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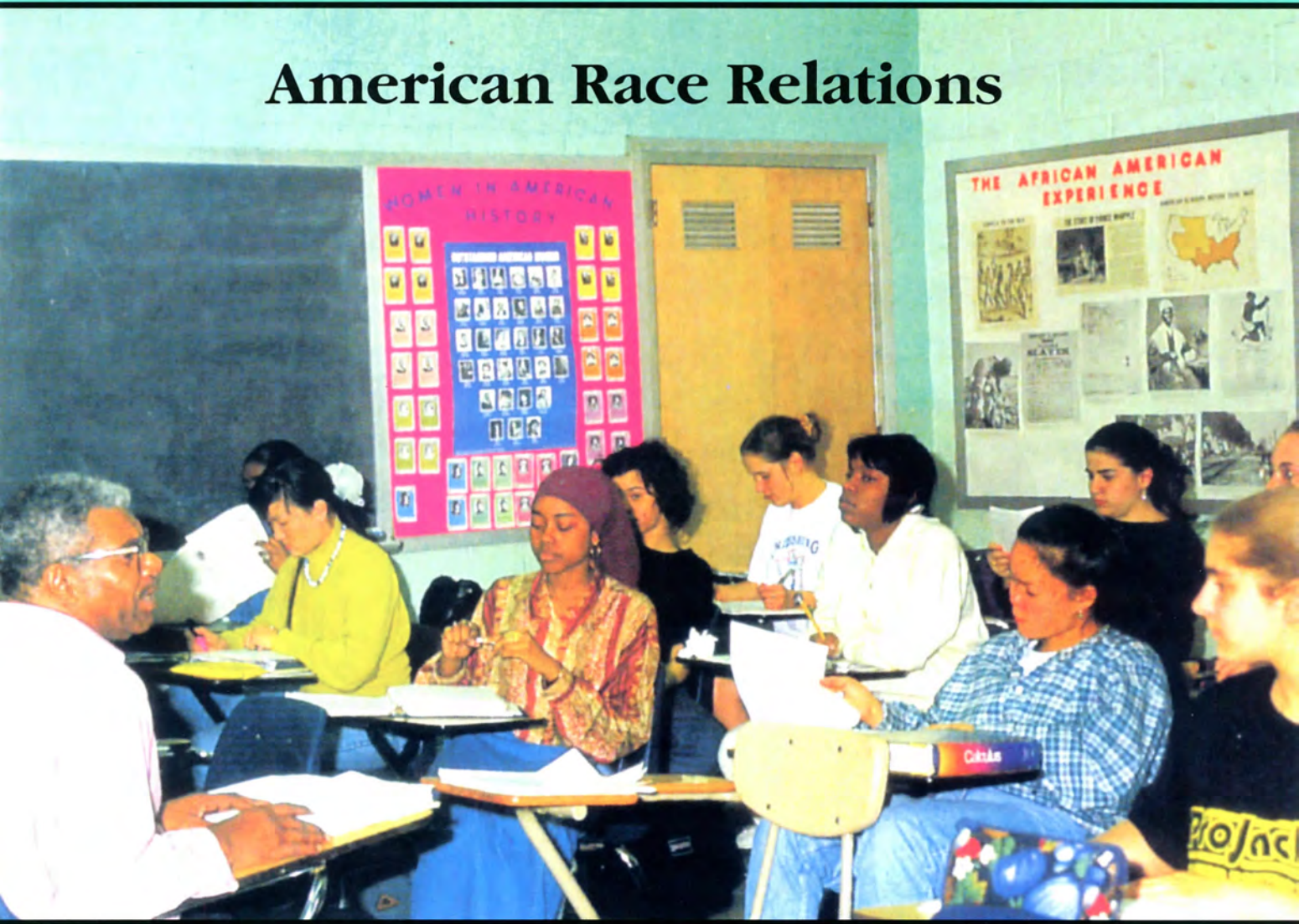
American Race Relations



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Editor's Note

Lutherstadt Wittenberg, June 2000

Dear Readers,

The *American Studies Journal*, founded in 1983 as the *American Studies Newsletter* and published by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Amerikicanische Studien, is currently published under the editorship of the Center for U.S. Studies at the Stiftung Leucorea, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg. The *American Studies Journal* seeks to promote an understanding of the breadth of American history and culture through cross-disciplinary articles, informative essays, book reviews and pedagogical articles.

The journal actively solicits submissions of articles reaching across the academic spectrum. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to the Editor. Submissions are not restricted in length, but should follow the general guidelines of typed, double-spaced, in 12 point courier font and Chicago style endnotes. Please include a copy of the submission on disk as well as a hard copy. Submissions may also be simply e-mailed to the editor.

The journal also seeks reviewers of books in the fields of history, literature, political science, American studies and teaching methodology. Again, book review length is not restricted.

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Native Americans (no. 46)(Winter 2000)
deadline: 1 September 2000
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deadline: 15 January 2001
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deadline: 1 September 2001
Conservatism and the New Right in the U.S. (no. 49)
(Summer 2002)
deadline: 15 January 2002
The University; Anniversary Issue for the University of
Wittenberg (no. 50)(Winter 2002)
deadline: 1 September 2002
Non-Profit Organizations (no. 50)
deadline: 15 January 2003

Once again, the *American Studies Journal* welcomes submissions from teachers and scholars. Submissions may be academic articles on a range of topics within the broad umbrella of American Studies or related to teaching.

J. Kelly Robison
Editor, *American Studies Journal*
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The Construction of Ulrich Bonnell Phillips's Interpretation of Slavery

John David Smith

Among American historians of the first half of the twentieth century, Ulrich Bonnell Phillips (1877-1934) ranked far and away as the leading authority on African-American slavery. In many ways Phillips symbolized the changes that occurred within the historical profession during the Progressive Era.[1]

A native of Georgia, Phillips looked upon his region with affection and sought to defend it from attacks by neoabolitionist historians. In doing so, Phillips was largely responsible for establishing Southern history as a research field. Trained in the "scientific" historical methodology of his day, Phillips broke fresh analytical ground in social and economic history. He ultimately surpassed all other historians of his generation in the appreciation and use of plantation records and other manuscript materials. Similarly, as a conservative on the race question and member of the white Southern intellectual elite, Phillips had few rivals. Although he repeatedly professed "objectivity," Phillips could escape neither the anti-black prejudice of the Jim Crow era nor his inherited perception of blacks and other working class peoples as inferiors. Following in the footsteps of his mentor and friend Frederick Jackson Turner, early in his career Phillips applied Turner's geographic and economic determinism to the study of slavery and the South. By the time of his death in 1934, Phillips had considerably expanded his outlook and had come to view slavery, as well as the entire span of Southern history, as falling within the broad realm of social history.

Phillips was born in 1877 in the West Georgia town of LaGrange, near the Alabama border. His father was of yeoman stock, but his mother, whom Phillips considered his foremost inspiration, had a plantation background. My recent research in local sources—newspapers and archives in Troup County, Georgia—suggests that previous scholars have overstated both the low economic status of Phillips's father, and the elite origins of his mother. Phillips's father was in fact a middle-class merchant and his mother descended from mid-sized planters. [2] As a result, Phillips understood well the tensions and pressures of the petit-bourgeoisie in the New South. From his youth, he identified with and romanticized the elite planter class of the Old South. This bias circumscribed his later interpretations of slavery and the South.[3]

No matter their exact economic status, Phillips's parents were affluent enough to send him to Tulane Preparatory School in New Orleans and the University of Georgia, where he earned an A.B. in 1897, and an A.M. in 1899. While working on the latter degree, Phillips attended the 1898 summer term at the University of Chicago where he took classes with Turner. Researching political parties in antebellum Georgia, Phillips found inspiration in Turner's emphasis on economic determinism and regionalism, his vision of the frontier as a "process," and his insights into American sectionalism. For more than three decades the Turner-Phillips relationship matured into one of mutual admiration.

Phillips completed his education at Columbia University, where he earned his Ph.D. under William Archibald Dunning in 1902. Phillips's dissertation, "Georgia and State Rights," won the Justin Winsor Prize and subsequently was published by the American Historical Association. From 1902-1908 Phillips served on Turner's staff at the University of Wisconsin, where he published widely, including the pathbreaking *History of Transportation in the Eastern Cotton Belt to 1860* (1908) and fifteen articles. In these years Phillips also labored in the cause of Progressive reform. Phillips's early writings dealt with hitherto unexplored economic themes—the unprofitability of black slave labor and slavery's ill effects on the Southern economy.

His reputation soared so quickly that in 1908 Phillips received a professorship at Tulane University. During his four years at Tulane, Phillips continued his on-going task of researching plantation records, census data, and other primary sources. In 1909 he edited *Plantation and Frontier,* a rich two-volume

compendium of excerpts from planters' diaries, travelers' journals, and merchants' account books. Because of his continued scholarly productivity, in 1911 Phillips was lured to the University of Michigan. During his eighteen years at Michigan, Phillips established himself as the foremost student of Southern history. These were his most fruitful years. Based upon a group of manuscripts that he assembled and edited, *The Correspondence of Robert Toombs, Alexander H. Stephens, and Howell Cobb* (1913), Phillips published in the same year his sole contribution to political biography, *The Life of Robert Toombs*. But Phillips's renown as a historian of the South resulted from his two best-known works, *American Negro Slavery* (1918) and *Life and Labor in the Old South* (1929). He also contributed important article-length studies treating comparative systems of slavery, the economics of slavery, and slave crime.

While at Michigan, Phillips began what he often referred to as his "big job"—a three-volume history of the South. Years of research and writing had prepared him for this task. The first volume, *Life and Labor in the Old South*, was so well received that it was awarded a large cash prize from Little, Brown and Company. The volume's success also earned Phillips the year-long Albert Kahn traveling fellowship. This enabled him in 1929-1930 to observe blacks and other laborers in tropical climates throughout the world. Just as Michigan had drawn Phillips away from Tulane, in 1929 Yale University successfully obtained his services as professor of history.

It was Phillips's goal in 1930, upon moving to Yale, to complete the next two volumes of his trilogy. Already showered with accolades—honorary degrees from Columbia and Yale, appointments to editorial boards and commissions, numerous invitations to lecture—Phillips had reached the pinnacle of success in his profession. He planned to devote his last years to the South's political history. Although his early death from throat cancer at age fifty-six forced him to leave his second volume uncompleted, Phillips left a legacy of outstanding scholarship, a corps of devoted students, and the racist caricatures of his prolific pen.[4]

Consideration of Phillips's racial assumptions and Southern origins offers important insights into his writings on the South and slavery. Descended from former slaveholders and reared in the Georgia Piedmont in the 1880s, he grew to manhood sensitive to the criticisms of slavery and the South by Northern, neoabolitionist writers. Phillips was convinced that unlike himself, who had lived and labored among blacks, these historians comprehended neither the South nor its inhabitants. And Phillips remained forever confident that he understood blacks. His prejudice was in fact strengthened by the attitudes of Turner and Dunning towards blacks as well as by the Jim Crow ethos of his adulthood. Phillips subsequently devoted much of his scholarly effort to rewriting the history of the South and slavery from the perspective of white southerners.

Phillips shared with other writers of the Progressive Era, North and South, a stereotyped image of blacks. His background and experiences, living and laboring among blacks in the rural South, convinced him of their inherent inferiority. Phillips professed liking blacks as individuals and was confident that he understood them as a race. But his elitist social outlook and ingrained belief that blacks were humorous, lighthearted, and backward, prevented him in his historical writings and in life from accepting persons of African descent as adults and equals. Phillips's racial aversion toward blacks, then, was both a conscious and an unconscious prejudice. He never doubted the superiority of his race over blacks but he failed to realize how this assumption made him insensitive to the lives of the slaves. As historian Eugene D. Genovese has cogently explained:

> His racism cost . . . [Phillips] dearly and alone accounts for his lapse from greatness as a historian. It blinded him; it inhibited him from developing fully his own extraordinary insights; it prevented him from knowing many things he in fact knew very well.[5]

Indeed, racial slurs abound throughout Phillips's writings. He referred to blacks as "ignorant and unenterprising" workers whose indolence and instability prevented them from organizing their own labor efficiently. Unlike Caucasians, Phillips said, Negroes lacked initiative and had to rely on their imitative faculties to absorb the white man's superior ways. Phillips identified an essential improvidence in blacks as a weakness characteristic of their race. He maintained that blacks lacked "love of work for work's sake" and failed to appreciate "future goods when set over against present exemption from toil." He considered blacks "tremendously inert" and judged them slow to be tamed "to the ways of

civilization"—many retaining their "barbaric" and "savage nature." Phillips described slaves as "stupid and careless," "childlike and credulous," and, in a flagrant example of racism, mentioned "the darkies listening in round-eyed alarm" to tales of the dreaded slave trade. Phillips enjoyed the company of "plantation negroes" because, he said, it was "easy to manage them." He never perceived the black man or woman as an equal, but rather as a "type" of inferior.[6]

Phillips credited African-Americans with possessing only the "civilization" that they acquired under the tutelage of the Anglo-Americans. He recognized few positive inherited African cultural traits among the blacks. This was one of Phillips's basic points most at odds with modern scholarship. Writing in 1909, Phillips explained:

> It is a striking fact of the intellectual history of the American negroes that they have preserved no vestige of tradition regarding the concrete ancestral life in Africa, and likewise the children of the slaves...[have] retained very slight knowledge of their parents. ...Typical negroes are creatures of the moment, with hazy pasts and reckless futures.

Even when Phillips admitted that the blacks' secret benevolent societies "may have had a dim African origin," he qualified his statement by adding that such groups "were doubtless influenced strongly by the Masonic and other orders among the whites." Phillips, then, conceived of blacks neither as creators nor as active participants in shaping their own destinies.[7]

The anti-black, pro-Southern attitude that permeates all of his works had its origins in Phillips's background as a youth growing up in the 1880s in upland Georgia. This section of the Confederacy had been hard hit by Union troops and remembrances of those better days "before the war" were the fabric from which whites fashioned the myth of the "Lost Cause." As a student at the University at Georgia, Phillips read in the histories of James Ford Rhodes and John Bach McMaster accounts of slavery and the Old South that clashed with these elements of his cultural background. Just as he came to view slavery from the perspective of the dominant class, Phillips's reference to "the agony of the so-called Reconstruction" mirrored Dunning's pro-Southern description of the period. According to Phillips, the immediate postwar years were a time of "false reconstruction." He emphasized the importance of white Southerners such as he rewriting his region's past. The most qualified historians were, Phillips said, "men who have inherited Southern traditions." Early in his career, Phillips informed readers of *The Gulf States Historical Magazine* that rich rewards awaited "the patriotic historian who sets forth the clear and convincing truth about the South." In subsequent years he reiterated what became one of his major themes: that Southerners themselves should "steer the course of Southern progress." "The South is a baffling puzzle to virtually all outsiders," Phillips explained in 1923. He was convinced that "it must remain so until insiders give the clues for its solution."[8]

Ulrich Bonnell Phillips (1877-1934)

Ironically, his racial and sectional biases in no way prevented Phillips from becoming one of the leading exemplars of the "scientific" history of his day. These traits may in fact have helped him. His emphasis on historical criticism, "objectivity," and new source materials meshed well with the teachings of the master German historian, Leopold von Ranke—an icon for late nineteenth-century American "scientific" historians.[9] Phillips's writings further adapted the

"scientific" historians' emphasis upon institutional development to the study of Southern history. Much of Phillips's early work traced the evolution of racial adjustment and slavery from their origins in colonial America up through 1860. Yet, as historian Wendell Holmes Stephenson correctly remarked, whenever Phillips referred to "scientific" history he envisioned "a means to an end, not the end itself."[10] In his emphasis on at least two important areas—attention to economic themes and to literary style—Phillips broke with the narrow limits of "scientific" history as practiced by his contemporaries. Still, Phillips shared many of the characteristics of the other "scientific" historians. His influential defense of slavery as a successful system of racial control became the most scholarly statement of the new proslavery argument that triumphed in the Age of Jim Crow.[11]

For example, Phillips championed the plantation system as an economic unit and predicted that its reinstitution, without slavery, would guarantee the New South a social order whereby the whites would remain unquestionably dominant, both economically and socially. Phillips equated the plantation of the Old South with both the modern factory and the social settlement houses of the Progressive Era. In his view the plantation served a vital social function: it created a controlled environment whereby masters and slaves lived in peace and harmony. The plantation, he said, also functioned as a school that trained "ignorant," "unenterprising," "barbaric," "childlike and credulous" Africans in the ways of civilization.[12]

Slavery, according to Phillips, was both an institution separate and apart from, but inextricably linked to, the plantation system. Phillips described slavery as a necessary and successful mode of racial control for the Old South. Repeatedly he described it as a benign, paternalistic institution. The blacks received adequate housing, food, and clothing, he said. Slave laws were enforced only casually and, "except in emergencies," masters rarely sold slaves. The planters' "dominating consideration was not that of great profit," wrote Phillips, "but that of comfortable living in pleasant surroundings, with a consciousness of important duties well-performed." Considerable give and take, Phillips argued, characterized labor relations on the plantation. Masters, out of self-interest and genuine kindness, were benevolent patriarchs. "The slaves," Phillips explained, "had many leverages, and oftentimes... ruled their masters more than the masters ruled them." And life under this supposed "paternalistic despotism" also included an educational component. Phillips concluded that slavery offered "the most efficient method ever devised for the use of stupid labor in agriculture on a large scale."[13]

