a few left the South and these were members of the lower class; approximately ninety percent of the nation's Negroes continued residence in the South until fairly recent times. It is apparent that economically prosperous individuals in the Southeast who depended for their careers on a large



Negro population largely opposed migration. Furthermore, none of the Southern Negro leadership class migrated themselves and usually only supported such a movement, as the Kansas Exodus, after it was well begun.

Another response to their status was the more radical, sometimes violent, one of protest which was seen in the vitality of state and national conventions. There was concern voiced over civil rights, Republican policy, the franchise, and mob violence. Leading Northern magazines also caused consternation among the Negro leaders. Harper's New Monthly Magazine, Century, and the Atlantic Monthly mirrored the refined tastes of the upper classes toward the Negroes they had defended in the Civil War. Those three leading literary magazines

regularly employed derisive terms that are rarely used today, except in local color fiction, in private conversation, and by the most rabid of 'wool-hat' politicians.<sup>4</sup>

Frederick Douglass was the greatest symbol of the protest movement during the 1880's and early 1890's. He felt, as did the majority of other leaders, that by gaining the respect of the white man through an emphasis on the middle class virtues and economic independence, Negroes would better attain their civil liberties. However, he saw no contradiction when he urged, at times, agitation for political rights which the constitution and subsequent amendments had guaranteed them. After the War Between the States, Douglass placed a good deal of stress on the gospel of wealth and racial unity, and he pursued these ideas in a somewhat attenuated form in the early 1880's. He spoke at that time in phrases suggestive of Booker T. Washington's speeches. As more and more emphasis was placed on the doctrines of self-help and economic advancement and away from civil rights, however, Douglass' tendencies moved away from the general stream. He began to speak less and less in the terms of the gospel of wealth while he increasingly devoted himself to theories of protest. Douglass, in fact, declaimed racial solidarity and race pride and protested vehemently against disfranchisement. He insisted that the Negro was not on trial but that the real defendant was America herself. Every American citizen and every American law would be tried. Although he did not deny that Negroes would partially combat racial prejudice by acquiring an education and an accretion of wealth, he named as some of their errors - race pride, race unity and economic chauvinism - the cardinal virtues of Washington. Douglass felt that by stressing these evils, which most of his contemporaries listed as excellent means, was doing just as the whites wanted. The Negroes were directly perpetuating their status as a nation within a nation, a sort of ghetto which today is so attacked by most except followers of the Black Muslim religion. Douglass encouraged Negroes to yield as little as possible to the pressures that forced them into maintaining separate housing complexes and institutions.

The basic protest movement retained much of its life, even to some extent in the South. Most Negro leaders spoke first of getting money, getting an education, and acquiring character, while a good proportion



of these went on to speak next of agitation for civil and political rights. Douglass' views were at the opposite end of the spectrum from those of Booker T. Washington, whose prominence lies less in his enunciation of American Negro's hope than in other factors.

Booker T. Washington taught:

The individual or race that owns the property, pays the taxes, possesses the intelligence and substantial character, is the one which is going to exercise the greatest control in government, whether he lives in the North or whether he lives in the South.<sup>5</sup>

Industrial education was a practical idea that Washington did not start but did bring to fruition. This was a very necessary link in his plans for Negro self-help. A program like this was primarily for the instilling of moral values and the acquisition of a definite trade. Industrial education fitted the spirit of the age and, when in 1895 Washington made his Atlanta address, he emerged suddenly as the national Negro "leader," not because of the originality of his proposals, but because of the excellent verbalization of those programs already at the core of influential groups among Northern and Southern Negroes. The 1880's was a perfect time since the converging trends made industrial and agricultural training more valuable for the Negro than liberal and higher education.

At the Atlanta Exposition in September, 1895, Booker Taliaferro Washington emerged with a national reputation and the acknowledged leader of American Negroes. His speech

was one of the most effective pieces of political oratory in the history of the United States...More than a half century later the reader comprehends the drama of the occasion and is moved by the speaker's eloquence and mastery of the art of public speaking.<sup>6</sup>

The fact that there was nothing new in the address does not destroy its importance. Its basic theme, compromise, was in touch with the common opinion prevailing since the late 1870's. A subordinate place for Negroes in American life heralded the successes of the New South. Washington's first sentence struck the keynote of his Atlanta Compromise of 1895. He pointed out that one-third of the South's population was colored and could not be forgotten if there was to be any hope of progress. Washington urged that migrations be stopped and that the colored people of the South settle down into agriculture; domestic service, or commerce. The greatest danger to Negro populations was that, in their great leap from slavery to freedom, they would forget that to live they must produce, they would prosper in proportion to their labor. "No race," Washington warned, "can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem."<sup>7</sup> In addressing the whites at the Convention, Washington struck another theme which caused more excited applause: than anything else he had said. "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things