Despite its importance in ordering Southern society, Phillips nevertheless judged slavery an utter economic failure. It burdened the plantation system by discouraging crop diversification, the establishment of factories, and free speech. He even predicted that had the Civil War not intervened, financial considerations would have led to slavery's disestablishment by some peaceable means. Phillips criticized slavery for what he termed "capitalizing the prospective value of the labor of each workman for the whole of his life." Although varied and flexible as a social system, he considered slavery to be too inelastic and rigid to be profitable as a labor system. It was too costly, Phillips said, locking up and exporting too much scarce capital, thereby retarding industrialization and making the South susceptible to financial crises. Slavery further discouraged the immigration of wage-earning whites into the South and wasted the fertility of the soil. "It was only in special industries," Phillips wrote in 1905, "and only in times of special prosperity, that negro slave labor was of such decided profit as to escape condemnation for its inherent disadvantages." Although the blacks profited from slavery's discipline, Phillips explained, slaves generally were more expensive than hired white laborers would have been.[14]

Phillips refined these themes in *American Negro Slavery*, his magnum opus, and the first systematic analysis of slavery in the entire South. This volume thrust Phillips into the role of the unrivaled student of black slavery of his day. According to pioneer economic historian Philip Alexander Bruce, it was "Not only . . . a work of extraordinary historical value," but, he informed Phillips, "You have presented the facts as they were, in the spirit of a perfectly disinterested historian. The work is a monument of research, . . ." Bruce added, "I venture to say that you have said the final word." The vast majority of contemporary white historians agreed with Bruce's assessment of *American Negro Slavery*.[15]

Without question the book eclipsed in scope and detail prior studies on North American slavery and has influenced virtually all subsequent works on the subject. To be sure, Phillips's chapters on West African

culture, the slave trade, Caribbean slavery, and slavery in the North actually added little to previous scholarship. But his use of the comparative method to examine slavery in the West Indies offered a fresh perspective to American historians. Phillips again pronounced slavery an economic burden retained essentially as a system of police control. He described it as "less a business than a life; it made fewer fortunes than it made men." Phillips pitied the planters whose "heavy capitalization of the control of labor" placed them in a self-defeating economic cycle. "Thus while the slaves had a guarantee of their sustenance, their proprietors, themselves the guarantors, had a guarantee of nothing."[16]

Phillips identified a sense of fellowship between the master and the slave, a relation characterized by "propriety, proportion and cooperation." Through years of living together, Phillips maintained, blacks and whites developed a rapport not between equals, but of dependent unequals. Under slavery the two racial groups became interdependent—the blacks "always within the social mind and conscience of the whites, as the whites in turn were within the mind and conscience of the blacks." Though masters controlled the privileges that the slaves enjoyed, Phillips considered blacks "by no means devoid of influence." Foreshadowing Eugene D. Genovese's early work by a half-century, Phillips interpreted slavery as a labor system "shaped by mutual requirements, concessions and understandings, producing reciprocal codes of conventional morality" and responsibility. The human equation thus served as the linchpin for Phillips's most important thesis, his explication of "plantation paternalism."[17]

In *Life and Labor in the Old South* Phillips promised "sundry changes of emphasis and revisions of judgment." The result was a masterfully written and richly textured analysis of antebellum Southern society. Recalling Turner's earlier emphasis on geography as a determinant in historical development, in *Life and Labor* Phillips sketched the interrelationship of man, climate, and physiography in the Old South. With chapters devoted to its long neglected people—Indians, Latins, yeomen, mountain folk—this book immediately became a landmark social history. Henry Steele Commager spoke for many of his peers when he rated *Life and Labor* "perhaps the most significant contribution to the history of the Old South in this generation."[18]

In spite of such applause, in *Life and Labor* Phillips failed to revise his interpretation of slavery and the Old South to any significant degree. In fact, Phillips's basic earlier argument—the duality of slavery as an economic cancer and a vital mode of racial control—can be traced back to his first writings. Phillips continued, for example, to admit that there were some cruel aspects to slavery, but he emphasized the institution's overall benign and paternalistic qualities. Slavery, Phillips said, "was a curious blend of force and concession, of arbitrary disposal by the master and self-direction by the slave, of tyranny and benevolence, of antipathy and affection." He repeated virtually all of his remarks concerning slave law and slavery's function as a school offering curricula in civilization to contented pupils. Phillips still adhered to his argument that slave owners provided their chattels with adequate food, shelter, and medical care. And Phillips modified neither his view that blacks were inherently inferior nor his belief that they retained few of their African cultural traits upon enslavement. "The bulk of the black personnel," Phillips explained Phillips, "was notoriously uncouth, improvident and inconstant, merely because they were Negroes of the time." The bondsmen lacked ambition, Phillips contended. Masters consequently waged an uphill, futile battle to make them into "full-fledged men." Less detailed, but presented in a more attractive literary style than *American Negro Slavery, Life and Labor* was a general synthesis rather than a monograph. Fewer racial slurs appeared in 1929 than in 1918, but Phillips's overt prejudice remained.[19]

In spite of Phillips's blatant racism and the conservative and reactionary themes that run through his work like a leitmotif, Phillips nevertheless commands respect as a historian of the Old South. His writings reflect the racial and class biases prevalent among leading white intellectuals of his day, not ours. Like all historians, then and now, Phillips too was culture-bound. No less a critic than Kenneth M. Stampp has argued that "in their day" Phillips's writings "were both highly original and decidedly revisionist." "He was about as objective as the rest of us," noted Stampp, "and that's not very much." Indeed, Phillips's peers considered his methodology, especially his use of plantation records, manuscripts, census data, and newspapers pathbreaking. His analysis of economic themes (the profitability of slavery, slave prices, and plantation management expenses) added an entirely new dimension to slave studies. And through all of his work Phillips wrote

candidly, always with style and charm. Not surprisingly, then, for decades—until his work was nudged aside by revisionists in the post-World War II years—Phillips's writings set the standard for historians of slavery. The pervasive interest in Phillips since the 1970s underscores his lasting importance to Southern historiography. When discussing recent scholarship on slavery, historian Willie Lee Rose remarked that while "U.B. Phillips has not arisen from the grave. We have survived the realization that even he may have done some things right."[20]

In the end, Phillips's legacy is two-fold. First, he contributed cogent analyses of slavery and the plantation South, integrating the two as an organic whole. His interpretation of "plantation paternalism" remains his most original and influential contribution. Phillips's vision, however, was blurred by his genteel racism, his condescension toward blacks, his elitism, and his sectional chauvinism. Second, in spite of, or perhaps because of, these flaws, Phillips transcended other Southern historians of his generation in the quality and salience of his writings. Few scholars still have probed the interrelation of race and class in the Old South with the keen, critical insight that Phillips brought to the task. As much as any historian, then, Phillips remained unmistakably the product of his race, class, time, and place.

Notes

1. The standard works on Phillips are John Herbert Roper, *U.B. Phillips: A Southern Mind* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984); Merton L. Dillon, *Ulrich Bonnell Phillips: Historian of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985); and John David Smith and John C. Inscoe, eds., *Ulrich Bonnell Phillips: A Southern Historian and His Critics* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1990).

2. See, for example, "A.R. Phillips," *LaGrange Reporter*, September 16, 1880; "Gone to Texas," ibid., January 12, 1882; Will of Robert M. Young, April 19, 1878, Will Book B, Troup County, Georgia, 422-424.

3. On Phillips and the construction of myths about slavery and the Old South, see Mark C. Smith, "Southern History and Myths: Ulrich Bonnell Phillips Reconsidered," *Journal of the American Studies Association of Texas*, 16 (1985): 9-13.

4. For analyses of many aspects of Phillips's professional life, see John David Smith, *Slavery, Race, and American History: Historical Conflict, Trends, and Method, 1866-1953* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999).

5. Genovese, "Ulrich Bonnell Phillips & His Critics," Foreword to Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), viii.

6. Ullrich Bonnell Phillips, "The Economics of the Plantation," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 2 (July, 1903): 231, 233; idem, "Conservatism and Progress in the Cotton Belt," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 3 (January, 1904): 6, 8; idem, "The Plantation as a Civilizing Factor," *Sewanee Review*, 12 (July, 1904): 257; idem, "The Economic Cost of Slaveholding in the Cotton Belt," *Political Science Quarterly*, 20 (June, 1905): 270; idem, "The Origin and Growth of the Southern Black Belts," *American Historical Review*, 11 (July, 1906): 808; idem, "The Slave Labor Problem in the Charleston District," *Political Science Quarterly*, 22 (September, 1907): 418, 425, 429; idem, *A History of Transportation in the Eastern Cotton Belt to 1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908), 25; idem, "Racial Problems, Adjustments and Disturbances," in *The South in the Building of the Nation* (13 vols.; Richmond: Southern Historical Publication Society), 4:223, 224; idem, "The Plantation Product of Men," *Proceedings of the Second Annual Session of the Georgia Historical Association* (Atlanta: Georgia Historical Association, 1918), 13.

7. Phillips, "Racial Problems, Adjustments and Disturbances," 218; idem, *American Negro Slavery; A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime* (New York: D. Appleton Company, 1918), 450.

8. Ullrich Bonnell Phillips, "Black-Belt Labor, Slave and Free," in Publications of the University of Virginia, Phelps-Stokes Fellowship Papers, *Lectures and Addresses on the Negro in the South* (Charlottesville: Michie Company, 1915), 35; idem, "The Decadence of the Plantation System," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 35 (January, 1910): 40; idem, "The Economic Cost of Slaveholding in the Cotton Belt," 257; idem, "Historical Notes of Milledgeville, Ga.," *The Gulf States Historical Magazine*, 2 (November, 1903): 171; Phillips to William W. Ball, November 28, 1923, W.W. Ball Papers, Duke University.

9. On "scientific" history and "objectivity" in this period, see Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

10. Stephenson, *The South Lives in History: Southern Historians and Their Legacy*

An Old Creed for the New South: Proslavery Ideology and Historiography, 1865-1918 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), chapter 8.

12. Phillips, "The Economics of the Plantation," 231; idem, "Racial Problems, Adjustments and Disturbances," 226, 223.

13. Phillips, "The Slave Labor Problem in the Charleston District," 437; idem, "Black-Belt Labor, Slave and Free," 30; idem, "Racial Problems, Adjustments and Disturbances," 200; idem, "The Origin and Growth of the Southern Black Belts," 805.

14. Phillips, "Conservatism and Progress in the Cotton Belt," 8; idem, "The Economic Cost of Slaveholding in the Cotton Belt," 261, 260.

15. Bruce to Phillips, March 11, 1919, Ulrich B. Phillips Collection, Yale University.

16. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, 401, 397.

17. Ibid., 296, 327. Historians continue to undervalue Phillips's influence on Genovese and for launching the modern debate over "plantation paternalism." See, most recently, Mark M. Smith, *Debating Slavery: Economy and Society in the Antebellum American South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 20-21.

18. Phillips, *Life and Labor in the Old South* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1929), vii; Commager in *New York Herald Tribune*, May 19, 1929.

19. Phillips, *Life and Labor in the Old South*, 217, 200.

20. Stampp, "Slavery—the Historian's Burden," in Harry P. Owens, ed., *Perspectives and Irony in American Slavery* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1976), 160; Stampp, comment at Southern Historical Association annual meeting, November 5, 1982, Memphis, Tennessee; Rose, "The New Slave Studies: An Old Reaction or a New Maturity?" in William W. Freehling, ed., *Slavery and Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 200.

John David Smith is Graduate Alumni Distinguished Professor of History at North Carolina State University and was Fulbright Professor of American Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich, in 1998/99. His latest book is *Black Judas: William Hannibal Thomas and The American Negro* (University of Georgia Press, 2000).

Disfranchisement: The Political System of White Supremacy

Manfred Berg

In his classic study *Southern Politics in State and Nation,* published in 1949, political scientist V.O. Key reflected on the multiple meanings of white supremacy, a key concept of southern racism.

> White supremacy, Key observed, is a watchword of no exact meaning. Broadly it includes the practice of residential segregation, the custom of social separation, the admonition of sexual isolation, the reality of economic subordination, and the habit of adherence to the caste etiquette of black deference toward white. When applied to politics white supremacy in its most extreme formulation simply means that no Negro should vote.[1]

In this article, I will focus on the political dimension of white supremacy. More precisely, I will introduce and discuss the principal ways and means by which southern blacks were denied their constitutional right to vote from the late 19th-century until the late 1960s when the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 put an end to most of these practices.

In order to understand how white supremacists succeeded in disfranchising black people, we first need to look into the legal and historical background of suffrage in the United States. Since the constitutional convention of 1787 could not agree on uniform standards for the right to vote, suffrage qualifications were largely left for the individual states to decide. Because the vast majority of black people in America were slaves, they obviously could not vote. In the wake of the revolution some states had granted equal suffrage to the small minority of free blacks, but by the beginning of the 19th-century the tide had already turned. While universal suffrage became the standard for all white males twenty-one years of age and older by the mid-century, free blacks were excluded almost everywhere. On the eve of the Civil War, only five New England states allowed blacks to vote on an equal footing with whites. In 1857, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that blacks could not be American citizens, because they were

> regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect. [2]

After the Civil War, the legal situation of African Americans changed dramatically. In 1865, the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constititution abolished slavery and in 1868 the 14th Amendment made the former slaves U.S. citizens entitled to the equal protection of the laws. The 15th Amendment of 1870 reads,

> The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

It is important to note that this amendment did not introduce universal suffrage for black men. All it did was to prohibit the states from using certain characteristics which only applied to African Americans as a legal basis for excluding them from the ballot box. The Amendment represented a compromise between "radicals," who believed that black people in the South needed the vote to protect themselves against racial discrimination and to prevent the political resurgence of rebellion, and "moderates" who argued that the states should retain the right to determine the qualifications for voting and should only be obliged to adminster these qualifications in an impartial and non-discriminatory manner.[3] As the Amendment came to be widely understood in the decades following the end of Reconstruction, it meant that the states could not use race as a suffrage restriction, but were free to enact all kinds of other qualifications as long as these were "color-blind" on their face.

In the 1880s and 1890s, the old Southern elites successively regained political power. When conflict erupted between the white oligarchy and the lower classes during the populist revolt of the 1890s and

the specter of an interracial alliance of black and white farmers emerged, radical racism became the ideological glue to reunify the white South. Blacks were blamed for the violence,turmoil, and corruption in Southern politics and made the "scapegoat in the reconciliation of estranged white classes and the reunion of the Solid South," as historian C. Vann Woodward put it in his classic *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*.[4] In order to restore order and to ensure "white supremacy," blacks had to be excluded from voting. Starting in Mississippi in 1890, the Southern states began passing a variety of new laws to accomplish this end and by 1910 the disfranchisement of African Americans in the South was near complete.[5] With black voters effectively excluded, the remnants of the Republican Party withered away. All white Southerners had to rally under the roof of the Democratic Party which established a de facto monopoly within the so-called Solid South. Thus, a political system was created which was dominated by conservative elites and racist demagogues and which differed markedly from the rest of the United States.

The challenge to the white supremacists was to disfranchise black voters without violating the letter of the 14th and 15th Amendments. They had to devise ostensibly "color-blind" restrictions which would nevertheless apply to large numbers of black voters. To maintain a semblance of equal treatment, a few blacks were admitted to the polls under these laws, while some whites were excluded. For many years such tokenism served its purpose. As long as Southern voting laws did not explicitly discriminate by race and a few blacks were permitted to vote, the courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court, would accept them in good faith.[6]

In nullifying the 15th Amendment, the disfranchisers showed considerable ingenuity. Three major types can be distinguished: (1) legal suffrage restrictions; (2) manipulations of the electoral process; (3) repression.

Legal Suffrage Restrictions

From the mid-19th-century on, most states required voters to register. Prior to an election, voters had to appear before an official registrar and prove that they were in fact qualified voters. While the introduction of voter registration had primarily served the purpose of limiting electoral fraud, the Southern states in the 20th-century made the registration process for black voters into the equivalent of running a gauntlet. Registration dates and hours were wildly irregular and information was deliberately withheld. Registration was only possible at the county seat which meant that rural folks might have to spend a whole day travelling back and forth. Black applicants were often told they had come on the wrong day or were too late. If the time was right, blacks had to stand in line for hours, while white applicants were speedily served. Registrars also helped whites with filling out the long and complicated registration forms, while they used even miniscule errors by blacks as a pretext for refusing them registration. Because the etiquette of white supremacy denied African Americans customary courtesy titles such as "Mr." or "Mrs.", registrars would address them as "Boy," "Girl, " or "Nigger." If blacks remained steadfast and no immediate pretext could be found for denying them registration, they might never receive an official note or would later be told that their papers had been lost.[7] Not surprisingly, such practices effectively deterred many qualified blacks from even trying to register, which white supremacist gladly cited as proof that African Americans did not care about politics.

Those who insisted on registration had to meet a variety of qualifications which were difficult, if not impossible, to meet for most Southern blacks. A crude method to discriminate against African Americans was to privilege descent without explicitly mentioning race—a practice that became known as *grandfather clauses*. When Louisiana made the ability to read and write a suffrage qualification in 1898, it exempted all male persons who had been qualified voters before January 1, 1867, and their sons and grandsons from this requirement.[8] Because in 1866 no blacks had been allowed to vote, only white illiterates could benefit from this clause. The intent and effects of these laws which were also introduced by several other Southern states were so blatantly discriminatory, that in 1915 the Supreme Court could not help striking down the grandfather clause as a violation of the 15th Amendment.[9]

Literacy tests, however, were viewed as a legitimate requirement and also widely used outside the South. According to their protagonists, the ability to participate responsibly in political affairs was predicated upon the ability to read and write.[10] Due to the legacy of slavery and the effects of segregated

and inferior schools, Southern blacks had disproportionately high illiteracy rates—in 1910 37.2% of voting age black males were illiterate compared to 8.9% among whites.[11] Thus, even if administered fairly, literacy tests resulted in the disqualification of large numbers of African Americans.

In order to provide a loophole for white illiterates and to countervail the rising educational levels of the black population, some states introduced so-called *understanding clauses* as an addition to the literacy test which required applicants to give a "reasonable interpretation" of a section of the state or federal constitution, thus granting virtually unlimited discretion to registrars to reject anybody they disliked. It goes without saying that registrars very rarely accepted the interpretations by black registrants as "reasonable." While simple reading and writing tests provided at least a modicum of objectivity, the understanding clauses made literacy tests, as V.O. Key put it, "a fraud and nothing more."[12]

Unlike literacy tests, payment of the *poll tax* as a prerequisite for voting had few defenders outside of Dixie. A form of direct per capita taxation, it had replaced more restrictive property qualificiations for voting at the end of the 18th-century. In the 20th-century, however, only the South still tied the tax to voting. Because the states made no effort to collect the poll tax as a source of revenue, it had developed into a de facto fee for exercising the right to vote. Although the yearly amount of one or two dollars may seem small, it meant a considerable burden to the rural population of the South who owned very little cash. Critics viewed the poll tax as the key instrument of the propertied elites to preserve their political domination and to keep poor blacks and whites down. Opponents of the poll tax estimated that it disfranchised more white than black voters, and called for interracial alliances against this symbol of Southern oligarchy.[13]

Black sharecropper in the South during the Jim Crow era

The simplest and most effective legal device to disfranchise black voters, however, was the so-called *white primary*. Early in the 20th-century primary elections had been introduced throughout the United States in order to break the power of "bosses" and "party machines" and to render the electoral process more democratic. While most non-southern states regulated primary elections by law, the southern states left the conduct of primaries almost entirely to the party organizations[14]. Parties were considered as private associations not bound by the 15th Amendment and perfectly at liberty to limit participation in their primaries to whites. Of course, the alleged "private" status of parties was a mere figleaf to disguise the fact that the states, by giving party organizations a free hand, deliberately disregarded the 15th Amendment. In reality, the Democratic Party had established a quasi monopoly after the Republicans had abandoned the South. The only election that really mattered was the Democratic primary. The subsequent general elections, in which few voters cared to cast their ballots, merely served to ratify its results. From the viewpoint of white supremacists, the white primary represented a panacea. It allowed for disfranchising all blacks and no whites at all without legal complications and hypocrasy. Although the obvious purpose of the white primary was to bypass the U.S. Constitution, it took the lawyers of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) until 1944 to persuade the Supreme Court that the Southern primaries were not a private affair but an integral part of the electoral process covered by the protections of the 15th Amendment.[15]

Manipulations of the Electoral Process

Manipulations of the electoral process have been commonplace throughout American political history and were never confined to racial disfranchisement. However, the guardians of white supremacy have also employed this approach very creatively, preferably when the kind of open suffrage restrictions described above had come under legal and political attack.

The crudest method of electoral manipulation is, of course, *fraud* which has a long and illustrous tradition in U.S. history. During the heyday of "bosses" and "machines" fraud had become a regular

concomitant of elections. Ballot boxes were stolen or "stuffed" with irregular votes. Ineligible voters were herded around polling places, each time casting a ballot. Fraudulent registration rolls resurrected the dead who would then miraculously vote in alphabetical order.[16] In the late 19th-century, the widespread practice of electoral fraud in Southern politics had served as a justification for disfranchising black voters. As long as large numbers of blacks were allowed to vote, white supremacists argued, fraud was necessary to prevent "Negro rule." Therefore "orderly" methods were required, so whites could return to clean and fair elections.[17] While electoral fraud by no means disappeared from the South after African Americans had been excluded, it was no longer needed to neutralize the black "voting bloc" which had simply ceased to exist. Still, some dedicated election officials took pains that not a single black ballot tainted the purity of white politics. For example, when Dr. L. A. Nixon, an African American dentist of El Paso, Texas, had won a court order which admitted him to the Democratic primary, he found his ballot marked with a "C" for "Colored," so it could be thrown out in the counting process.[18]

After it had become more difficult to prevent blacks from registering and voting, white supremacists began concentrating on minimizing the impact of their ballots, a practice which political scientists have termed minority vote dilution.[19] A key strategy to accomplish this goal is the manipulation of electoral districts, the basic unit of representation in the American political system. There are two main varieties of this approach: One is called *malapportionment*, meaning that districts contain grossly unequal numbers of voters. The other is predicated upon tailoring the geographic boundaries of a district in ways that will presumably benefit certain candidates or parties and is known as *gerrymandering*.

Malapportionment is an old problem primarily between rural and urban areas. In 17th-century England, John Locke had already complained about the overrepresentation of the depopulated "rotten boroughs" in Parliament.[20] However, it took the U.S. Supreme Court until 1964 to acknowlegde that legislators represent "people, not trees or acres" and that significant population imbalances between electoral districts violate the constitutional guarantee of equal protection of the laws.[21] While malapportionment is not a racial issue per se, it affected Southern blacks in particular. It was only in the larger cities that blacks could vote in substantial numbers, but Southern cities were seriously disadvantaged in the apportionment of legislative seats because rural interests tended to dominate these states. One example may illustrate the problem: In electing its governor Georgia practiced a so-called county-unit system which assigned electoral votes to counties in a way that grossly distorted the population ratios. Under this system Fulton County, the largest county and the site of Atlanta with a population of 365,000 of which almost 120,000 were blacks, was entitled to only three times the electoral votes which the smallest county with no more than 1,300 residents could claim.[22] Needless to say that its defenders justified the system as necessary for the preservation of white supremacy.

The fine art of gerrymandering is named after Massachusetts governor Elbridge Gerry who in 1812 had created an electoral district allegedly resembling a salamander in order to bolster the prospects of his party. Gerrymandering is not necessarily aimed at diluting the voting power of racial minorities, but well suited for the purpose because the customary residential segregation between black and white voters makes it easy to draw district boundaries along racial lines.[23] The effect of minority vote dilution is achieved in two ways: Either a solid area of black voters which could form a majority if put into one district is split up and spread across several other districts in each of which whites retain a majority. This method is called *cracking*. The other option is *packing* large numbers of black voters into a single district where they may easily elect a candidate by a heavy majority, but do not have a chance to influence the election outcome in other districts. A blatant case of racial gerrymandering occurred, for example, in 1957 in Tuskegee, Alabama, when virtually all black residential areas were carved out of the city limits so whites could retain control of the city council. The racial motivation was so obvious that the U.S. Supreme Court prohibited the scheme under the 15th Amendment.[24] On the other hand, there have never been clear rules for drawing the boundaries of electoral districts and courts have traditionally considered gerrymandering a political issue beyond their jurisdiction.

Another way of diluting the voting strength of African Americans to which many Southern municipalities resorted in the wake of federal Voting Rights Act are so-called *at-large elections*. For example,

if a city council has ten seats, the ten councilors can be elected from ten electoral districts. The candidates with the most votes in their respective districts are the winners—by far the predominant electoral system in the United States.[25] If the districts represent compact neighborhoods, African-American candidates have a good chance of winning in predominantly black districts. In at-large elections, all ten councilors will be elected city-wide. Each voter has ten votes and the ten candidates with the highest number of votes are elected. This means that black candidates can only win, if they receive substantial support from white voters as well—until very recently, this has been virtually unthinkable in most of the South. Just like drawing and apportioning electoral districts, however, at-large elections are not necessarily aimed at minority vote dilution and subject to intricate legal and political controversy.[26]

Repression

As we have seen, the Southern political system offered numerous institutional obstacles which made it extremely difficult for blacks to register and vote and have their ballots counted on an equal footing with white voters. However, to many guardians of white supremacy this was not enough. From their point of view even the attempt by African Americans to register and vote violated the unwritten law that politics was "white folks' business." By asserting their rights as U.S. citizens, blacks symbolically challenged the political and social order of the South. Therefore, white supremacists created a climate of racist repression to "keep the Negro in his place," as Southern vernacular put it.

The most effective way of keeping black people down were *economic reprisals*. The vast majority of African Americans in the rural South were day laborers and sharecroppers who were deadlocked in grinding poverty and entirely without protection against economic pressures. Even the small minority of land-owning farmers—in 1940 just 15% of black farmers in the South owned land[27]—could easily be ruined by cutting off their credit or refusing to buy up their crops. White Supremacists also had no qualms about using hunger as a weapon. When civil rights activists launched a voter registration campaign in Greenwood, Mississippi, in 1962, the county directory terminated the distribution of food to the needy and exposed thousands of black families to near starvation.[28] Those blacks who held jobs in the public sector—for example the black teachers in the segregated schools—could expect to be fired, if they participated in civil rights activities. The economic vulnerability of most blacks posed a serious dilemma for civil rights groups like the NAACP which worked to increase the number of black voters. Basically, they were asking poor and powerless people to risk their livehoods without being able to offer them any meaningful assistance.[29]

Economic reprisals, however, were not the worst form of repression. Since the times of slavery, *intimidation and violence* had been traditional means to ensure white domination. By conservative estimates, 3,250 blacks were lynched in the South between the 1880s and the 1940s.[30] In the rural Deep South, where racial oppression was particularly rigid, even the attempt to register would almost inevitably provoke threats and violence. If "friendly advice" was not enough, the Ku Klux Klan terrorists might burn a cross in front of black people's home or throw firebombs. Numerous activists were murdered, and at times of intense racial conflict, mobs descended on black neighborhoods killing and looting.[31] The perpetrators of these acts had nothing to fear. If they

African American girls and women, Alma Plantation, False River, Louisiana, 1934
Source: Library of Congress, LC7414B, no. N52a

were prosecuted and tried at all, they could count on a swift acquittal by an all-white jury.

In contrast, black activists who worked for civil and political rights faced all kinds of *legal harassment.* Trumped-up charges for traffic violations, obstruction of the authorities, assault, vagrancy, breach of peace et cetera were the order of the day and often resulted in draconian sentences. Such practices were part and parcel of a racist judicial system in which blacks had no chance of a fair trial.[32] Because juries were drawn from the registration lists, African Americans were also excluded from jury service. Needless to add, there were no black judges or prosecutors in the entire South and only very few black lawyers. Legal harassment also put a heavy financial burden on black activists because bail and fines were often excessive and threatened to bankrupt the civil rights groups. When a generation of younger activists began provoking mass arrests in the early 1960s in order to put racist oppression on the spot, NAACP leader Roy Wilkins refused to assume the costs of a strategy that brought more people into jail than names onto the registrations rolls.[33]

For much of the 20th-century, the political system of white supremacy deprived Southern blacks of all meaningful political participation. In 1940, no more than five percent of African American adults in the eleven states of the old Confederacy were registered voters. Due to the tireless efforts of grass-roots activists and a more liberal political climate in the upper and the urban South, this proportion grew to almost 30% in 1960.[34] However, white supremacy did not disappear gradually. In the early 1960s, the African American civil rights movement challenged segregation and disfranchisement head on by nonviolent mass protests and, finally, prodded the federal government into action. In 1964 Congress passed the Civil Rights Act which prohibited racial segregation in the public sphere, and in 1965 the Voting Rights Act put the voter registration and elections in the Deep South under federal supervision and suspended all literacy tests and understanding clauses. To forestall new discriminatory devices, all changes in suffrage and election laws had to be submitted either to the Department of Justice or the federal district court in Washington, D.C., for "preclearance."[35] The poll tax had already been abolished in federal elections through a constitutional amendment in 1964, and in 1966 the Supreme Court also prohibited its use as a prerequisite for voting in state and local elections.[36]

The immediate consequences of these measures were nothing short of spectacular. While in 1964 35% of all eligible Southern blacks had been registered, the number soared to 60% in 1971, the same level of white participation. The change was especially dramatic in Mississippi, by far the most repressive of all Southern states. The proportion of registered black voters skyrocketed from 6.6% in 1964 to 59.4% in 1971.[37] Moreover, the number of black elected officials in the South increased from a mere twenty-five in 1964 to roughly 700 in 1970.[38]

The Voting Rights Act, to be sure, did not eliminate the political system of white supremacy overnight. Intimidation, economic reprisals, and violence continued for some time, especially in the rural Deep South where black voters formed a majority. In general, however, resistance was more sophisticated and concentrated on minority vote dilution through racial gerrymandering and at-large elections.[39] But the legal and political consensus in favor of black voting rights held firm. Through several extensions and new interpretations during the 1970s and 1980s, both Congress and the U.S. Supreme Court made the Voting Rights Act into an effective instrument against minority vote dilution.[40] In fact, following the 1990 census, the Department of Justice directed the Southern States to redraw their congressional districts in a way that resulted in more districts with a majority of African American voters. In the 1992 congressional elections, thirteen new black representatives were elected from these districts.[41]

In response, critics have complained that the creation of electoral districts with black population majorities for the purpose of improving the chances of black candidates amounts to racial gerrymandering in reverse. Since 1993, the U.S. Supreme Court has consistently ruled that drawing bizarre-shaped districts for the sole purpose to ensure a majority of black voters violates the right of all voters to a "color-blind" political process.[42] As a consequence, five black reprentatives from Texas, Georgia and Florida who had been elected in majority-black districts in 1994 had to seek re-election in majority-white districts two years later. Surprisingly, all five of them, including three women with a distinctly liberal reputation, were handily re-elected. While some observers rejoiced that racial polarization was declining and the South approaching a color-blind political process, skeptics argued that without the initial support from a

majority-black district the successful black candidates would never have been able to get into the favorable position of incumbency.[43]

The conflict over minority vote dilution and the creation of majority-black districts should not obscure the fact that the old Southern political system of disfranchisement is now dead and gone. The vast majority of whites have come to respect the right of black citizens to register and vote and have accepted black candidates and interests as legitimate political factors. This is not to say that either racism or racial polarization have altogether disappeared from Southern politics. In the early 1990s, David Duke, a former leader of the Ku Klux Klan, came close to winning races for U.S. senator and governor in Louisiana. Duke was backed by a majority of white voters and could only be defeated by a record turnout of blacks, united with upper-class whites.[44] Moreover, party identification differs markedly between black and white voters. The Republican Party has re-established itself as the party of conservative whites, while most blacks identify with the Democrats and hold more liberal political views.[45] But whatever racial conflict and prejudice have persisted, they are a far cry from the times when the South had locked itself in the ideological cage of white supremacy.

Notes

1. V.O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, new ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 646.

2. Paul Finkelman, *Dred Scott v. Sandford. A Brief History with Documents*, The Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, New York: Bedford Books, 1997), 61. On the successive introduction of universal suffrage for white males see Chilton Williamson, *American Suffrage: From Property to Democracy, 1760-1860* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960).

3. On the genesis of and the contemporary debates over the 15th Amendment see William Gillette, *The Right to Vote: Politics and the Passage of the Fifteenth Amendment*, The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), esp. 52-71; Earl M. Maltz, *Civil Rights, the Constitution, and Congress, 1863-1869* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1990), 121-56, argues that even qualifications with a discriminatory intent behind them were considered as constitutional by the framers of the amendment as long as they were impartially administered.

4. C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. 3rd rev. ed. (New York,Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 82; on the rise of radical racism see Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

5. See J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974).

6. See Williams v. Mississippi, 170 U.S. 213 (1897); Giles v. Harris, 189 U.S. 475 (1903).

7. The habits and practices of Southern registars have been thoroughly documented by the United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Hearings Held in Montgomery, Alabama: Voting* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1959); *1961 United States Commission on Civil Rights Report: Voting*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961); *Hearings Held in Jackson, Miss.: Voting*, vol.1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965); *Voting in Mississippi* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965).

8. See Art. 197, Sect. 5 of the 1898 Louisiana Constitution in William F. Swindler, ed. *Sources and Documents of United States Constitutions* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications Inc., 1973-1988), vol. IV A, 257.

9. Guinn v. United States, 238 U.S. 347 (1915).

10. Edward W. Stevens, *Literacy, Law, and Social Order* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1988); *Report of the President's Commission on Registration and Voting Participation* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1963), 51-59.

11. Jessie Carney Smith, Carrell Peterson Horton, ed. *Historical Statistics of Black America* (New York: Gale Reserach Inc., 1995), vol. I, 667.

12. Key, *Southern Politics*, 576.

13. See the discussion of the poll tax in such classical works as Key, *Southern Politics*, 578-618; Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 20th anniversary ed., (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 481-84; Ralph J. Bunche, *The Political Status of the Negro in the Age of FDR* (University of Chicago Press, 1973), 328-83; National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax, "Poll Tax Fact Sheet," Records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Washington, D.C., Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Part II, Series A, Box 386.