essential to mutual progress." Such an idea, heretical now to the Negroes involved in nonviolence, direct action, and militance, was one of the keys to the period between 1880 and 1910. By 1915, however, the Negro mind was sufficiently divided between the economic approach to the ballot box and the more direct agitation that it becomes difficult to explain his actions. Washington went on to say that the fate of the white people was so tied up with that of the Negro that every attempt should be made to make them useful citizens. He spoke about the civil rights to which the Negro was entitled but said that these would come more as a result of severe constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing. Douglass, who had died in 1895, would have found this Compromise wholly distasteful since it accepted a subordinate position for Southern Negroes. He spared nothing in denouncing social equality and, in return, asked for a chance to gain a decent livelihood. Although overtly Washington minimized the importance of the franchise and civil rights, covertly he was deeply involved in politics. The fullest statement which Washington allowed himself without losing his staunch white supporters in the North and the South was made, in 1900, before the Bethel Historical and Literary Society of Washington, D. C. This speech urged that beyond all else Negroes must keep hoping and never lose courage. No solution would be permanent which was not built on the confidence and respect of Southern and of Northern whites. Until the Negro stopped being called "boy" and was being addressed as "sir" every other concession would not have any lasting substance. The greatest numbers of the colored population should be directed toward toil that would permit them a decent wage in the community in which they chose to reside. As regards the delicate problem of political participation, Washington urged the following principles:

1. In national politics Negroes should vote Republican, but in local Southern politics, Democratic.
2. The Fifteenth Amendment should remain a part of the Constitution, but it should not be generally enforced.
3. Ignorant whites and Negroes should be excluded from, or admitted to, the ballot on equal terms.<sup>9</sup>

It was important that Washington not alienate the white supporters among whom he was very popular. Washington sincerely felt his program would be the most effective in the long run, and he needed white friends who helped to give him prestige and power within the Negro community. His power over the Negro press was quasi-dictatorial and his pressure was usually sufficient to stifle criticism. W. E. B. DuBois, however, was not to be persuaded by Washington's soft-pedaling of political and civil rights. This paper, however, should first discuss the Negroes' relations with labor, a topic quite obviously intimately tied into the Negroes' search for stability, before it begins discussion of the reversal characterized by attacks on Washington, the Niagara Movement which failed, and the successful high point against Booker T. Washington when the NAACP was formed in 1909. Besides the discussion of labor, attention will also be given to the new Southern state constitutions and the Supreme Court decisions which caused the nadir of Negroes in America during the 1890's.



Labor was the key to Booker T. Washington's new gospel so a more detailed study of it is in order. The majority of notes in this section have their references to an article by Bernard Mandel entitled, "Samuel Gompers and the Negro Workers, 1886-1914," which appeared in The Journal of Negro History in January, 1955.

Gompers' American Federation of Labor inherited the Knights of Labor attitudes toward organized Negro labor and reaffirmed the theory that workers should form unions without regard to color or creed. Personally, Samuel Gompers' own life can be gauged somewhat by his Negro position which was first that of a fire-eater for radical labor reform then evolved into a conservative on labor issues. "In 1890, the Federation declared that it looked with disfavor upon unions which excluded members on account of race or color."<sup>10</sup> Trouble was brewing over the International Association of Machinists which finally agreed to drop their restrictive "white clause" but did so in name only. No one was fooled, it became common knowledge that really nothing had changed. This did not disturb Gompers too much because in his address to A. F. of L. at their sixteenth convention, 1896, he told the Brotherhood that the union had decided it was unwise to go out with banners flying against a race. He drew the parallel that during the Civil War many abolitionists desired the removal of that degrading system but did not fall in love with the victims of it.

There is no doubt that Gompers, at least in the early years of the Federation, desired the organization of the Negro workers and, if possible, their organization in the same union with white workers...He explained to his Southern organizer that the unionization of colored workers was not a matter of recognizing social equality, but a question of absolute necessity.<sup>11</sup>

However, Gompers weakened the implementation of his desire for unionizing Negroes by leaving it in the hands of white organizers. And, by 1897, Washington was accusing the trade unions of hindering the material advancement of Negroes by not organizing them. Resolutions were passed for more strenuous efforts but, in the South where the majority of Negroes still resided, they were rarely translated into any effective action. In 1900, Gompers responded to a questioner that asked him why the South had not effectually organized. He gave three reasons and ascribed the first blame to the Negroes. Thus, in a few short years, Samuel Gompers' campaign espousing a place for Negro labor in the A. F. of L. was being almost totally retracted. Around the turn of the century the American Federation of Labor abandoned even nominal support of equal standing for Negro laborers. This happening in the very years that Southern race relations were suffering terribly and the Negro disfranchisement process was in high gear. In his annual message to the A. F. of L. in the 1900, 20th Convention, Gompers went so far as to say that an insistence on equality or even admission of Negroes would result in an end to the Brotherhood. So it became common policy for the Federation to indulge in jim-crowism and refuse installment of Negroes even where there were too few of them to form a separate union. This certainly was not the Samuel Gompers who had begun a



membership drive among Negro workers in 1886. William E. B. DuBois made a study of trade unions and found

...that forty-three national organizations, including the railroad brotherhoods, had no Negro members, and that in sixteen of them this was due to the discriminatory policies of those organizations. Twenty-seven others had very few members, partly due to the failure of the unions to train apprentices. There were altogether only forty thousand Negroes in the A. F. of L. with a total membership of just over a million.<sup>12</sup>

Gompers began his work without a racial attitude but this attitude was based on a trade union desire to keep Negroes from successfully competing with whites. He neatly switched the blame to the colored men for not making common cause with the white worker. Samuel Gompers led his union from a reasonable outlook to a lily-white one splattered with jim-crowism.

The last two subjects which should be discussed before the twentieth century opens are very related. They concern the new state constitutions which were passed before 1900 and some of the Supreme Court decisions which upheld their constitutionality.