14. Peter H. Argersinger, "Electoral Processes," in *Encyclopedia of American Political History: Studies of the Principal Movement and Ideas*, ed. Jack P. Greene (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1984), vol. II, 506-7.

15. Smith v. Allwright, 321 U.S. 649 (1944). On the legal battle against the white primary see Manfred Berg, *The Ticket to Freedom: Die NAACP und das Wahlrecht der Afro-Amerikaner*, Nordamerikastudien (Frankfurt/M.: Campus, 2000), 161-76, 235-42; Darlene C. Hine, *Black Victory: The Rise and Fall of the White Primary in Texas* (New York: KTO Press, 1979).

16. See the amusing account by former President Jimmy Carter of his first campaign in Georgia. Jimmy Carter, *Turning Point: A Candidate, a State, and a Nation Come of Age* (New York: Times Books, 1992), 74-131.

17. Key, *Southern Politics*, 539-40.

18. See the letter of his lawyer Fred Knollenberg to NAACP secretary Walter White of Sept. 21, 1934, NAACP Records, Part I, Series D, Box 92.

19. For an introduction see Chandler Davidson, ed. *Minority Vote Dilution* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1984).

20. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government: A Critical Edition with an Introduction and Apparatus Criticus*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 390.

21. Reynolds v. Sims, 377 U.S. 533 (1964); Gordon E. Baker, *The Reapportionment Revolution: Representation, Political Power, and the Supreme Court*, Studies in Political Science (New York: Random House, 1966).

22. Henry J. Walker, Jr., "The Georgia County Unit Rule System," in: *Political Parties and Elections in the United States: An Encyclopedia*, ed. L. Sandy Maise, Garland Reference Library of the Social Sciences (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1991), vol. 1, 430. The population figures apply to 1960. See United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Political Participation: A Study of the Participation by Negroes in the Electoral and Political Processes in 10 Southern States since Passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965* (Washington,D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 234-35.

23. Tom A. Kazee, "Gerrymandering," in Maisel, *Political Parties and Elections in the United States*, vol.I, 432-33.

24. Gomillion v. Lightfood, 364 U.S. 339 (1960).

25. Argersinger, "Electoral Processes," 495-95.

26. On the discriminatory use of at-large elections see Political Participation, 35-39; Alexander J Bott, *Handbook of United States Election Laws and Practices: Political Rights* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 204-7.

27. Smith and Horton, *Historical Statistics of Black America*, vol. I, 136.

28. John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, Blacks in the New World, ed. August Meier and John Bracey (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 143-45. Other cases of economic reprisals are documented in: *Political Participation*, 127-31; *Voting in Mississippi*, 31-39.

29. NAACP Records, Part III, Series A, Boxes 230 and 231, "Mississippi Pressure Cases." On the NAACP campaigns to register black voter see Manfred Berg, *The Ticket to Freedom*, 244-74, 341-75.

30. Smith and Horton, *Historical Statistics of Black America*, vol. I, 495. Also see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South, Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930*, Blacks in the New World, ed. August Meier and John Bracey (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

31. In 1920 an entire village was burnt down in Florida and dozens of residents were murdered. See the report of NAACP activist Walter White to congressman Isaac Siegel, December 3, 1920, NAACP Records, Part I, Series C, Box 284. In my book *The Ticket to Freedom*, 260-64, I have documented two cases of murder and violence against NAACP voting rights activists.

32. For the legal harassment against the civil rights activists see United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Hearings Held in Jackson, Miss.: Administration of Justice*, vol. II (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965).

33. See the letter by Wilkins to Ed King, September 1, 1961, NAACP Records, Part III, Series A, Box 214.

34. Steven F. Lawson, *Black Ballots. Voting Rights in the South, 1944-1969*, Contemporary American History Series, ed. William E. Leuchtenburg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 134; Smith and Horton, *Historical Statistics of Black America*, vol. II; 1312-13.

35. See The Voting Rights Act of 1965, in: Howard Ball, Dale Krane, and Thomas P. Lauth, *Compromised Compliance: Implementation of the 1965 Voting Rights Act*, Contributions in Political Science, ed. Bernard K. Johnpoll (Westport,Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1982), 216-36; Chandler Davidson, "The Voting Rights Act: A Brief History," in *Controversies in Minority Voting: The Voting Rights in Act in Perspective*, ed. Bernard Grofman and Chandler Davidson (Washington, D.C: The Brookings Institution, 1992).

36. Harper v. Virginia State Board of Elections, 383 U.S. 663 (1966).

37. See the tables in my *Ticket to Freedom*, 343; Smith and Horton, *Historical Statistics of Black America*, Vol. II, 1312-13.

38. Steven F. Lawson, *Running for Freedom: Civil Rights and Black Politics in America Since 1941* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 126. For a comprehensive account see Chandler Davidson and Bernard Grofman, ed. *Quiet Revolution in the South: The Impact of the Voting Rights Act, 1965-1990* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

39. On the massive resistance against the Voting Rights Act by the Mississippi legislature and authorities see Frank R. Parker, *Black Votes Count: Political Empowerment in Mississippi after 1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 34-77.

40. For details see Davidson, "The Voting Rights Act," 21-51.

41. Katherine Tate, *From Protest to Politics: The New Black Voters in American Elections*, 2 ed. (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1994), 198-200.

42. The first of these rulings was Shaw v. Reno 509, U.S. 630 (1993); for an influential critique of racial gerrymandering in reverse see Abigail M. Thernstrom, *Whose Votes Count? Affirmative Action and Minority Voting Rights* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press), 1987.

43. Michael A. Fletcher, "New Tolerance in the South or Old Power of Incumbency?" *The Washington Post*, November 23, 1996, A1 and A6.

44. Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 463-77.

45. On the return of the two-party-system see Earl Black and Merle Black, *Politics and Society in the South* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1987), 259-316.

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Public Perception of the Past in the American South: A Paradigm Shift

Melton McLaurin

Although African Americans had begun to openly challenge segregation by the end of the Second World War, especially through the increasingly responsive federal judicial and executive branches, Southern whites remained devoted to the system. Only a relatively few white Southerners, primarily intellectuals and academics, were willing to publicly question both segregation and the mythological past that supported it. These white critics created a body of writing that Fred Hobson, a leading scholar of Southern literature, describes as the racial conversion narrative. The work of these writers, including Lillian Smith, Katharine Du Pre Lumpkin, Sarah Patton Boyle, and Willie Morris, lent support to the condemnation of segregation by a postwar generation of black writers, including Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Zora Neal Hurston, and Maya Angelou. The white writers, Hobson observes, had participated in the South's system of segregation and were intimately familiar with the manner in which cultural values, the legal system, and violence were employed to maintain it. For a variety of reasons, including their personal experiences with blacks and a strong Christian faith, these writers underwent a "conversion experience;" they came to see segregation as morally unacceptable and an impediment to the South's cultural and economic development. [1]

A survey of the autobiographical writing of white southerners of the post-World War II era who challenged Jim Crow underscores the degree to which the region's white population clung to segregation and a vision of the past that portrayed the institution as both necessary and desirable to both races. Their work reveals that they were acutely aware of white society's loyalty to the code of segregation and the racist assumptions upon which that code was based. Indeed, so strong was the society's support of the code that almost all the writers who repudiated segregation record a scene or scenes in which they publicly supported it, despite growing misgivings about its morality. Such scenes persist even in the work of writers educated since the Civil Rights Movement, including Tim McLaurin and Melany Neilson.[2] Hobson, too, observes the continuing appeal of the white racial conversion narrative into the 1990s, although he contends that more recent autobiographers have been primarily concerned with issues of class. That writers continue to grapple with the region's racial heritage is hardly surprising, for it must be recognized that even the more recent autobiographers, such as McLaurin and Neilson, individuals now in their forties, personally experienced aspects of both the segregated South and the extreme social turmoil that accompanied its overthrow.[3]

The continuing portrayal of participation in the rituals of segregation by those more recent autobiographers who renounced the system conveys the anger, pain, sadness, and guilt felt by some individual participants. The occasional expression of a sense of guilt for the larger white society found in white autobiography, however, remains an expression of an individual's response to the region's racial heritage and is not indicative of a shift in racial attitudes on the part of the majority of whites. Indeed, the very nature of the racial conversion genre suggests that the writers feel that the larger white society continues to adhere to the racist beliefs that undergirded segregation, even after federal legislation and federal court rulings had destroyed the system itself. Any other position taken by the autobiographers would essentially negate the conversion genre's central theme.

In white Southern autobiography, as in fiction, the past is a powerful presence, and autobiographers reveal a nuanced understanding of how white society employed what came to be an "official" version of the past to justify and support the institution of segregation. Nowhere is this understanding of the past as an integral part of the segregated present better expressed than in one of the earliest of the postwar Southern autobiographies, Katharine Lumpkin's *The Making of a Southerner*. In the first three chapters of her work, and especially in chapter three, entitled "A Child of the Lost Cause," Lumpkin graphically details how, through the support of every

institution of the society in which she came of age, the values and beliefs which upheld segregation were conveyed to and celebrated by the region's white population. Family, school, church, and political party at every turn reinforced the laws that maintained a segregated society, and they did so in large measure by presenting a uniform, and mythologized, version of the region's past.[4]

The mythologized view of Southern history presented a wealthy antebellum planter aristocracy that was morally superior to its northern counterpart. In this view the planter elite benevolently treated slaves who were supplied by greedy, cruel Yankee traders, and the Civil War resulted from Yankee jealousy of the South's success. After four years of gallant resistance, the South's heroic troops were subdued by the numerically superior northern forces, after which the region endured the horrors of Reconstruction and was subjugated to the rule of ignorant, rapacious blacks by a northern Republican party bent upon destroying the South. To save white civilization and the virtue of Southern womanhood, the gallant men of the South organized into paramilitary groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. Using violence only when forced to do so, they overthrew their black and Republican oppressors and re-established the rule of honest, God-fearing whites who continued to look out for the true interest of the region's blacks.

Elements of this Lost Cause mythology can be found in practically every racial conversion narrative penned by white Southerners since World War II, in large part because it was taught to them in the region's schools. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Southern patriotic organizations such as the United Confederate Veterans (UCV), Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), and especially the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), embarked upon a crusade to see that every Southern state adopted history texts that reflected the mythology of the Lost Cause. Under the leadership of such figures as Mildred Lewis Rutherford, Historian-General of the UDC, and Stephen D. Lee, chairman of the UCV's Historical Committee, these organizations were remarkably successful. These same organizations successfully supported efforts to see that monuments to the region's Civil War dead were given a prominent position on the grounds of the South's courthouses, city halls, and state capitols.[5] In addition, three generations of Southern writers, from Joel Chandler Harris to Thomas Dixon to Margaret Mitchell, perfected a literary version of this myth in best sellers that eventually reached a vastly larger national audience through enormously popular motion pictures. *The Birth of a Nation*, released in 1915, was based on Dixon's works *The Klansman* and *The Leopard's Spots*, Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* was filmed in 1939, and *Song of the South*, based on Harris's Uncle Remus tales, reached theaters in 1946. The South had lost the Civil War, but thanks to the literary skills of its writers and the fact that Northern whites shared the same basic racial prejudices, it shaped the nation's views of the region's past and of the place of African Americans in postwar society.[6]

While the Civil Rights Revolution ultimately resulted in incorporating the African-American past in public school curriculums, as well as in motion pictures, television, and other popular culture media, throughout the South generations of whites schooled in the mythologized past continued to determine how the past was celebrated at the community level. Through a variety of voluntary associations—churches, clubs, historical societies—as well as through local governmental bodies, they struggled to preserve a segregated past. Whites incorporated into their version of the mythologized past a justification for and a defense of the violence and political fraud employed by the white supremacist who disenfranchised blacks and enacted segregationist legislation at the turn of the twentieth century. Just as significantly, whites refused to recognize any validity in the black community's quite different collective memory of the segregationist campaigns and prevented the black memory from entering the public discourse of the community or from being memorialized by the region's many historical monuments and markers. This bifurcation of the past, or the creation of segregated pasts, contributed substantially to the racial violence that accompanied desegregation in the 1960s and the rapid growth of the Republican Party in the region during the decades of the 1970s and 1980s.

This generational cultural lag accounts for the fact that only recently have white Southerners begun collectively to question the old Lost Cause mythology and to seek a more inclusive understanding of the past. Numerous events that occurred at locales throughout the South during the 1990s clearly demonstrate that such a shift in perceptions of the collective, public past is now occurring. While the

Even the Bible was cited to justify segregation.

current debate over the flying of the Confederate flag over the South Carolina capitol grabs national headlines and seems to confirm the continued power of the mythologized past, this shift, which represents a paradigm change, is a far more significant story and far more representative of cultural changes within the region.

This paradigm shift can be illustrated by any number of incidents or events. Four are especially noteworthy because they are indicative of broad-based white support for a more objective and inclusive view of the region's racial past. Because they gathered a broad base of support, they differ significantly from the protests of the few white Southern intellectuals who publicly challenged segregation and the mythologized past that supported it immediately following World War II.

In 1994 the Florida legislature addressed one of the state's most violent racial incidents of the twentieth century. Responding to rumors of a black rapist attacking a white woman, in January 1923, a mob of armed whites attacked blacks in their homes at Rosewood, Florida. The embattled blacks defended their homes with deadly accurate gunfire, killing two members of the attacking mob. Over the next two days, reinforced by white men from communities throughout north central Florida, armed mobs attacked and destroyed every black home in Rosewood, killing at least six black men.[8] For 71 years the state of Florida refused to acknowledge what happened at Rosewood or to restore the peace and property to the town and its people. Then in 1990 a pro bono team at Holland and Knight, the state's largest law firm, initiated a successful legal battle on behalf of Rosewood victims and their descendants. In 1994, after the discovery of additional survivors and more than 300 direct descendants, the Florida state legislature offered a delayed apology in the form of a claims bill modeled after the Japanese Reparations Act of 1988, awarding $2.1 million to be divided among the Rosewood survivors.[9]

In 1996 the people of Tulsa, Oklahoma held their first commemorative service for and erected a memorial to those killed in 1921 in one of the nation's worst incidents of racial violence. As with the Rosewood violence, the Tulsa incident resulted from a report of an assault by a black man on a white woman. White mobs, including members of the Ku Klux Klan, burned a 35-block business district in the city's thriving black community known as the "Negro Wall Street of America." Before the governor sent in the National Guard to stop the mayhem, hundreds of homes were destroyed and estimates of the number of blacks killed topped 250. For the next 75 years, Tulsa whites blamed blacks for instigating the riots, while seeking to suppress information about the incident. No memorial was built, and articles about the riot were cut from newspapers kept at the city's library. Prodding from the city's black community led to the 1996 commemorative services held at the Mt. Zion Baptist Church, which was rebuilt after being destroyed by fires that broke out following the riot. Some 1,200 citizens, black and white, participated in the church services, then marched to the site of a new memorial that bears the names of black businesses destroyed in the rioting. Prominent political leaders from Tulsa and Oklahoma attended the ceremonies, including Tulsa's mayor, Susan Savage, and David Boren, president of the University of Oklahoma and former United States Senator.[10]

In 1995 the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution renouncing its racist roots and apologizing for its past defense of slavery. The resolution declared that Convention delegates "unwaveringly denounce racism, in all its forms, as deplorable sin" and "lament and repudiate historic acts of evil such as slavery from which we continue to reap a bitter harvest." The resolution apologized to all African Americans for Southern Baptists "condoning and/or perpetuating individual and systemic racism in our lifetime" and expressed repentance for "racism of which we have been guilty, whether consciously or unconsciously." While Southern Baptists had condemned racism in the past, this was the denomination's first effort to deal with the legacy of slavery. The resolution came

to the convention as the result of a grass-roots movement begun in 1994 that saw a number of Baptist state conventions pass statements of repentance. [11]

In 1998 residents of Wilmington, North Carolina, for the first time publicly commemorated a violent racial event that inaugurated the white supremacy campaign in that state at the end of the nineteenth century and memorialized the African-American victims of that tragedy. On November 10, 1898, an armed mob of whites led by some of Wilmington's most respected and influential citizens destroyed the state's only daily African-American newspaper by burning the building in which it was housed. They then turned their fury and guns on the city's black population, killing at least nine blacks according to the contemporary white press, scores according to the oral tradition within the African-American community. The mob then drove others, perhaps hundreds—men, women and children—from their homes into surrounding lowlands in search of safety. Over the next two days, while Wilmington's black citizens unsuccessfully appealed to the federal government for protection, groups of armed whites forcefully expelled from the city both black and white political and business leaders opposed to Conservative Democratic rule and white supremacy. Armed whites, under the leadership of the city's white elite, used the threat of paramilitary forces to remove from office Wilmington's duly elected, biracial city government, replacing it with representatives of the old elite in what has been called the only successful coup d'etat in the United States.[12]

Wilmington's commemoration resulted from two years of planning by the 1898 Centennial Foundation, a biracial organization composed of representatives of a variety of community institutions, including the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, the local NAACP chapter, black and white congregations of several denominations, the Chamber of Commerce, and the YWCA. The Foundation sponsored a number of events throughout the centennial year, including a series of racial dialogues among integrated "dialogue circles" in churches and homes throughout the community, a series of conferences on means of creating a climate of economic inclusion within the business community, and a series of lectures by prominent scholars on the city's racial history. In October the University of North Carolina at Wilmington hosted a two-day symposium on the 1898 events and their legacy, featuring the nation's leading scholars of the event and the literature it produced. The program also saw the state unveil a highway historical marker for Alex Manly, the black editor who had been expelled from the city and whose press had been destroyed in the 1898 violence. The Foundation's formal commemorative program concluded in November. A corps of volunteer actors and musicians produced a drama based on the events of 1898 in the city's historic playhouse, Thalian Hall, in which a hundred years ago whites had gathered to demand that the city's black population adopt a "White Man's Declaration of Independence." After the play, members of the audience were asked to sign "The People's Declaration of Racial Interdependence," a call drafted by the Foundation for continual efforts to achieve racial equality and economic justice within the community. On the precise centennial anniversary of the riots, November 10, the Foundation sponsored a commemorative ceremony at Thalian Hall featuring the combined choirs of the African-American St. Luke A.M.E. Zion Church and the white First Presbyterian Church, at which the Foundation reaffirmed its commitment to erecting a memorial to those killed in the violence.[13]

Such efforts to acknowledge the oppression and brutality that are central features of the region's racial past have several common characteristics in addition to a broad base of support within a community or institution. Each sought to insure that the African-American view of the past was clearly articulated to a predominately white population. Each included an act of repentance, or an acknowledgement that the African-American community had been harmed by segregation and the racism upon which it was based. Perhaps most significantly for the future of race relations in the region, each included some indication that the white community felt some form of compensation to African Americans was appropriate. While the form of compensation varied from specific monetary payment for specific property lost in the Rosewood case to efforts to create an economic community that would be more inclusive of African Americans in the Wilmington 1898 commemorative events, the willingness to acknowledge the impact of the past upon the current economic position of African Americans within the region represents a historic shift in the attitudes of white Southerners.

Another indication that the white South is now willing to entertain a public representation of the past that includes the African-American perspective is the proliferation of museums and monuments within the region which chronicle the history of the modern Civil Rights Movement. While the South's African-American community initiated this effort to insure that the history of the Civil Rights Movement would neither be forgotten nor rewritten, it was quickly embraced by the "heritage-based" tourism industry. This has resulted in rather surreal, almost schizophrenic, tourism promotional cam-paigns in which the birthplace of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church where segregationists's bombs killed four African-American girls are promoted as assiduously as antebellum mansions, hoop-skirted belles, and Civil War forts and battlefields.

Not surprisingly, two of the most noted institutions which interpret the region's recent racial past are directly linked to the life and work of Martin Luther King, Jr. By far the best funded and influential is the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta. Part of the National Park Service, the King Site is now each year the destination for hundreds of thousands of tourists from within the United States and abroad. The King Site is actually a complex of buildings on Auburn Avenue, in the heart of the middle class African-American community in which King grew up. The complex includes the home in which King was born; King's father's church, Ebenezer Baptist Church; a Fire Station devoted to museum space; a visitors' center; and the APEX Museum, which houses the African American Panoramic Experience. The Historic Site complex also includes the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, a private organization established in 1968 by King's widow, Coretta Scott King, "as a living memorial dedicated to the preservation and advancement of the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for civil and human rights." Both the Center and the Site annually host a variety of special programs and events related to history of the civil rights, in addition to the permanent museum displays.[14]

The National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee, officially opened in 1991, after a decade of grassroots organizational efforts and financial struggle. In 1986 funding to create the museum came through, with the state of Tennessee providing

Martin Luther King's birthplace in Atlanta

$4.4 million, the city $2.2 million, and Shelby County $2.2 million. Run by a private, nonprofit foundation, the Museum is located in the transformed Loraine Motel, the building in which Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, and annually draws more than a hundred thousand tourists to downtown Memphis. Unlike the King National Historic Site, which focuses on the life and work of Dr. King, the National Civil Rights Museum seeks to present a

> comprehensive overview of the civil rights movement in exhibit form...to provide understanding of the civil rights movement and its impact on human rights movements worldwide.

The museum houses more than 10,000 square feet of permanent exhibits and a courtyard for dramatic presentations. In addition to the display of artifacts, the museum employs life-size models of movement leaders, newsreel footage, sound recordings, and displays of documents to capture the attention of visitors. It, too, annually hosts a number of commemorations, events, and celebrations that highlight the triumphs of the civil rights movement.[15]

Located in the heart of Birmingham's African-American community, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute is the focal point of the city's recently developed Civil Rights District, which includes the Institute; the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church; Kelly Ingram Park, where in 1963 the infamous Bull Conner unleashed police dogs on civil rights protestors; the Fourth Avenue Business District; and the Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame, which is housed in the renovated Carver Theater. While run as a private, non-profit organization with a board of directors, the Institute is in fact a private-public sector partnership.

After city voters twice defeated bond issues proposed to obtain construction funds, the city sold property to obtain the monies to construct the thirteen million dollar facility. Birmingham's mayor also serves as an ex officio member of the Board. While the city was obviously motivated by the desires of the African-American community, it also believed that the Institute would become the state's second largest tourists attraction, drawing as many as half a million tourists per year, behind only Huntsville's United States Space and Rocket Center.[16]

Although it contains exhibits on the civil rights struggle elsewhere in Alabama and the South, the Institute focuses on the particularly violent events in Birmingham during the Civil Rights Movement. The Institute tells the story of the movement in the city through the same techniques employed so effectively by the National Civil Rights Museum, the use of life-size figures, audio-visual displays featuring newsreel footage, and arresting artifacts, including a burned-out Freedom Rider bus and a replica of the jail cell in which Martin Luther King wrote his famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." Visitors are ushered through a series of "galleries," arranged chronologically, beginning with a gallery devoted to life in segregated Birmingham and ending with the Human Rights Gallery, which illustrates the impact of the South's Freedom Struggle on the Human Rights movement worldwide. The central exhibit, the Movement Gallery, is devoted to the years from 1955 to 1965. Like the King Historic Site and the National Civil Rights Museum, the Institute sponsors a year-round schedule of special programs, events, and exhibitions designed to portray the past of Birmingham's African-American community. It also houses a growing archival collection devoted primarily to the Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham and Alabama and works with area school systems to provide materials to insure that African-American history is included in the curriculum.[17]

Among the monuments celebrating the region's African-American heritage that have been recently constructed, none is more impressive than Montgomery, Alabama's Civil Rights Memorial. Erected by the Southern Poverty Law Center, the memorial was the idea of Morris Dees, the crusading white attorney who created the Center. The Civil Rights Memorial is located at the Center's entrance, only yards away from the State Capitol, the first Confederate White House, and the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church at which Martin Luther King, Jr. was pastor during the Montgomery bus boycott. Designed by Maya Lin, who also designed the famous Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C., the Memorial honors the 40 individuals killed between 1954 and 1968 while attempting to advance the civil rights cause. Officially dedicated in November 1989, the Memorial has become one of Montgomery's most noted landmarks and most popular tourist attractions, visited by hundreds of thousands annually.

Like the Vietnam Memorial, with which it shares many common traits, the Civil Rights Memorial creates a sacred place in which visitors can contemplate both the meanings of the deaths of the individuals being memorialized and of the Civil Rights Movement. The monument consists of a large circular table of black granite resting on a black granite shaft. On the face of the circular table are carved the names of the 40 individuals killed, each on a line that radiates from the table's center. Also from the center emerges a constant flow of water, which spreads evenly over the table's surface, which is slightly sloped toward its edge. The water on the table's surface acts like the polished granite of the Vietnam Memorial Wall, reflecting the faces of those who circle the table to read the names of the memorialized dead. Like the surface of the wall, the surface of the table invites visitors to trace with their fingers the names on the memorial. To further heighten the sense of the sacred, water also flows down the face of a curved black granite wall behind the table. And as at the wall, visitors speak in hushed tones, or contemplate in silence, and often in tears, the sacrifice the monument represents.[18]

Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama

The emergence of heritage tourism as a potent feature of the South's economy is clearly contributing to the proliferation of memorials and museums that reflect the region's racial history in a manner that includes the African-American perspective. In Alabama, for example, the state's Bureau of Tourism has embraced the notion of commercializing its heritage of racial conflict. In 1996 the Bureau received a federal grant of $1,500,000 to make the fifty-four miles of U.S. Highway 80 between Selma and Montgomery, the route of the 1965 voting rights march that resulted in Selma's infamous Bloody Sunday, into a civil rights memorial, while continuing its efforts to promote Civil War sites. Sites of horrible violence have become places to promote to tourists seeking to understand the brutality and viciousness of events that happened nearly four decades ago. Included are Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge, where in 1965 Sheriff Jim Clark's mounted deputies beat blacks to the ground with Billy clubs, and the spot, now marked by a monument, where Viola Liuzzo was murdered because of her par-ticipation in the voting rights march.[19]

Today Alabamians boast of their heritage-based tourism and the role remembering the Civil Rights Movement plays in promoting it. Jamie Wallace, president of the Selma-Dallas County Chamber of Commerce, noting Selma's ability to attract large numbers of European and Japanese visitors, attributed the region's success to the combination of civil rights sights and a "kinship" the Europeans and Japanese felt "with the plantation era of the old South because it is the closest thing to a European aristocracy." Speaking of what the state had to offer tourists, Aubrey Miller, former director of the Alabama Bureau of Tourism, noted that "...we have the history of the civil rights era. We have the only Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in the World." On another occasion, and in a more philosophical mood, Ms. Miller observed that Alabama's

> history has taught us something, and we in turn have taught the nation some things. We have gone from Civil War to civil rights to civilization. It is a progressive history, and that's what we want to share with our visitors.[20]

Creating a consensus about how the region's tragic and often bloody racial past should be presented publicly will continue to be problematic in a region where, as in the nation, race continues to matter, and to matter significantly. Yet the extent to which the African-American experience, and especially the history of the Civil Rights Movement, has been incorporated in the region's public past within the last decade is truly astonishing. A review of the Web sites of the South's cities, both those maintained by governmental entities and those maintained by private organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, reveals that most Southern cities actively promote heritage tourism that includes the African-American experience.[21]

Indeed, recent events indicate that the battlefront on which the public past is forged may be shifting. While it is evident that African Americans have won their struggle for the inclusion of their perspective in the creation of the public past, it is by no means clear that this perspective can coexist with the romanticized view of the Old South that has for more than a century been a mainstay of white Southern culture and of the region's tourist industry. The recent row over the flying of the Confederate flag above the South Carolina State Capitol, which was injected into the Republican fight for the presidential nomination this year, is but one indication of a cultural war already begun.[22] The battle is joined between those who wish the symbols of the white South, a South that embraced slavery and segregation, to remain and those who do not. It is a war whose battles and skirmishes are reported daily in the newspapers of the region's cities and towns. In Richmond, capital of the Confederacy and the Lost Cause's holy city, the current city council debates the changing of the names of two bridges in a black neighborhood from two Confederate heroes to two civil rights leaders, and a vandal destroys an image of Robert E. Lee on a mural depicting the city's history on a floodwall. In Montgomery, the Alabama Historical Commission struggles to satisfy all constituencies as it restores both the Confederate monument on the grounds of the State Capitol and the Greyhound bus station used by the Freedom Riders. It is a struggle that will continue, for the past is too important to ignore, especially in the South. It is to be hoped that the results of this struggle will be the creation of a public past that encompasses the full complexity of the region's history, with all the ironies and ambiguities, the trials and tragedies, the defeats and victories its people, black and white, have endured.[23]

Notes

1. Fred Hobson, *But Now I See, The White Southern Racial Conversion Narrative* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999).

2. Melton McLaurin, "Rituals of Initiation and Rebellion: Adolescent Responses to Segregation in Autobiography," *Southern Cultures*, 3 (Summer 1997): 5-24.

3. Hobson, *But Now I See*, 120-148

4. Katharine Du Pre Lumpkin, *The Making of a Southerner* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 111-147.

5. Fred Bailey's work on the campaign to see that a Southern version of history was taught in the region's schools is perhaps the most detailed. See his articles "Mildred Lewis Rutherford and the Patrician Cult of the Old South," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, LXXVII (Fall 1994): 1-27; "Free Speech and the 'Lost Cause' in Texas: A Study of Social Control in the New South," *Southern Historical Quarterly* (January, 1994), 452-477; and "The Textbooks of the 'Lost Cause,' Censorship and the Creation of Southern State Histories," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, LXXV (Fall 1991): 507-533.

6. This thesis was first advanced by Paul Buck in Paul Buck, *The Road to Reunion* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1937), 196-307; also see Stanley P. Hirshon, *Farewell to the Bloody Shirt: Northern Republicans and the Southern Negro, 1877-1893* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), especially 143-258. Buck's thesis is updated in Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), which has a perceptive essay on Margaret Mitchell, 241-269. The best work on Margaret Mitchell is Darden A. Pyron, *Southern Daughter: The Life of Margaret Mitchell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); on Dixon, see Raymond A. Cook, *Fire from the Flint: the Amazing Careers Of Thomas Dixon* (Winston-Salem, NC: J. F. Blair, 1968); on Harris see Bruce R. Bickley, *Joel Chandler Harris* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978); also see Jack T. Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie: Tthe South in the American Imagination* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).

7. Melton McLaurin, "The Image of the Negro in Deep South Public School State History Texts," *Phylon*, 32 (Fall 1971): 237-46.

8. For a good brief discussion of the Rosewood racial violence, see Thomas R. Dye, "Rosewood, Florida: The Destruction of an African American Community," *The Historian*, 58 (Spring 1996): 605-23.

9. Eileen Finan, "Delayed Justice: The Rosewood Story," *Human Rights: Journal of the Section of Individual Rights & Responsibilities*, 22 (Spring 1995): 8-11; Eric Morgenthaler, "Big Law Firm Works Free to Seek Justice in 71-Year-Old Case," *Wall Street Journal*, April 4, 1994, A1; Wolfgang Saxon, "Minnie Langley, 83; Sought Recompense for Racist Rampage," *New York Times*, December 19, 1995, B14.

10. "75 Years later, Tulsa Confronts its Race Riot," *New York Times*, May 31, 1996, A8. Also see Jonathan Z. Larsen, "Tulsa Burning," *Civilization*, 4 (February/March 1997): 46; "Oklahoma clears black in deadly 1921 race riot," *New York Times*, October 26, 1996, p.8; and "City of Tulsa, OK, finally recognizes suffering of blacks in 1921 race riot", *Jet*, Vol. 90 (June 17, 1996): 4.

11. "SBC Denounces Racist Past," *Christian Century*, 112 (July 5, 1995): 671. Also see *New York Times*, June 21, 1995, A1.

12. The best works in print on Wilmington's racial violence of 1898 are H. Leon Prather, *We Have Taken a City: Wilmington's Racial Massacre and Coup of 1898* (Rutherford, N. J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984); and David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson, *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). The most complete treatment of the event is Jerome A. McDuffie "Politics in Wilmington and New Hanover County, North Carolina, 1865-1900, the Genesis of a Race Riot," (Ph.D. dissertation, Kent State University, 1979).

13. 1898 Centennial Foundation, *Report on Activities*, Winter, 1998; 1898 Centennial Foundation, *Report on Activities*, Fall, 1998; 1898 Foundation, *Report on Activities*, Spring 1999, all in the 1898 Centennial Foundation Collection, University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

14. Basic information about the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site can be found on the Site's Web site at <http://www.nps.gov/malu>. Also see Lloyd Davis, *History of the King Center: Twenty-Five Year Legacy of Accomplishment* (Atlanta: The King Center, 1990).

15. Basic information about the National Civil Rights Museum can be found at its Web site, <http://www.midsouth.rr.com/civilrights/museum>. For a survey of the history of the museum, see Kenneth R. Adderley, "Monument on the Mississippi: Background, Development, and the Rising Significance of the National Civil Rights Museum," (MA Thesis, University of Memphis, 1997). Also see Lynn Norment, "Memphis Motel Becomes a Shrine," *Ebony*, 47 (April, 1992): 54-59; Michael Honey, "Doing Public History at the National Civil Rights Museum: A Conversation with Juanita Moore," *The Public Historian*, 17 (Winter, 1995): 71; "Honoring the Struggle of a Generation," *History News*, 51 (Fall, 1996): 5.

16. For an excellent survey of the museum's origins, exhibits, and programs see "Civil Rights Institute, A Guide to Its Galleries, History and Mission," *Birmingham News*, November 15. 1992, 1P-39P.

17. The Web site for the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute is <http://www.bcri.bham.al.us>, and contains an overview of the Institute's exhibits and programs. Also see "Civil Rights Institute," *Birmingham News*, November 15, 1992, 1P-37P; and "Signs of Struggle: Civil Rights Museums Keep Track," *Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution*, July 28, 1996, K06.

18. The Web page for the Civil Rights Memorial can be accessed from the Web site of the Southern Poverty Law Center, <http://www.splcenter.org>.

19. "Trail of History, Alabama's Civil Rights Past and Present," *Partners, Magazine of the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama*, reprinted by Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.

20. Ibid.; "Birmingham Forges New Cultural Image," *Birmingham Post Herald*, December 1, 1997; Elizabeth Spaid, "Alabama Faces Up to Its Racial Roots," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 29, 1996, 3.