Distressed white farmers in the South fed the Populist revolt which threatened to halt the return to the "Southern way of life." Racial animosities were laid aside when poor farmers, white and black alike, joined hands in an attempt to right the injustices. But the program of Populism ran aground when the banner of Free Silver was raised and the racial solidarity which had been momentarily interrupted was revived with greater intensity. Demagogues such as Ben Tillman and Tom Watson raised the hue and cry. Watson had first met the Negro problem courageously but in the end took refuge in every retreat and subterfuge known to Southern politics. Tillman was able to proudly boast that South Carolina had disfranchised all the colored people it could. Louisiana can be used as the model state in its efforts, largely successful, to deny the ballot to Negroes. Only from this state, furthermore, are reliable figures available to show what the new constitutions did. A constitutional convention had been called for 1898 but in the last election before it there were registered in the state 130,344 Negroes, with majorities in over twenty-five parishes. After the adoption of the constitution, in the vote of 1900, there were registered only 5,320 Negroes, with colored majorities in none. While the number of Negro registrants fell by 96 percent, white registration decreased by only thirty thousand.<sup>13</sup> The nadir had come during the term of President McKinley who consistently failed to make any references that could be remotely considered as calling attention to the inequalities existing between white and black throughout the South and occasionally in the North. In the Presidential election of 1896, the Negro was almost completely forgotten, except in the South where the specter was brought up again to keep the South solidly Democratic. Thus, at the doorstep of the twentieth century, both major parties had betrayed the Negro and decided between them that it was not necessary to apply the principle of democracy equally to white and black.



No help could be gotten from the Supreme Court either. Practically all the relevant decisions emasculated "Radical" Reconstruction laws incorporated into the Constitution. The Slaughter-House Cases of 1873 did not directly involve the Negroes but the Supreme Court often referred back to this case which upheld the Louisiana State Legislature. Fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the Constitution had their importance decreased by the Supreme Court which eventually passed on *Plessy v. Ferguson*. This noted 1896 case established the doctrine of "separate but equal accommodations" and this verdict was upheld in later cases involving segregation on public carriers and separate schools. Meanwhile the "Grandfather" clauses, poll taxes, and literacy tests were upheld in the nation's highest court. Protection of the Negro was quickly being given to the states who in turn simply relegated them to a second-class citizenship.

With Tuskegee as his operative example, Booker T. Washington proclaimed the Negro's savior to be industrial education. His theme was that his race ought now begin to earn first-class citizenship rather than press for further immediate concessions. This thesis made him not so much a leader of Negroes as an intermediary, interpreting the races to each other, and made of him a powerful national politician, perhaps the most influential from the South. As a highly favored man he was given immense prerogatives over the patronage system and in every field which affected the Negro.

In 1900, the total population of the United States was almost seventy-six million people of which 8,834,000 were Negroes. Approximately 90 percent of the Negroes still were residing in the South under oppressive conditions.<sup>14</sup> This generation of 1900 began for Negroes with the Tuskegee Idea in the ascendancy: purchasing peace by denying their social and political rights. The Atlanta Compromise almost did not have time to stop its ringing in the white man's ears when segregation tightened up and lynchings multiplied. This was the first of the unmistakable signs of bad faith and general breakdown of the compromise in the white community. Negro churches, Negro fraternities, and Negro leagues of all types could not fight the type of war now being waged. The following pages will trace the crystallization of opponents to Washington, their first attempt to changing the Tuskegean philosophy, and their victory with the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Movement was slow at first but finally snowballed into an irresistible stream. Booker T. Washington was no longer the central figure, his dominance was weakening and was finally broken. Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., author of The Negro In Northern Politics, 1870 - 1900, says of him,

The question as to whether Washington utilized his power in the best interests of the race is one that still remains to be answered, but Washington did realize, however much he leaned in the direction of cooperation, that the power of the race could be best organized by moderation.<sup>15</sup>

William E. B. DuBois first approved the Tuskegee philosophy but slowly repudiated it as he concluded that Washington's remedies were insufficient and even harmful. He soon became the outspoken leader of the minority who opposed Washington and, in his classic, The Souls



of Black Folk, launched into a protest against the policies of seeking an accommodation with Southerners. The philosophies so precious to Washington's heart were just the assurances that the white establishment in South and North were anxiously seeking. Those who had never followed this "soft line" now found themselves listened to more eagerly since the lot of the Negro did not improve despite their attempts. In 1905, DuBois responded to the growing demands and issued a call for an organization of men pledged to action. Some twenty-nine intellectual and professional men responded who collectively organized the Niagara Movement. At Harper's Ferry in the following year he spelled out his objectives naming, among them, full manhood rights which belong to every American citizen. Though the Movement created a considerable stir, its maximum membership was never more than four hundred. It floundered because of the still widespread influence of Booker T. Washington and the personality of DuBois. However, one direct result of the Niagara Movement was to oust Washington from the control of the Afro-American Council. As early as 1905 the Council reversed its position and gave up its support of a restricted franchise in favor of urging Negroes toward collective action in testing the disfranchisement laws in the state and federal courts. DuBois insisted that disfranchisement retarded the economic development of the Negro because the voteless could not protect their property rights. This Harvard graduate became the model of the paradoxes in American Negro thought. Despite his early bannings in favor of an accommodating viewpoint with the trappings of racial solidarity and self-help, DuBois expressed better than had any other the protest tendency in Negro American thought--the need to be a first-class citizen, and respected as an American.