21. URL addresses for various city Web sites include: For Birmingham, <http://www.areaguides.net/ag/category/C5/Ag0106>, under Entertainment, museums; for Montgomery,<http://montgomery.miningco.com.citiestowns/southeast/montgomery> and <http://www.montgomerychamber.org/Visitor>, under Black Heritage Trail, Civil Rights, and Civil War; for Memphis, <http://www. western tennessee.com>; for Richmond, <http://www.i.richmond.va.us>, under Tourism Highlights undet About Richmond; for Greensboro, <http://www.areaguides.net.org/Category/C5/AG0047>, under Entertainment, museums; <http://www.greensboro.com/sitins>.

22. Coverage of the Confederate Flag issue has been widespread in both the United States and Europe. For examples, see Edward Walsh, "Unflagging Stands on Battle Flag," *Washington Post*, January 13, 2000, A6; Chris Buritt, "Rebel Flag Protest in S. C.," *Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution*, January 18, 2000, A1; "A Clash of Symbols," *Newsweek* 134 (January 24, 2000): 56; "The Trouble with Flags," *The Economist* 354 (January 22, 2000): 36.

23. Carrie Johnson, "Two Bridges Get New Names," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, February 15, 2000, A-1; Carrie Johnson, "Struggling to Tell All Sides Story," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, March 3, 2000, A-1; Mike Hudson, "The War over the War," *Roanoke Times and World News*, February 13, 2000.

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'Brothers' in Arms: Race Relations in the Vietnam War

Petra Feld

There's more than a nation
inside us, as black & white
soldiers touch the same lovers
minutes apart, tasting
each other's breath,
without knowing these rooms
run into each other like tunnels
leading to the underworld.
Yusef Komunyakaa

Komunyakaa, a black Vietnam veteran, captures in his poem the intricacy of racial relations in the Vietnam war. Vietnam, although depicted as a hellish place, is also a place of intimacy. As on the battlefield, black and white soldiers are brought closely together by the Vietnamese, this time by the prostitutes on Saigon's Tu Do Street. The soldiers, despite being united by their common nationality are divided by what is "more than a nation": their race. The tunnels

> are the texture of the race war, the network of devious connections that underlie both the official racial assimilation of 1960s America and the unofficial separation.[1]

American troops in Vietnam came from diverse social backgrounds and belonged to all the ethnic groups American society consisted of. Nevertheless, the social and racial stratification of the forces did not mirror American society as a whole. Due to the relatively easy eligibility of student deferments,

> men from disadvantaged (low income, poorly educated) backgrounds 'were about twice as likely as their better-off peers to serve in the military, go to Vietnam, and see combat'[2]

—Vietnam was 'the working man's war.' It was also 'the black man's war'—the number of African American soldiers was disproportionately high. "The African American soldier has always fought two wars simultaneously—the war against the country's ostensible enemy and the war for respect from his ostensible ally, the white American."[3] The relations between white and black soldiers were often at least difficult if not openly hostile, especially after the assassination of Martin Luther King.

In the Second World War the military was still segregated. Black soldiers served in all-black regiments, mostly in combat support.[4] Three years after the end of the "Good War," on July 30, 1948, President Truman ended segregation in the military and created a committee to ensure "equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin."[5] During the Korean War, most blacks served in integrated units for the first time since the revolutionary wars.[6] While in the civilian world the rule was still 'separate but equal,' the military, for once, was on the forefront of social change.

Supported by Lyndon B. Johnson's vision of the Great Society[7], the civil rights movement increasingly campaigned for equality and desegregation throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In 1954, in the famous case *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka*, the Supreme Court ruled out segregation in schools. One year later, the black seamstress Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat in the white section of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, thus inspiring the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955/1956. Two of the most important victories of the civil rights movement were won in 1964 and 1965 respectively, when the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act[8] were passed.

When the Vietnam war began in 1964, it was regarded as the first serious testcase for the Great Society's desegregational experiment. About 3 million American soldiers were sent to Vietnam between 1964 and 1973. The total percentage of black soldiers serving in Vietnam was about 10% throughout the war. In the first years of the war, from 1965 to 1967, disproportionately great numbers of black soldiers died in combat: the American population as a whole only consisted of about 11% African Americans, but as much as 20% of fatal combat casualties were black, peaking at about 25% in late 1966 and early 1967.

The high percentage of black combat deaths was primarily brought to public attention by leaders of the civil rights movement. In 1967, Martin Luther King broke his former silence about the war in Vietnam and spoke out especially against the negative effects of the war on America's struggle against poverty. King argued that the war swallowed financial resources that were urgently needed to solve problems in America. "The promises of the Great Society have been shot down on the battlefield of Vietnam," King said, and he added in his speech at Riverside Church, New York City, in April 1967, that the American involvement in Vietnam was not only "devastating the hopes of the poor at home," but Black Americans were also "sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinary high proportions relative to the rest of the population." King emphasized the injustice inherent in the treatment of blacks at home and abroad,

> We have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. So we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would never live on the same block in Detroit.[9]

He poignantly added in another speech: "We are willing to make the Negro 100% of a citizen in warfare, but reduce him to 50% of a citizen on American soil."[10] As a result of the mounting pressure and increasing criticism, the Department of Defense reacted and "took steps to readjust force levels in order to achieve an equitable proportion and deployment of Negroes in Vietnam."[11] Towards the end of 1967, the percentage of black casualties had sunk to 13%, and fell to less than 10% in 1970-72. All in all, the percentage of black casualties was 12.5% compared to a general black American population of 11%.[12]

The initially high percentage of black soldiers killed in action is connected to the fact that blacks were overrepresented in elite combat units, especially in airborne and airmobile units. Additionally, many blacks volunteered for hazardous missions. In the early years of the war, they were also three times as likely to reenlist than their white peers. But despite the high motivation of black soldiers, only very few got the opportunity to go to officer candidate school —only 2% of the officers serving in Vietnam were black—or to take higher-paying, non-combat positions. The military regarded most blacks as not qualified enough for other than combat assignments, because black soldiers scored significantly lower than whites on the Armed Forces Qualifying Test.

> These scores account for much of the disproportion. [...] Poor and working-class soldiers, whether black or white, were more likely to be trained for combat than were soldiers economically and educationally more advantaged.

In addition to the results of economic and racial inequalities in civilian society, the military further discriminated against black soldiers by assigning to line units even those who scored high on the test.[13]

Despite the disproportionately high percentage of casualties, in the first years of the war black soldiers were quite satisfied with their situation.

> In 1966 *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report* all published articles painting a rosy picture of interracial camaraderie; the few complaints were ascribed to the usual GI griping.[14]

These articles mentioned the high losses of black soldiers but rather than criticizing the military they focused on the rights of blacks in the integrated army.

> The Negro has found in his nation's most totalitarian society—the military—the greatest degree of functional democracy that this nation has granted to black people,

Ebony magazine commented[15], a view that was initially shared by many of the black soldiers. There was by no means a united opposition against the American involvement in Vietnam. Black soldiers even criticized the outspoken civil war leaders like Stokely Carmichael, Muhammad Ali, and even Martin Luther King, and approved of more moderate opinions expressed by Thurgood Marshall, Edward Brooke, or A. Philip Randolph. For black enlistees—as well as for many white working-class soldiers—enlistment in the military meant an opportunity for upward social mobility. Many also saw it as their duty as Americans to fullfil Kennedy's pledge "to pay any

price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and success of liberty."[16] As one black soldier put it,

> As a black person, there was no problem fightin' the enemy. I knew Americans were prejudiced, were racist and all that, but, basically, I believed in America 'cause I was an American.[17]

Wallace Terry commented that "the Armed Forces seemed to represent the most integrated institution in American Society."[18]

But integration was often achieved at the price of voluntary segregation of black soldiers. In their off-duty time, they would rather seek the company of other blacks and meet in 'soul bars' in Soulville in Saigon or Soul Alley near Tan Son Nhut Air Base. On the bases, they often lived together in all-black hootches and ate separately at all-black tables in the mess halls. Whereas racial problems sometimes surfaced in the rear, they rarely played a role in combat units and during missions,

> The racial incidents didn't happen in the field. Just when we went to the back. It wasn't so much that they were against us. It was just that we felt that we were being taken advantage of 'cause it seemed like more blacks in the field than in the rear. [...] In the field, we had the utmost respect for each other, because when a fire fight is going on and everybody is facing north, you don't want to see nobody looking around south. If you was a member of the Ku Klux Klan, you didn't tell nobody.[19]

On the one hand, the voluntary separation of blacks was partly a reaction against hostile white soldiers, particularly those from the South, who displayed the Confederate flag and listened to country and western music. Richard L. Ford, a member of a LURP team, described one incident,

> In the rear we saw a bunch of rebel flags. They didn't mean nothing by the rebel flag. It was just saying we for the South. It didn't mean that they hated blacks. But after you in the field, your [sic] took the flags very personally.[...] One time we saw these flags in Nha Trang on the MP barracks. They was playing hillbilly music. [...] We just came out the jungles. We dirty, we smelly, hadn't shaved. We just went off. Said, "Y'all the real enemy."[20]

On the other hand, black self-segregation was also an expression of black racial pride.

> In an effort to separate themselves from the white man's army, to repeat its forms with a difference, black soldiers risked violations of the appearance and dress code with Afro haircuts, [...]braided wrist bands, and 'shades' (sunglasses) worn day and night.[21]

Ford recalls the function of those signs,

> Black guys would wear sunglasses, too. We would put on sunglasses walking in the jungle. Think about it, now. It was ridiculous. But we want to show how bad we are.[22]

But besides the occasionally erupting violence between black and white soldiers, largely due to misinterpretations of the other's rhetorical conventions and styles,[23] race relations up to 1968 were such that a reporter of *Time* magazine wrote that "[...] the result of the Viet Nam experience should pay high dividends in reshaping white Americans' attitudes toward social justice and integration."[24]

With the assassination of Martin Luther King on 4 April 1968, race relations changed drastically. Riots broke out in Vietnam as well as in the States. Even if many black soldiers felt that the anti-war movement in the States was largely elitist and morally self-righteous, they were more prepared than ever to listen to those black leaders of the civil rights movement who preached violence rather than adopt peaceful forms of protest. Staff Sergeant Don F. Browne, stationed in Tuy Hoa, remembers his feelings,

John Wayne signs Private First Class Fonsell Wofford's helmet during his visit to the 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines, at Chu Lai...

Source: National Archives (NWDNS-127-N-A187201)

Three Fighting Men. This statue by Frederick Hart as part of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C., depicts a black, a white, and a Hispanic combat soldier.

> When I heard that Martin Luther King was assassinated, my first inclination was to run out and punch the first white guy I saw. [...] A few days after the assassination, some of the white guys got a little sick and tired of seeing Dr. King's picture on the TV screen. [One guy] said, "I wish they'd take that nigger's picture off." [...] we commenced to give him a lesson in when to use that word and when you should not use that word. A physical lesson.[25]

Some whites responded by flying the Confederate flag or by burning crosses in the style of the Ku Klux Klan to intimidate the embittered and angry black troops, thus further widening the gap between whites and blacks.

The strong anti-war stance of important civil rights organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), founded by Martin Luther King in 1956, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), or the influential and radical Black Panther party as well as Muhammad Ali's flat refusal to join the Vietnam war—"Hell, no, I won't go!"—gave many black American soldiers second thoughts about the goals they were fighting for in Vietnam. The following statement is typical for the opinion of many black soldiers at that time,

> We didn't really feel that we were fighting for our country; half the brothers felt it wasn't even our war and were sympathetic with Ho Chi Minh. When I was in the Nam, Muhammad Ali was refusing to take the oath. Our reaction was that we shouldn't have taken it either. We felt that the American Dream didn't really serve us. What we experienced was the American Nightmare. [...] We felt that they put us on the front lines abroad and in the back lines at home. [...] We'd say 'What the fuck are we doing in Vietnam, man? When we get back to the states, we gonna be treated shitty ...anyway.'[26]

By 1969, the change in attitude of the black soldiers was obvious. Now many blacks were draftees, many were linked to the civil rights movement and conscious of the military's discrimination against blacks in terms of decorations, promotion possibilities, and combat assignments. They no longer ignored the insults, cross-burnings, and Confederate flags and tried to unite the black 'brothers' in protest and mutual support. "For black soldiers in Vietnam the enemy was now Charles, a term that could refer either to Charlie (the Viet Cong) or to Chuck (the white man)."[27]

The North Vietnamese Army and the Vietcong were quick to discover the inherent split in the American forces. They attempted to win the black soldiers over by branding the white Americans as the primary foe of colored people all over the world. After the death of Dr. King 'Hanoi Hannah,' the propaganda voice of North Vietnam, addressed the black soldiers,

> Soul brothers, go home. Whitey raping your mothers and your daughters, burning down your homes. What you over here for? This is not your war. The war is a trick of the capitalist empire to get rid of the blacks.[28]

The North Vietnamese also left leaflets in the jungle, saying, "Blacks, get out, it's not your fight," or, "They call us gooks here and they call you niggers over there. You're the same as us. Get out, it's not your fight."[29] After the death of Dr. King, black

soldiers noticed that the Vietcong would primarily shoot to kill white soldiers and let the black soldiers pass unhurt. The propagandistic attempts as well as the growing anti-war movement in the States and in Vietnam lowered morale and raised the doubts among black soldiers that they were fighting on the wrong side of the war. Militant black leaders like Stokely Carmichael went so far as to assure the North Vietnamese of the support of the black troops when he visited Hanoi. Huey Newton even offered to send Black Panthers to fight as revolutionary troops. Nevertheless, these efforts had comparatively little effects since very few cases of desertion and collaboration with the enemy have been proven.

Black soldiers were less prone to racist attitudes toward the Vietnamese than whites. Some felt a certain affiliation towards the Vietnamese as a colored people. Asked by a post-war study to recall their "feelings toward the Vietnamese in general," 48% of black veterans remembered positive feelings, compared to 27% of white veterans. Only 9% of the blacks admitted negative feelings, compared to 32% of white veterans.[30] Some even settled in Southeast Asia after their tour was over. But black soldiers were by no means immune to the typical wartime racism. Dwight D. Williams recalls,

> Yeah, we called the Vietnamese gooks too. Almost everybody took on some racist feelings, no question. When you're in combat you don't really think about the right and wrong of it. They're just the enemy, the bad guys, the gooks. [...] you can even get to hate them. It's like they ain't even human.[31]

In the years of the 'Vietnamization' of the war, from 1968/69 until the final withdrawal of American troops in 1973, "both black soldier and white fought to survive a war they knew they would never win in the conventional sense. And, often, they fought each other."[32] Drug abuse became a major problem, and many units refused to fight when the risks seemed too high. 'Fragging,' the killing of officers who were deemed dangerous by their men, increased sig-nificantly, and morale deteriorated to an extent that in 1971, a military analyst, touring Vietnam, noted,

> By every conceivable indicator, our army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state of approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and noncommissioned officers, drug-ridden and dispirited where not near-mutinous.[33]

Not only the anti-war movement in the United States but also the resistance of GIs in Vietnam was a crucial factor in convincing the American public and its leaders of the necessity to end the war.

After their return to the States, black veterans suffered from the same psychological and physical effects as their white peers. They had to deal with problems stemming from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or from exposure to the highly toxic defoliant Agent Orange. Some black veterans, disillusioned and embittered by their experiences with the white society, joined militant civil rights organizations like the Black Panthers. One veteran stated,

> It was obvious that [the State] wasn't gonna give us anything unless we stood up and were willing to die. They obviously didn't care about us, 'cause they had killed King. [...] I left one war and came back and got into another one. Most of the Panthers then were veterans. [...] We had already fought for the white man in Vietnam. It was clearly his war. If it wasn't, you wouldn't have seen as many Confederate flags as you saw. And the Confederate flags were an insult to any person that's of color on this planet.[34]

Not all veterans, of course, embraced similar extremist views. But even those who tried to re-integrate in American society faced more problems than their white peers. The unemployment rate of black veterans was eight or nine times higher than that of whites.

> [...] what can be said about the dysfunction of Vietnam veterans in general can be doubled in its impact upon most blacks; they hoped to come home to more than they had before; they came home to less.[35]

One year after the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, in fall 1984, an additional memorial was erected opposite of the 'Wall'. Frederick Hart's statue, commonly called *Three Fighting Men*, shows three male soldiers in full combat gear, supposedly returning from the jungle. Their features distinctly characterize one of them as being black,

one white, and one hispanic[36], thus honoring the service of African American troops in Vietnam and signifying that Americans independent of their ethnic origin fought in Vietnam. Wallace Terry's gloomy prediction that "by the year 2000 the African American role in Vietnam will be erased from cultural memory"[37] has not come true, even though the struggle to integrate black war experiences in the public discourse about the Vietnam war is still going on.

Notes

1. Milton J. Bates, *The Wars We Took to Vietnam: Cultural Conflict and Storytelling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 70.

2. Ibid., 91.

3. Ibid., 84.

4. The segregation in the Second World War led to mixed feelings of the black soldiers, "Even in the 'good war' of 1941-1945, black soldiers could not participate without feeling compromised. As with all American wars after the Revolution, it was fought by a Jim Crow army, with a majority of black men being assigned to service rather than combat units. This was a glaring instance of racism in a war fought ostensibly against proponents of racism, and the paradox was not lost on the black GI, especially when he observed German prisoners of war eating in restaurants that were closed to nonwhites." Ibid., 54.

5. Cf. Paul Boyer et al., *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People*, 3rd ed. (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1996), 918f.