A sequel has been written to this very vital period in America's history, vital to black and white. The NAACP was founded in 1909 and found many of its leaders from the defunct Niagara Movement. It came as the natural response to the "need of organized resistance to the steady erosion of the citizenship rights of Negroes."<sup>16</sup> The sequel to the era of protest exemplified by the NAACP has not been written but the goal of the Negro remained the complete recognition of his rights. He has been and is now devoted to the principles of democracy and equality. The formula, for him, remains the same: it is the responsibility of government to insure each of its citizens the property atmosphere in which he can have an opportunity to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.



## FOOTNOTES

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- 15 Leslie H. Fishel, Jr. "The Negro in Northern Politics, 1870-1900," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLII. (June, 1955 to March, 1956), p. 489.
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## THE NEGRO AS HIS OWN HISTORIOGRAPHER

Submitted by:

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### Introduction

The Negro has long been ignored as a factor in the history of the United States. His history, his past, his functioning in the American movement have been untapped, unmentioned, unheard facets of the Saga of United States development.

However the Negro has had an individualistic, ethnocentric consciousness of himself. Throughout the development of the United States members of the Afro-American race have struggled to inscribe the achievements of their people upon the minds and consciousness of their race and of others to bring about the end of prejudice and the recognition of natural achievements.

At first the Negro historian wrote sparingly as an untrained individual. His products and results improved with increased knowledge of technique and awakened awareness.

It is the purpose of this paper to consider the progress of the Negro historian from writer to historiographer.

The relatively untapped state of this field of study-the Negro's value as a Historiographer may be seen in Earl E. Thorpe's comment upon the opening page of Negro Historians in the United States, without which this paper would never have taken its final form:

Aside from the statements interspersed in Vermont Loggin's volume entitled The Negro Author, a brief unpublished master's thesis by Joseph Grimes, and a few articles on individual historians there was no analysis of this historiography in evidence.<sup>1</sup>

This researcher can collaborate Thorpe for not considering the absence of an analysis of Negro historiography, the only mentions of a work by a Negro historian in any General American Historical Bibliography available was one of The Negro in the Americas by Charles H. Wesley,<sup>2</sup> one of A Guide to the Study of the Negro in American History by Merl R. Eppse,<sup>3</sup> and a comment on The History of the Negro Race in America (1619-1880) by George Washington Williams,<sup>4</sup> and finally The Negro in the United States: A Bibliography, lists two works pertinent to Negro History.<sup>5</sup> Thus this paper tries to unite relatively divergent sources into coherent work on this topic.

To this end it will consider the three main periods of Negro

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historical writing, and selected representatives of each period in the light of the definition of Historiography given by the Social Science Research Council:

- Historiography is used in three senses:
- 1) primarily as the intellectual processes critical and constructive by which history is written (in which sense it is often treated as equivalent to the synthesis in historical work);
  - 2) the results of those processes (in which sense it is largely equivalent to secondary historical literature);
- and
- 3) the study and criticism of the sources and development of history (in which sense it is largely equivalent to the history and critique of history).<sup>6</sup>

The progress of the Negro as a Historiographer has advanced greatly in our history, but throughout this period as Earl Thorpe says:

...the thinking of the colored American has been basically American. Negro thought and behaviour are to be explained, not in terms of any peculiar characteristics, but in terms of the same conditions and forces which have played so great a part in moulding the thought and behaviour of American Whites. Where they exist, the differences in response to these conditions and forces are usually a matter of degree only. The American Negro has constantly realized that his destiny in this country has at all times coincided with the destiny of the nation."<sup>7</sup>

#### The Beginning School

Until 1860 the great predominance of Negroes in the United States were slaves and those who wrote until the 1890's were influenced heavily by this social position in their past.

The attitudes and opinions of their race which the Negroes held varied between an inferiority image painted for them by the slave owners, and the equalitarian concept arising from Christian beliefs and modern liberal philosophy. One scholar says of the Negroes of this period:

The Social philosophies with which Afro-American have been identified have been dependent to a large extent on the conceptions which they held of their race group. Those who accepted the planter's picture of the race as inferior and childish have tended toward a conservative fatalism and an eat-drink-and-be-merry philosophy. That majority of Negroes who have accepted the equalitarian ideal have dreamed of a bright future for their group."<sup>8</sup>



The Negroes who wrote in this period are linked together because they:

- 1) Wrote in the period from about 1830-1890.
- 2) Were not chiefly historians, but wrote history only incidentally.
- 3) They were not bitter or vindictive in the works they produced.
- 4) These writers usually produced only one or two historical works. Their research was generally only superficial and their documentation was poor. They wrote in an oratorical style and the quality of their works is not good.
- 5) The Beginning Historians took their arguments directly or indirectly from the Abolitionists and were themselves attempting to justify emancipation.

The Historiography of this group was extremely poor. In every sense of the definition all these writers except one failed to produce acceptable history. The only intellectual processes they used were primitive and uncritically swayed by outside influences. The works they produced were lacking both in quality and quantity. And finally the only effort ever made toward the study and evaluation of the sources and development of history was a moralistic appraisal of the past.

Although this first group was limited in the critical value of its Historiography, nevertheless, its efforts established the background for meaningful Negro Historiography and began to explode the myth held by White Americans that the Negroes had been happy, willing slaves. Earl E. Thorpe says of them:

Members of the Beginning School of Negro Historians had faith in a bright future for their race. Against frightful odds they believed constantly in the Christian Religion, Declaration of Independence, Constitution and the American people. Though they lived and wrote at a time when the main concern of their race was for freedom and the main weapon an appeal to the nation's conscience, they never lost their faith that ultimately democracy would triumph.

It is significant that this first group set the pattern of thought which almost all Negro Historians were to follow until the members of the New School began writing around 1930.<sup>10</sup>

#### George Washington Williams

The most important Negro historian of the Beginning School is George Washington Williams. He was born at Bedford Springs, Pennsylvania in 1849, attended Howard University, and graduated in 1874, from Newton Theological Seminary.



Williams despite his scholastic training and knowledge of methodology is nevertheless classified among these Beginning writers because of his moralistic conception of history. Williams believed that the Negro's position was due to his turning from God when history was an infant. It is this type of reasoning which overshadows George Washington Williams' commendable researches and prevents him from being classified the Middle School Scholars. G. W. Williams is however the one early author mentioned earlier who by his critical and constructive processes eliminates the complete failure of the group in the field of Historiography.

George Washington Williams expressed his reasons for studying and writing Negro history in his preface to The History of the Negro Race in America,

.....because Negroes had been the most vexatious problem in North America from the time of its discovery to the present day; because that in every attempt upon the life of the nation....the Colored people had always displayed a matchless patriotism and an incomparable heroism in the cause of Americans; because such a history would give the world more correct ideas of the Colored people and incite the latter to greater effort in the struggle of citizenship and manhood. The single reason that there was no history of the Negro race would have been sufficient reason for writing one. <sup>11</sup>

and later he wrote;

...not as a blind panegyrist of my race nor as a partisan apologist, but from a love for 'the truth of history' I have striven to record the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.....I have not striven to revive sectional animosities of race prejudices..... <sup>12</sup>

Edwin E. Sparks in The Literature of American History, published in 1953 reviewed The History of the Negro Race in America;

The only important history of the Colored race written by a colored man. Describes the Negro in Africa and in the various American colonies with his share in the War for Independence. Treats of slavery extension, anti-slavery organizations, the Civil War and Reconstruction period. In the writer's view hope for the future lies in the education of the Negro and his accumulation of property. The Work is optimistic, often lacking in cohesion and good historic treatment and replete with faulty rhetoric. Its greatest value to the student lies in certain compilations concerning the negro made from colonial records. <sup>13</sup>

This researcher takes issue with the use of the word 'only' which precedes. John Hope Franklin's From Slavery to Freedom and



Carter Woodson's The Negro in Our History are more notable violations. The use of the word serves to illustrate the lack of awareness of Negro Historiography in scholastic fields.

At the time of its publication it was proclaimed "perhaps the most creditable performance that has yet come from the pen of any representative of the African race in America,"<sup>14</sup> and

In 1931 it was observed:

"Although The History of the Negro Race in America appeared almost half a century ago, it is still perhaps the most comprehensive general history of the American Negro."<sup>15</sup>

Earl E. Thorpe writes in 1958;

"...no historian has yet brought out a general history of the race in America of comparable scope and based on such broad research."<sup>16</sup>

In 1881 through his History of the Negro Race in America, George Washington Williams of the Beginning School set a standard for all Negro historians of the following periods.

#### The Middle Group

These classified as members of the middle school though divergent in many aspects were recognized through a number of characteristics common to all.

These men:

- 1) began their careers between 1890 and 1930. Most were university trained scholars of the social sciences.
- 2) were motivated through
  - a) a desire to disprove sociological teachings prevalent on race.
  - b) a desire to use history to raise the position of their race by appealing to reason and Christian sentiments and to stimulate other negroes.
- 3) labored to rewrite American history which they felt was unfair to the Negro.
- 4) were bitter and warped because of the treatment to their race.
- 5) were more prolific than those of the Beginning School, did better research and documentation than this group claimed good use of methodology.
- 6) were vocationally historians but lacked a deep understanding of historical causation. These writers followed moral and sometimes economic explanations.<sup>17</sup>

Earl E. Thorpe says of the Beginning and Middle historians;



There are several similarities between these first two schools. They are:

- 1) Members of both document inadequately;
- 2) Both are, to a considerable extent, propagandists for their race, although the motivation differs somewhat for each school.
- 3) They are both excessively laudatory of their race while largely ignoring the darker side of the Negro's history: both schools are more interested in case-proving than in presenting a balanced story of the development of a people. They do not generally apply the sentiment 'Ars Gratia Artis' to historical research and writing; and
- 4) Both write almost exclusively on the topics relating directly or indirectly to the Negro.<sup>18</sup>

The Historiography of this Middle Group according to the definition of the committee on Historiography of the Social Science Research Council was

- 1) improving over the Beginning School in the use of critical and constructive intellectual processes, yet lacking any great degree of scholastic refinement or proficiency of technique. The value of the synthesis which these men applied to their historical work was lowered because of the bitterness, bias and faulty motivation from which they brought forth their works.
- 2) The Middle School however did produce more and better secondary historical literature than the members of the Beginning School. Their careers as historians led them to produce more and undertake deeper, more poignant documentation and research for these works.
- 3) The Middle historians partially again because of their faulty motivation and to a greater extent because they failed to comprehend historical causation to an extent any greater than the Beginning School knew nothing of the history and critique of History. In studying and criticizing the sources and development of their or any history, their awareness of the concept and implications of any historical causation other than a moral or perhaps an economic one does not exist.