6. After the British troops enlisted slaves with the promise of freedom after the war, the colonies were forced to abort the ban on enlistments of black soldiers. About one thousand blacks fought on the side of the loyalists and five thousand with the patriots. For a more detailed account see Bates, *Wars We Took to Vietnam*, 52. A history of black soldiers is provided by Jack D. Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History* (New York: Praeger, 1974).

7. In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson elaborated on his vision of the Great Society. First, he said, "an end to poverty and racial injustice" had to come. "The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents. It is a place where leisure is a welcome chance to build and reflect, not a feared cause of boredom and restlessness. It is a place where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community. It is a place where man can renew contact with nature. It is a place which honors creation for its own sake and for what it adds to the understanding of the race. It is a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods." Boyer, *Enduring Vision*, 972.

8. The Civil Rights Act from 1964 outlawed discrimination in public accomodation, prohibited discrimination in any federally assisted program, banned discrimination in most employment, and enlarged federal powers to protect voting rights and to speed school desegregation. The Voting Rights Act authorized federal examiners to register qualified voters and to suspend the literacy test in all areas where fewer than half the minority residents of voting age where registered. This led to an enormous increase in registration of black voters, especially in the South. Cf. Boyer, *Enduring Vision*, 977-983.

9. All quotes from Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War: American Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993),19f.

10. Ibid.; Martin Luther King was not the first prominent black leader to criticize this imbalance: well-known men like Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali, Adam Clayton Powell, and others spoke out against the war well before King broke his silence.

11. Appy, *Working-Class War*, 20f.

12. Unless otherwise indicated, I get the statistical material from Appy, *Working-Class War*, here 19.

13. Appy, *Working-Class War*, 22. —For an extensive study of the social background of soldiers in Vietnam see 23ff.

14. Bates, *Wars We Took to Vietnam*, 55.

15. Appy, *Working-Class War*, 21.

16. Appy, *Working-Class War*, 65. —For a general analysis of the reasons to enlist see 44ff. "The 1964 NORC survey found that almost twice as many blacks as whites gave self-advancement as their primary motive for enlisting, 37% to 21%, respectively. Such men no doubt had real hope that military training and veterans' benefits might someday bring them significant upward mobility, but even the rudimentary economic security provided in the service was, for a considerable number, black and white, a market improvement over civil life." Ibid., 49.

17. Wallace Terry, ed., *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans* (New York: Random House, 1984), 8. Cf. also "Introduction," xvi.

18. Ibid., xv.

19. Ibid., 40f.

20. Ibid., 40.

21. Bates, *Wars We Took to Vietnam*, 55. —Bates argues, "Yet even as African Americans have assimilated features of white culture and have judged themselves according to its standards, they have simultaneously separated themselves from that culture in virtually every sphere. The pattern of assimilation and separation, the 'repeat-with-a-difference,' is manifest in things as small as African American names, speech, and dress and in things as large as religion, politics, and art." Ibid., 51.

22. Terry, *Bloods*, 38.

23. "Black soldiers complained that white 'chucks' or 'rabbits'—less neutral terms were 'crackers' and 'honkies' - lacked 'soul'; they were emotionally repressed and conventional to the point of being dull. White soldiers complained that black 'brothers' or 'spades' —the hostile terms are well known—were 'showboats,' loud and boastful. Though the two races shared more or less the same language, they had different rhetorical traditions. African Americans were schooled from early childhood in the arts of bragging (for which Muhammad Ali became notorious), signifying (which Geneva Smitherman defines as 'the verbal art of insult in which a speaker humorously puts down, talks about, needles—that is, signifies on—the listener'), and the dirty dozens (insulting someone's mother, often in crudely sexual ways). White soldiers did not understand these conventions, nor did they understand that for black people verbal aggression need not lead to physical aggression. Consequently, in confrontations between black and white soldiers, fighting words sometimes led to fistfights and fistfights to firefights." Bates, *Wars We Took to Vietnam*, 56. For a thorough analysis of the differing styles see Thomas Kochman, *Black and White Styles in Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

24. Quoted from Bates, *Wars We Took to Vietnam*, 56.

25. Terry, *Bloods*, 172.

26. Appy, *Working-Class War*, 224.

27. Bates, *Wars We Took to Vietnam*, p. 60.

28. Terry, *Bloods*, 41f.

29. Appy, *Working-Class War*, 224.

30. Ibid., 224f.

31. Ibid., 225.

32. Terry, *Bloods*, xvi.

33. Appy, *Working-Class War*, 247.

34. Terry, *Bloods*, 13f.

35. Ibid., xvii.

36. The Vietnam Women's Memorial also depicts one of the women with distinctly African-American features. The other figures are whites.

37. Quoted from Bates, *Wars We Took to Vietnam*, 84.

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The Visible Hand of Negrotarians in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man

Amy Carreiro

Historian Harold Cruse argues that African-American history

> is basically a history of the conflict between integrationalist and nationalist forces in politics, economics, and culture, no matter what leaders are involved and what slogans used.[1]

This conflict includes the contributions of white Americans in the movement for racial equality. Ralph Ellison's novel, *Invisible Man*, reflects the frustration of black intellectuals with integration attempts dominated by the "visible hand" or philanthropy of white social reformers.[2] Although Kenny McSweeney and numbers of other critics believe that "*Invisible Man* is essentially a novel of personal development, [and] not politics,"[3] the politics of race relations is a central theme of Ellison's work. Ellison depicts the role of "Negrotarians"[4] in the movement for black social and economic equality as ambiguous and at times patronizing. In doing so, he illustrates the frustration of black intellectuals with white reformers who often dictated the course of racial equality and integration in the decades before the civil rights movement.

Beginning in the 1920s with the Harlem Renaissance and peaking in the 1960s with the civil rights movement, African-American intellectuals questioned the traditional practice of an "unquestioning willingness to do what is required of [black Americans] by others."[5] For some, "others" represented Negrotarians who charted the course of social reform. The prominence of white liberals spurred a number of black writers to deal with the issue of integration in their fiction. Tension between black intellectuals and Negrotarians escalated through the late 1930s and 1940s.

Ellison was not the first black writer to criticize Negrotarians. He was influenced by the writings of both Langston Hughes and Richard Wright. In 1936, Ellison moved to New York City where he first met Hughes who introduced him to Wright later that year.[6] Langston Hughes's *The Ways of White Folks*, Richard Wright's *Native Son*, and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* provide excellent examples of the resentment of black writers. Hughes's *The Ways of White Folks* (1934) is a compilation of short stories that provides a starting point for protest literature by drawing attention to the problematic relationship between white benefactors and black beneficiaries.[7] Like Hughes's *Ways of White Folks*, Ellison's novel depicts the relationship between Negrotarians and African Americans as ambiguous at best and patronizing at worst. Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) reflects the growing disillusionment of black intellectuals with both wealthy humanitarians and the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA). Wright's theme reappears in Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952).[8] Ellison echoes Wright's objection to white social activists, like the CPUSA, who used black civil rights to advance their own political agenda. Like Wright, Ellison emphasizes the blindness of white Americans to racial injustice, poverty, and the lack of educational opportunities for African Americans.[9]

Some black intellectuals believed that the invisibility of African Americans was reinforced by the failure of Negrotarians to recognize their own role in maintaining and promoting racial barriers. The Negrotarians did so by creating a situation in which the success of racial equality and integration became dependent upon their philanthropy. Interracial relationships were sometimes ambiguous because white humanitarian efforts, like the Daltons in Wright's *Native Son* and the Pembertons in Hughes's "Poor Little Black Fellow," often evolved out of a guilty conscience and not genuine concern for racial equality. The relationships were sometimes patronizing because the Negrotarians' liberalism often stifled or dictated the growth of the black beneficiary.

Ellison was also influenced by the personal experiences of other writers. Some black intellectuals who observed the white "visible hand," or humanitarianism, resented its implication of racial

dominance and the Negrotarians. These intellectuals realized that the Negrotarians' humanitarianism sometimes, in effect, created obstacles for integration. Hughes understood this paradox, having himself received financial assistance from white socialites during the Harlem Renaissance. Ellison was also familiar with the results of being a beneficiary of Negrotarian philanthropy. He once remarked to Hughes that "I'm following your formula with success, you know 'be nice to people and let them pay for meals.'"[10] Wright refused this type of patronage and believed that the Harlem Renaissance was cheapened by artists who received support from Negrotarians.[11] As Harold Cruse writes

> there was nothing morally or ethically wrong in accepting patronage at the outset. The problem was, the pattern was adopted as a permanent *modus operandi* in interracial cultural affairs.[12]

Ellison criticizes this "modus operandi" in his novel. His work is an indictment of white humanitarians and their often patronizing attempts at racial equality. Ellison remarked that, while on vacation in 1950, he

> met some white liberals who thought the best way to be friendly was to tell us what it was like to be Negro. [He] got mad at hearing this from people who otherwise seemed very intelligent.[13]

He became outraged by their insensitivity and channeled his frustration into his work in progress, *Invisible Man*. Ellison explained,

> I went upstairs that night feeling that we needed to have this thing out once and for all and get it done with; then we could go on living like people and individuals.[14]

Invisible Man emphasizes the increasing resentment black intellectuals felt toward the "visible hand" of Negrotarians in the struggle for racial equality.

Ellison's criticism of Negrotarians in *Invisible Man* is related through the experiences of the Narrator. Ellison's nameless Narrator finds himself marginalized by white society, including Negrotarians, which view him only as part of a larger cause. Ellison explains in the novel's Prologue that "you're constantly being bumped against by those of poor vision...out of resentment, you begin to bump back."[15] He maintained that he wrote the novel "as a way of dealing with the sheer rhetorical challenge involved in communicating across our barriers of race and religion, class, color, and region."[16] According to Ellison, these

> barriers...were designed, and still function, to prevent what would otherwise have been a more or less natural recognition of the reality of black and white fraternity.[17]

Beginning with the opening scene in *Invisible Man*, at the Battle Royal boxing match and throughout the Narrator's education at a state college for African Americans, the Narrator adheres to interracial protocol. As a child, his grandfather advised him to "overcome 'em with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller 'till they vomit or bust wide open."[18] What the Narrator finds most disturbing about this advice is that his grandfather considered himself a traitor for complying with the social terms imposed by some Negrotarians. Thus, throughout the novel, the Invisible Man finds himself guilt-ridden for accepting accolades and praise from "the most lily-white men in town."[19]

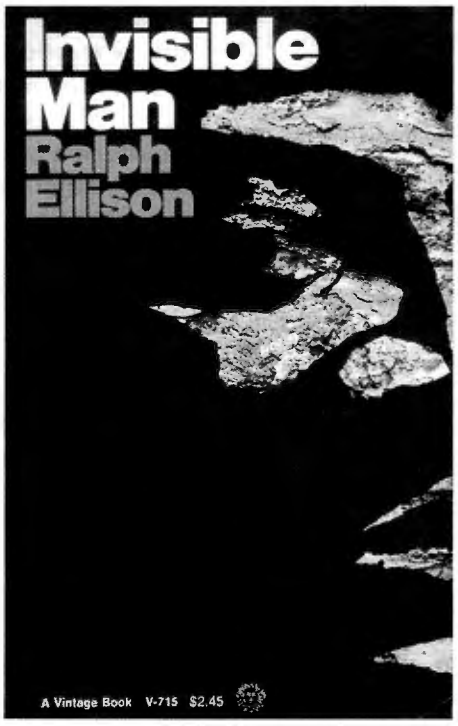
The Narrator's earliest exposure to the ambiguities of white philanthropy occurs following his graduation from high school. He is asked to appear before the local businessmen's club to recite his valedictorian address. However, before giving his speech he must compete in a boxing match with several other young African Americans. To Ellison, the Battle Royal represented the "greenhorn's initiation into a crazy and prejudicial society."[20] The Narrator observes that white humanitarianism is not necessarily free of entanglements.

Ellison explained in an interview for the *Paris Review* that this type of initiation "is a vital part of [the] behavior pattern in the South, which both Negroes and Whites thoughtlessly accept."[21] Ellison explained that "it is a ritual preservation of caste lines, a keeping of taboo...patterns...I did not have to invent."[22] He argued that these "patterns were already there in society so that all I had to do was present them in a broader context of meaning."[23] The Narrator, unlike the Negrotarians, was aware of the ambiguity within this interracial interaction. The Narrator must first entertain the benefactors before receiving their benefits.

During the Battle Royal, the young men are blindfolded with white cloth and sent into the ring to fight each other simultaneously. One critic believes that the blindfolding of the boys forces them to fight a "darkness imposed upon them by the white spectators who represent the whole society."[24] Additionally, the blindfolds prevent the young men from fighting effectively—turning the match into a farce. The boxers must fling their arms aimlessly hoping to land a blow on an unseen target. The spectacle entertains the town fathers, who laugh heartily at the teenage boys whose punches land on their unprotected opponents.

One of the men in attendance is the school superintendent who invited the Narrator. The Narrator recognizes his voice as the administrator yells, "Bring up the shines, gentlemen! Bring up the little shines!"[25] Undeterred throughout the battle, the young man continues to think about his speech. He truly, if foolishly, believes that "only these men can judge my true ability."[26] Following the boxing match, the young Narrator, covered in sweat and blood, recites his speech. During the presentation, he verbally slips by saying "racial social *equality*" instead of "racial social *responsibility*." The men immediately jeer and taunt the Narrator with their laughter. One benefactor asks him to repeat the phrase and then questions, "You weren't being smart, were you, boy? You sure that about 'equality' was a mistake?"[27] The Narrator assures the man that he simply misspoke. Finally, the man informs the student that "We mean to do right by you, but you've got to know your place at all times."[28]

These patronizing sentiments become even more evident when the businessmen give the young man a scholarship to a state college for "blacks only."[29] The Negrotarians' "visible hand" tries to guide black development—but paradoxically has the effect of teaching African Americans a lesson different from the one intended. In this sense, Ellison's Narrator transcends Wright's Bigger Thomas, who never seems to learn that, in race relations, assistance is sometimes a synonym for control.



Title page of Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972).

One of the most important lessons that the Narrator learns at the state college is "the difference between the way things are and the way they're supposed to be" between blacks and whites.[30] He is at first confused by the ambiguity of the benefits bestowed by Negrotarians and the strict limitations their humanitarianism place upon him. The Narrator's confusion puts his college education in jeopardy because he fails to understand the paradoxical situation for both the black intellectual and the white social reformer. Consequently, the Narrator errs in judgment by allowing Mr. Norton, a white New England trustee, to mingle with a black sharecropper and several mentally-unstable black veterans. Norton's fraternization with the sharecropper and veterans ultimately exposes the harsh realities of Norton's and many other Negrotarians' racial thoughtlessness. This becomes the Narrator's true education.

The Narrator is entrusted by the school administration to escort Mr. Norton around the community. The implication is that the student will show the trustee the finer aspects of the area. On a drive through the countryside, Mr. Norton is intrigued by Trueblood, a black sharecropper working in his yard. Mr. Norton asks the Narrator to stop so he can converse with the farmer. Trueblood relates a horrible experience which has tainted his family. He describes to Mr. Norton how he raped and im-pregnated his teenage daughter during a drunken night's sleep. He tells Norton that he was helpless in overcoming his sexual urges and blames his actions, in part, on the alcohol and the family's cramped living quarters which force him to sleep beside both his wife and daughter.

Trueblood and his family are considered among the lowest class in their society. The black community resented him because his incest reinforced the white community's prejudicial stereotypes of the African-American race.[31] The Narrator, with contempt, concludes that he and the college officials "were trying to lift them up and they...did everything possible it seemed to pull us down."[32] Thus, the Trueblood find themselves outcasts in their own community. Ellison's de-

piction of the relationship between the Truebloods and the school is not surprising. The Tuskegee Institute, where Ellison attended college, had a tense relationship with the surrounding community which often felt intimidated by the students, faculty, and administrators.

While the institution scorns the Truebloods, the white community offers assistance to the family. The white community brings the family food, clothes, and firewood. The local sheriff and townspeople protect Trueblood from the college officials, who try to force him out of the county. Similarly, Norton is both intrigued and repulsed upon hearing the circumstances surrounding Trueblood's crime and gives the sharecropper money. Norton's behavior exemplifies racial bias mixed with white guilt. He believes the prevailing prejudicial stereotypes concerning African-American men and sexuality. However, his conscience has trouble rectifying these attitudes with social responsibility.

After hearing Trueblood's story, Norton, a father of a teenage daughter, is deeply disturbed and asks the Narrator to find him some whiskey. The young man drives the trustee to the Golden Day, a bar frequented by many mentally-disabled black men from the local veteran's hospital.[33] The scene turns into a free-for-all after the veterans incapacitate their orderly. Norton, in shock from his conversation with Trueblood, is ushered upstairs to the bordello to be cared for by one of the veterans, a former physician. The black physician soon engages Mr. Norton in a philosophical discourse on the meaning of the Negrotarian's influence on the Narrator. The veteran informs the trustee that "to you he is a mark on the score-card of your achievements, [but] he believes in the great false wisdom taught slaves and pragmatists alike, that white is right."[34] Norton is oblivious to the veteran's charges because, like the Pembertons in Hughes's "Poor Little Black Fellow" and the Daltons in Wright's *Native Son*, Norton "lives in a world that insulates him from the moral consequences of his actions."[35] However, the African-American physician explains the paradox of social reform. The social ramifications of Norton's "visible hand" and its effect on the lives of his beneficiaries are exposed. But he is blinded by his humanitarianism and fails to see his role in perpetuating racial inequality. The Narrator recognizes his own paradox in being both delighted and uneasy in hearing a black man speak to a white man "with a freedom which could only bring on trouble."[36]

On returning to campus, the young man receives another lesson in the ambiguity of relationships between white benefactors and black beneficiaries. The college's black president, Dr. Bledsoe, is irate because the Narrator drove Norton into the old slave quarters to see Trueblood and the Golden Day bar to mix with the veterans. The student tries to defend himself by telling Bledsoe that the trustee asked to stop and speak with the sharecropper and then desperately needed a shot of whiskey. Dr. Bledsoe is angry because the Narrator listened to Norton. Bledsoe believes that the young man failed in his responsibilities because he allowed the trustee to have his own way. The president bellows: "Damn what he wants.... We take these white folks where we want them to go.... I thought you had some sense."[37] Again, the ambiguity is puzzling to the young man.