The three most important negro writers of this group were W.E.B. DuBois, Carter Woodson, and Charles H. Wesley.

Earl E. Thorpe singles DuBois and Woodson out as the more prominent saying

"Because they were far more prolific writers than any other colored historians have been, because of their zealous, if sometimes misguided, devotion to scholarship and the scientific spirit, and because of the wide and permanent influence of their writings and organizational



activities, DuBois and Woodson stand far and above all other Negro historians. Of the two, Woodson was probably more balanced and objective."<sup>19</sup>

and Mr. Therpe comments on Wesley,

'Charles Wesley is here placed with the Middle Group largely out of respect for his efforts in getting Negro history accepted as a respectable field.'<sup>20</sup>

Harvey Wish says of the attitude of these three men toward U. B. Phillip ,

Even Phillips unflinching urbanity toward individuals of both races did not charm the newly trained professional Negro historians like the rebels Dr. William E. B. DuBois of Atlanta, Dr. Carter G. Woodson of Washington, Dr. Charles H. Wesley of Howard University, and many other able and outspoken young academicians of that race. They looked upon history as an instrument of racial salvation as well as a source of pride in race achievements. Therefore, they condemned Phillips' realism, his stereotype of the happy-go-lucky Negro, and his assumption that Negroes had few cultural contributions to make in either the New World or in Africa. Unlike Burgess, Dunning and Rhodes, they felt a keen sympathy for the Reconstruction experiment in political and social equality.'<sup>21</sup>

W.E.B. DuBois of mixed Negro and French ancestry, was raised in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, a locale with few Negroes. He went south to study at Fisk University but rebelled against the ritual of Jim Crow. He finally entered Harvard and obtained all three degrees there.

DuBois revealed his historiographical attitudes through his writings.

In Black Reconstruction when criticizing the works on Reconstruction by James F. Rhodes, John W. Burgess, and William H. Dunning, whom he felt were surrounded by post-war graduate students from the south, his bitterness is revealed.

"They had been born and reared in the bitterest period of Southern race hatred, fear, and contempt. Their instinctive reactions were confirmed and encouraged in the best of American Universities. Their scholarship when it regarded black men became deaf, dumb, and blind. The clearest evidence of Negro ability, work, honesty, patience, learning and efficiency became distorted into cunning, brute toil, shrewd evasion, cowardice and imitation—a stupid effort to transcend nature's law."<sup>22</sup>

He added in his final section,

In propaganda against the Negro since emancipation in



this land we have faced one of the most stupendous efforts the world ever saw to discredit human beings: an effort involving universities, history, science, social life, and religion. <sup>23</sup>

DuBois spoke of his motivation for writing of negro history in the preface to The Negro,

The time has come for a complete history of the Negro people. Archaeological research in Africa has just begun, and many sources of information in Arabian, Portugese, and other tongues are not fully at our command and, too, it must be confessed, racial prejudice against darker people is still too strong in so-called civilized centers for judicial appraisalment of the peoples of Africa. Much intensive monographic work in history and science is needed to clear mooted points and quiet the controversialist who mistakes present personal desire for scientific proof. <sup>24</sup>

Of his writing of John Brown, DuBois says he

had considered John Brown from the point of view of the Negro-American rather than as a fanatic who had interrupted the normal course of events in American life and history. <sup>25</sup>

Earlier in the work he had said

Even in the absence of special material the great broad truths are clear, and this book is at once a record of and a tribute to the man who of all Americans has perhaps come nearest to touching the real souls of the black folks. <sup>26</sup>

DuBois considered John Brown as "one of the best things I have done." <sup>27</sup>

In "Black Folk, Then and Now-An Essay in the History and Sociology of the Negro Race," DuBois again stated his concept of his motivation and its influence upon his works.

I do not for a moment doubt that my Negro descent and narrow group culture have in many cases predisposed me to interpret my facts too favorably for my race; but there is little danger of misleading here for the champions of white folks are legion. The Negro has long been the crown of history; the football of anthology; and the slave of industry. I am trying to show here why these attitudes can no longer be maintained. I realize that the truth of history lies not in the mouth of partisans but in the calm science that sets between. Her cause I seek to serve and whenever I fail, I am at least paying truth the respect of earnest effort. <sup>28</sup>



Charles H. Wesley comments on DuBois,

"DuBois found the Negro an average and ordinary American and a human being faced with pressures created by the masters of his environment against which he was struggling in vain, but to him the struggle was worth it. He admitted his pro-Negro premises and proceeded to prove them. He was for Negroes in history, as so many others were against them. DuBois knew that a people must believe in themselves, for, as he said, no people who did not had "written its name in history."<sup>29</sup>

DuBois has given illustration of those characteristics which have primarily classified him in this Middle Class himself. These characteristics: bitterness, motivation, the theory of causality and a focal interest upon the Negro himself are then seen by Charles Wesley, another Middle School historian, in the light of the Middle School Attitudes.

#### Carter G. Woodson

Dr. Carter G. Woodson was born in Virginia in 1875 the son of ex-slaves. He was educated at home and worked in a coal mine in West Virginia for several years until he could enter high school and the University of Chicago and also Berea College in Kentucky. He received his first two degrees from the University of Chicago and went on to obtain his doctorate from Harvard. Harvey Wish says of his dedication in the fight for racial equality which filled his life

"He gave up a deanship at Howard University to devote the rest of his life (except for teaching at a Washington High School) to the promotion of Negro history by amateurs as well as professionals. In 1915 he established the Association for the study of Negro Life and History, which introduced Negro History Week. Most important he founded The Journal of Negro History, with an editorial board of scholars and literary contributors drawn from both races. Woodson urged historians to search for the historical role that negroes had played in freeing themselves and in shaping their own destiny. He helped to raise the status of Negro historical studies to a high professional level. Not least among his intensive activities was the sponsorship of a special outlet for books about the Negro, the Associated Publishers."<sup>30</sup>

Wish goes on to discuss Woodson's attitude toward U. B. Phillip's author of the classic on slavery, American Negro Slavery.

'Dr. Woodson emphasized his dislike for Phillip's American Negro Slavery by reviewing adversely not only for the Mississippi Valley Historical Review but also this time in an unsigned review-for his own Journal of Negro History. While he conceded that the book was better than most



histories of slavery (at least in the extent of subject matter), he thought it was primarily an economic treatise concerned only with the Negro as property and definitely biased. He commented upon Phillip's 'inability to fathom the Negro mind' and his tendency to emphasize the kindly and the contented slave.<sup>31</sup>

A review of Phillip's works in 1963 in the Journal of Negro History went back to the same review mentioned by Wish,

Carter G. Woodson, former editor of the Journal of Negro History was one of the few early critics of Phillip's first major writing on slavery, American Negro Slavery (1918). An unsigned review in this journal which Dr. Woodson probably wrote stated that a major defect of the book was a "failure to understand what the Negroes have thought and felt and done..."<sup>32</sup>

Woodson's pervading efforts were always towards the expansion of recognition and knowledge of Negro achievements, to this end he wrote a textbook for the use in upper grades, high school or the general reader. Thorpe says of it

"The Negro in Our History, went through nineteen editions. First published in 1922, the work was in its fourth edition by 1927. Until his death it was constantly revised and enlarged to keep it up to date, and was unquestionably the best textbook on the subject until the appearance in 1948 of John Hope Franklin's From Slavery to Freedom."<sup>33</sup>

In 1962 a new issue of The Negro in Our History was published by Associated Publishers having been revised and updated by Charles H. Wesley. The Journal of Negro History reviewed this new edition concluding,

....these two Harvard-trained historians complement each other. Woodson is at his best as a narrator, enlivening his pages with dramatic episodes and thumb-nail sketches of important persons, whereas Wesley is without peer in interpretation, giving the crowded events of recent years a touch of illumination born of reflection wedded to insight. Alain Locke speaks of it as belonging "to that class of books that have brought about a revolution of mind."<sup>34</sup>

Woodson failed to present the negative aspects of the colored in the United States. His belief was that the Negro must be re-educated to an increased appreciation of the race's past. Although he kept history correct as far as facts are concerned he failed to be objective in two facets. First he slanted his discoveries to reveal not the whole truth but rather a favorable past for the Afro-American people. Secondly his historical literature is frequently interrupted to draw moral conclusions. Woodson's style itself has been referred to as "not impressive"<sup>35</sup> and "cramped and slovenly."<sup>36</sup> However for all these deficiencies Carter Woodson towers in the field of Negro Historiography.



Thorpe says of him,

Woodson's pioneer efforts in studying the history of the race contributed tremendously to the coming into being of a new area for historical research and study. 37

John G. Van Deusen in The Black Man in White America says "Dr. Woodson has probably done more than any single person to rescue Negro history from oblivion." 38

Charles H. Wesley

Charles H. Wesley is a member of the Middle Group because of the extremely prominent role he has played and is continuing to play in the development of Negro Historiography and because his philosophy of history follows closely that of Woodson and DuBois. Wish in referring to him says,

Among the gifted young Negro historians was the Fisk-Yale-Harvard educated Dr. Charles H. Wesley of Howard, later President of Central State College at Wilberforce, Ohio. Like many talented Negroes, such as those of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's, he joined Dr. Woodson in calling for greater attention to the role of Africa in history and a more intimate interpretation of the Negro's past. His Collapse of the Confederacy (1937) unlike so many histories by Negroes, did not focus upon slavery alone but dealt with the entire Southern society and argued that the Confederacy lost the war because of weakness in morale rather than a shortage of weapons and men. 39

In October 1965 the Journal of Negro History reviewed Wesley's latest work, Neglected History: Essays in Negro-American History by a College President, stating

"This volume is a two-fold contribution to history describing the manner in which history is written (or more properly not written), and supplying historical information hitherto unearthed. .... Wesley points out that the kind of history generally taught in the schools can have no "lasting value for youth of color, (nor) create the Promethean fire which has motivated nations and peoples to greatness." 40

Wesley an intimate co-worker of Woodson's did not believe in "race history" but rather worked to bring about a revision of American History to recognize the contributions of the Negro.

Wesley himself speaks of his overriding belief in the importance of the Negro in history for all historians



"Here then is the challenge to American scholars, Negro and White, for the days of race propoganda continue.... it is imperative that we study again the capacity of races. Historians of Negro people should direct attention to Africa and the Africans. These African people should be rescued from oblivion and the belief in their savagery, barbarism and inferiority."<sup>41</sup>

### Conclusion

Thorpe says of this period of the Middle School movement,

"In some respects the 1900-1930 period was the most significant epoch of organizing which the Negro has had. Not only did Woodson launch his successful movement in this period, but scores of new businesses, newspapers, churches, schools, and Urban League and NAACP attest to this fact. In these formative years individual leaders stood out as giants. Their efforts and utterances indicate they shared not only the uncertainty but the heady optimism of the Progressive Movement and the "Roaring Twenties."<sup>42</sup>

### The New School

Today a new type of Negro historian is predominant. These historians when considered by the standards of the Social Science Research Council are to be respected as proficient historiographers.

Their critical and constructive intellectual processes are more objective, less bitter, motivated less through a crusading spirit than a desire for real historical knowledge and their research and documentation is far more thorough and scientific. Thus the synthesis in their historical work which has resulted is far superior in quality to that produced before.

As a result of the improvement of their intellectual process the secondary historical literature which has arisen from this school is more refined, less prolific perhaps, but more varied, not exclusively preoccupied with their race but rather entering into other fields of historical study.

These men have a far better grasp of the social sciences than did the members of the preceding groups. Their understanding of causality in history has deepened over their predecessors. As a result their knowledge of the history and critique of history has become respectable in this field of study.

### John Hope Franklin

In the school of New Negro Historians, John Hope Franklin is perhaps the most prominent as a scholar in Negro history. Thorpe says in reference to him:



One of the more able young members of the New School of Negro Historians is John Hope Franklin. Dr. Franklin is the author of what is probably the best college textbook on Negro History.<sup>43</sup>

Wish summarizes his contributions deeming him,

'.....a thoughtful, soft-spoken scholar who reflected the temperateness of the younger generation without sacrificing the activist Negro.'

and continuing,

'His book, The Free Negro in North Carolina (1943) grew out of his dissertation and won very favorable notice; and his From Slavery to Freedom (1947) easily became the best textbook in the field because of its balance, thoroughness, and accuracy. Like Wesley (and some Negro novelists as well), he turned to a general picture of Southern Society in The Militant South, 1800-1861 (1956) .....Dr. Franklin's appointment to the history Chairmanship of Brooklyn College, a large and outstanding city college in New York City, was an event in the history of racial integration.'<sup>44</sup>

In 1957 John Hope Franklin defined Negro History as consisting of

the overt actions of Negroes and America's treatment of Negroes including the impact of forces and events affecting the lives of negroes in countless ways.'<sup>45</sup>

His attitude toward Afro-American history is not one of narrow interpretation of moralistically based, but rather open to the consideration of numberless influences and facets.

### The Negro Historiographer

The Negro has throughout American History continually improved as his own Historiographer. The products of his efforts have varied in form and content but have followed many similar patterns.

The Negro Historiographer has generally written a social history. He has depicted the sufferings of his race. Throughout his works a lack of optimism and hope can be seen. His intense lack of self-confidence is a strain apparent in his works. This man did not feel respected or accepted. When he wrote he was defensive, his works were not well rounded and ethnocentrism was the predominant interest. The Negro historiographer did not search for historical law, he had faith in the moral law. He did not counsel violence for progress, his acceptance of American tradition and society, his love of liberty and democracy fostered his overriding confidence in the ability of education and science to raise his people. This man is influenced (or not influenced) by a limited understanding of causality and a lack of concern for political science. He will not compromise his stands. As for the historical literature which he has produced, it has been almost



exclusively on Negro History. Loggins says "little of any literary value has been produced by the American Negro....which is not related to racial wretchedness." However though this man is preoccupied with his race and slavery, he has produced few definitive studies.

The Historiographer of the New School is bringing about a gradual elimination of these faults yet this school has far to go also. However this field is one of great promise and hope. Increased confidence in themselves as historians and a realization of the value of their past as "history" rather than propaganda are the two most important elements for the improvement of Negro Historians to the highest level of Historiography.



## FOOTNOTES

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- 6 Social Science Research Council; Theory and Practice in Historical Study: A Report of the Committee of Historiography, #54. pp. 133-4.
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- 8 Earl E. Thorpe; p. 15.
- 9 Earl E. Thorpe; p. 15-16.
- 10 Earl E. Thorpe; p. 17.
- 11 George Washington Williams; History of the Negro Race in America 1619-1880; pp. v-vi.
- 12 G. W. Williams; p. x.
- 13 J. N. Larned; 3511.
- 14 Vol. IX, The Magazine of American History, (Apr. 1883) p. 299.
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- 17 Earl E. Thorpe; p. 49.
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- 19 Earl E. Thorpe; p. 55.
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- 37 Earl E. Thorpe; p. 108.
- 38 John G. Van Deusen; The Black Man in White America, p. 284.
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- 40 Journal of Negro History, Vol. XLVII (1962) #3.
- 41 Journal of Negro History; Vol XVV (1940) #4.
- 42 Earl E. Thorpe; p. 136.
- 43 Earl E. Thorpe; p. 141.
- 44 Harvey Wish; p. 261.
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