Even more puzzling is Dr. Bledsoe's role in perpetuating the "visible hand" of Negrotarians in the struggle for racial equality. In an attempt to educate the Narrator on the state of integration, Dr. Bledsoe explains "the rules of the assimilation game" played between Negrotarians and African Americans. The president relates that neither blacks nor whites control the school. Bledsoe tells the student that it is he, Bledsoe, who is in power because "I's beg and I say 'yes, suh' as loudly as any burrhead when it's convenient."[38] Bledsoe advises the Narrator to acquire power through accommodation and "then stay in the dark and use it!"[39]

Ellison postulated that some black intellectuals, like Dr. Bledsoe,

> did not represent the Negro community, [but] beyond their [own] special interests, they represented white philanthropy, white politicians, business interests and so on.[40]

Other black intellectuals, like the Narrator, understand their role in the struggle and thereby offered hope to the rest of the community. Unlike Richard Wright, Ellison did not wish to characterize African Americans as "brutalized and without hope."[41] He believed that "Wright was over committed to ideology."[42] Ellison explained that "Even though I wanted many of the same things for our people, you might say that I was much less a social determinist."[43]

Inevitably, the Narrator is dismissed from college. The Narrator, on counsel from Dr. Bledsoe, travels

under false pretense to New York City. The young man believes that he has received a favorable recommendation from Dr. Bledsoe to secure employment from various trustees. He again encounters the veteran physician who reinforces Bledsoe's advice by telling the young man "play the Game, but don't believe it."[44] Bledsoe, the veteran physician, and the Narrator's grandfather all advise the young man to participate in a form of day-to-day resistance by treating the relationship between Negrotarians and African Americans as a game in which the latter impose a facade of accommodation while playing by their own rules. An example of this type of behavior is evident in Langston Hughes's and Zora Neale Hurston's relationship with their patron, Charlotte Osgood Mason, during the Harlem Renaissance. Hughes warned Hurston to give Mason information only on a-need-to-know basis; Mason attempted to control the professional and personal lives of her beneficiaries.

Ellison's novel exposes the risky paradox in this form of interracial interaction. For example, in the last pages of *Invisible Man*, the Narrator encounters a very bewildered Mr. Norton, who has lost his way on the streets of New York City. When the trustee fails to recognize the young man, the Narrator reminds him bitterly, "I'm your destiny.... Now aren't you ashamed?... Because, Mr. Norton, if you don't know *where* you are, you probably don't know *who* you are. So you came to me out of shame. You are ashamed, now aren't you?"[45] Norton considered himself a humanitarian because of his financial donations to the college. The Narrator's "destiny," like other young black men, was limited by the southern caste system. Critic Robert Bone argues that Mr. Norton represents the northern capitalist who, intent on industrializing the South, worked with white southern politicians and conservative black leaders to establish vo-technical colleges for blacks.[46]

More simply, Mr. Norton can be categorized as the classic Negrotarian who believed that his intent and money liberated his social conscious. Early in the novel, he tells the Narrator,

> You are my fate.... Only you can tell me what it really is. I mean that upon you depends the outcome of the years I have spent in helping your school. That has been my real life's work, not my banking or my research, but my first hand organizing of human life.[47]

Confused, the young man thinks to himself, "but you don't even know my name."[48] Mr. Norton fails to realize that his good will reinforced the dependence of black youths upon white society which perpetuated integration on white terms. Norton's support of an all-black college reinforces segregated education. His "fate" is contributing to institutionalized racism.

Ellison believed that many Negrotarians, like Norton, were motivated by guilt and a political agenda. Ellison, like the Narrator in *Invisible Man* and many other black writers before him, expressed strong feelings against white biases and patronization. Unlike Wright, but similar to Langston Hughes, Ellison disguised his criticism. Ellison believed in "the ideals that are shared—at least in the abstract—by all Americans."[49] However, as an African American, he was painfully aware that those American ideals were not universally applied to all races.

Ellison once remarked that he did not believe that "books change society in any immediate way."[50] He explained that "during the thirties there were theorists who tried to convince us of such [a] possibility."[51] Ellison concluded that the Harlem Renaissance was stymied by the Negrotarians' "visible hand." Regardless of whites' financial and aesthetic support, Ellison and other black artists were "still forced to live in the same sections of our cities and [were] strictly limited in [our] choices of such matters as jobs, restaurants, neighborhoods."[52] In the novel, Ellison emphasized the increasing isolation and alienation of blacks from American society because he believed that

> what is needed in our country is not an exchange of pathologies, but a change of the basis of society. This is a job which both Negroes and whites must perform together.[53]

Ellison, in the *Invisible Man* identified the role of Negrotarians in the movement for black social and economic equality as ambiguous and, at times, patronizing. Later, in an interview he remarked:

> When you see those who exercise power in the country you love violating its ideals you're obligated to criticize them and do whatever one can to correct it. And when it works, it works. And when it doesn't...accept the punishment that goes with telling the truth. For that after all, is your role in society.[54]

Ellison's novel criticizes both racist institutions and attitudes in the United States. In doing so, it emphasized the frustration of black intellectuals with the "visible hand" of white social reformers. Ellison recognized the Negrotarians' and writers' paradoxical situation in attempting to bridge the cultural, racial, and class chasms between them. The paradox for the Negrotarians was that their philanthropy or "visible hand" was motivated by conflicting emotions: sympathy, humanitarianism, guilt, and sometimes a desire for social control.

Notes

1. Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: Quill, 1984),564.

2. "Visible hand" refers exclusively to the title of Ellison's novel. Playing off his premise of the "invisibility" of African Americans, it is used here to denote the role of Negrotarians in social reform.

3. Kenny McSweeney, *Invisible Man: Race and Identity* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988),100. Other critics who view the novel as art and not political include Steven Marx, "Beyond Hibernation: Ralph Ellison's 1982 Version of *Invisible Man*," *Black American Literature Forum* 23 (Winter 1989), 701-721; Alan Nadel, *Invisible Criticism: Ralph Ellison and the American Canon* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1988); and Robert O'Meally, *The Craft of Ralph Ellison* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

4. "Negrotarian" is derived from the words "Negro" and humanitarian. The author Zora Neale Hurston is credited with first using the term during the Harlem Renaissance. Hurston, an anthropology student at Columbia University, studied black southern dialect during the 1920s. She devised the term Negrotarian to define white socialites and humanitarians who financially supported young black artists. This term became popular among the Harlem Renaissance generation of artists; David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem was in Vogue* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1981), 98.

5. Interview with Ralph Ellison, "The Art of Fiction: VIII," *The Paris Review* 17 (Spring 1955), 66.

6. Langston Hughes to Michel Fabre, 25 April 1963, Langston Hughes Papers, James Weldon Johnson Memorial/Special Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Division, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

7. Waters E. Turpin, ed., "Four Short Fiction Writers of the Harlem Renaissance: Their Legacy of Achievement," *CLA Journal* 11 (Summer 1967), 64; Peter Bruck, ed. "Langston Hughes: The Blues I'm Playing," chap. in *The Black American Short Story in the 20th Century: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Amsterdam: Greener Publishing, 1977), 74.

8. Richard K. Barksdale and Kenneth Kinnamon, eds., *Black Writers of America* (New York: MacMillan, 1972), 683-687.

9. In Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Mrs. Dalton, a white, wealthy, humanitarian is blind and ignorant of interracial problems in society and, in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, the Narrator, like black America, remains unseen by white America.

10. Ralph Ellison to Langston Hughes, 7 July 1936, Hughes Papers.

11. Richard Wright to Harold Jackman, 13 April 1938, James Weldon Johnson Papers, James Weldon Johnson Memorial/Special Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Division, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

12. Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, 38.

13. Ellison, "The Art of Fiction: VIII," 69.

14. Ibid.

15. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Vintage Books, 1952; repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1982), iii-iv.

16. Ibid., xiii.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., 16.

19. Ibid.

20. Ellison, "The Art of Fiction: VIII," 63; O'Meally, *The Craft of Ralph Ellison*, 13.

21. Ellison, "The Art of Fiction: VIII," 62-63.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Thomas Vogler, "*Invisible Man*: Somebody's Protest Novel," in *Ralph Ellison: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. John Hersey, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974), 143-144.

25. Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 18.

26. Ibid., 25.

27. Ibid., 31.

28. Ibid.

29. In 1933, Ellison entered Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. The vocational school was founded by Booker T. Washington in 1881. The institution was funded, in part, by an appropriation from the Alabama State Legislature and northern humanitarians.

30. Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 139.

31. McSweeney, *Invisible Man: Race and Identity*, 49-50.

32. Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 47.

33. Historically, the Tuskegee community was the location of a federal- and state-sponsored syphilis study. Many residents who were identified as infected and sought treatment were given ineffective drugs so that the government could gauge the effects of the disease if left untreated. This "study" lasted until it was uncovered in 1972.

34. Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 93-94.

35. Nadel, *Invisible Criticism: Ralph Ellison and the American Canon*, 101.

36. Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 91.

37. Ibid., 100.

38. Ibid., 140.

39. Ibid., 144.

40. Ralph Ellison, "That Same Pleasure, That Same Pain," interview, Richard G. Stern, *December* 3 (Winter 1961), 43.

41. Larry Neal, "Politics as Ritual: Ellison's Zoot Suit," *Black World* 20 (December 1970), 52.

42. Ellison, "That Same Pleasure, That Same Pain," 41-42.

43. Ibid., 42.

44. Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 151.

45. Ibid., 564-565.

46. Robert Bone, *The Negro Novel in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 204.

47. Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 41-42.

48. Ibid., 45.

49. Ralph Ellison, "Intellectuals and Writers Since the Thirties," interview by William Phillips, *Partisan Review*, 59 (Special Issue 1991), 535.

50. Ibid., 540.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. Ralph Ellison, "*Review of an American Dilemma*," chap. in *Shadow and Act* (New York: Random House, 1964), 317.

54. Ellison, "Intellectuals and Writers Since the Thirties," 536.

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Jim Crow and American Modernism: Suppressing the Urge to Be All a Nation Can Be

Madeleine Hirsiger Carr

Large metropolitan districts began to play a central role in defining American culture as well as politics during the 1920s. For 1920, the federal census reported for the first time in American history that the proportion of the population classified as urban was greater than that classified as rural. Perhaps even more revealing is that the number of cities in the 1920s grew from 68 to 92 at the end of that decade. Not all cities—like Houston, for instance—could expand horizontally. American cities had almost four hundred buildings that reached into the sky more than twenty stories. New York's Empire State Building, completed in 1931, was the tallest building in the world with room for 25,000 tenants in 102 stories.[1]

In this spirit of expansion it is interesting that Americans did not participate in the 1925 Paris Salon of Decorative Arts. Whereas Woodrow Wilson had spent months away from the United States as he negotiated with the Europeans a settlement that ended World War I with visions of a League of Nations, his successor, Warren Harding "was a living, breathing disaster" best kept within the United States borders. "If he goes out on tour somebody's sure to ask him questions," it was said about Harding, and "Warren's just the sort of damned fool who will try to answer them." Clearly, Harding's reputation as an inept politician was not all true. He had helped bring an end to the 12-hour day in the steel industry, and provided for greater civil liberties than had any of his predecessors. He also appointed Herbert Hoover as his commerce secretary who pushed private foreign investment and determined where and for what purpose they would lend money.[2]

Feeling that the United States "could not meet the Modernist requirements for entry laid out in the [Paris] Exposition's charter," Hoover also was responsible for United States non-participation in that event. The 1925 show, however, has become known as the highlight of a revolutionary transition from wood to metal in furniture manufacture, for instance. The decorative (deco) style that emerged was also a vehicle that expressed the spirit of the age. It was an age in which the United States, ironically, circumscribed what the future would hold for its growing consumer society.[3]

The emergence of the modernist artist-designer in the United States in the late 1920s generally is attributed to the second phase of the French Art Deco movement. This influence and its associated style appear in the architecture of nightclubs and skyscrapers. When the skyscraper boom began in earnest between 1923 and 1925 it is as if all modern architects searched for the only distinctly modern, and therefore appropriate, decorative style available to embellish setbacks and entrance lobbies at the Paris Salons.[4]

Yet if the Americans did not officially participate in the Paris Exposition that has come to define the Art Deco movement, the period immediately following World War I may illustrate how America evolved its own modern style and expose why some of its designers are continually overlooked. Although it is commonly held that the French led the decorative art movement and influenced the shape of American modernists, it is not entirely clear whether what has also come to be known "le style sans style" (the style without style) in the United States had any uniquely American cultural associations.[5]

"The style," wrote art historian Alistair Duncan about the artists exhibiting in Paris, "manifested itself emotionally, with zest, color and playfulness," especially seen in the furniture's purity of form and opulent mix "of newly fashionable exotic woods and materials." Geometric compositions which "took inspiration from the movements in avant-garde painting a decade or so earlier," also provided a basis for the graphic artists. "Futurism contributed the new century's preoccupation with speed and power," which graphic artists applied to posters the public viewed on Paris's "ubiquitous *colonnes d'affiche.*"[6]

The exposition coincided with a seemingly minor New York event in March 1925, the publication of the 66-page *Survey Graphic* issue entitled "Harlem:

Mecca of the New Negro." The periodical contained poems, essays, short stories, and social analysis "by a younger generation of Black writers and intellectuals," sold more than 5,000 copies, but apparently was read by tens of thousands. The publication included illustrations, stylized designs, and full-page portraits of African Americans created by Winold Reiss. The appearance of the publication was an outgrowth of a Civic Club dinner one year earlier at which prominent white publishers were introduced to black writers. The gathering in New York at the invitation of Charles Spurgeon Johnson, editor of the Urban League's *Opportunity* magazine, included Alain Locke. He was a Harvard graduate and Howard University professor who, in 1916, had founded *Stylus*, a literary magazine advocating the study of black history. Locke began the New Negro movement that became known as the Harlem Renaissance with Johnson's support of art and literature as a means to "crack the nation's racist armor."[7]

This issue of *Survey Graphic* was the precursor to Locke's *The New Negro*, a book that appeared in December that year. The industrial era decoration used on *Survey's* cover framed a bold pen-and-ink drawing of singer Roland Hayes. German artist Reiss was one of the contributors to the evolving American modernist Art Deco style and was commissioned to produce this and other drawings. The shaping of his own cultural constructs is often overlooked. How long had Reiss lived in the United States; how was a German chosen to illustrate a book associated with the Harlem Renaissance, acknowledged as the birthplace of African American art?

Survey appeared halfway through the period that has become known as the Harlem Renaissance and Jazz Age. The context for the emergence of black art in the United States in an increasingly politically and socially hostile world has been well documented. Far less well known is the coincidental creation of an American art based on black experiences. One African American artist, Aaron Douglas, attributed the emergence of his own distinctive style to Reiss. Responding to requests "for a visual pattern comparable to, or rather suggestive of, the uniqueness found in the gestures and bodily movements of the Negro dance," he explained that he began to draw at Reiss's urging simply because "there was no one else to do so."[8]

Douglas was a newcomer to the New York scene. As early as 1921 the New York Public Library's 135 Street branch had exhibited black art, and black artists became the focus of the 1928 Harmon Foundation exhibition, offering new opportunities for black artists. Douglas, however, had arrived in New York from Kansas to become a participant in the potential vanguard of a movement which affiliated black and white Americans. Studying mural painting with Reiss for two years, the African American artist credits Reiss's influence with his look to African art "as a source for a racial expression." Reiss, who had left Germany for New York on the eve of World War I, left behind a world that had held a romantic perception of the American West. Reiss's detailed rendering of subjects and his accomplishment as an Art Deco designer had brought him to Locke's attention, who called him "a folk-lorist of brush and palette." Perhaps a more detailed inquiry into this newly emerging world of artistic collaboration is necessary to understand any affiliation between white American modernists and the Harlem Renaissance, as George Hutchinson suggests.[9]

That the term "American modernist" has added to a lively discussion that pits "who belonged and who did not" against each other has enraged art critic Jeffrey C. Stewart, but for opaque reasons. Arguing that Hutchinson, for one, ignores "the issues of control over the ownership and production of knowledge and culture in the 1920s," Stewart pits publishers (white) against artists (black) in a continuing fight over "white vetting of black intellectuals and artists." Continuing W.D. DuBois's idea of the African American living a "double consciousness," Stewart nevertheless eschews any attempt to paint the Harlem Renaissance as interracial. Yet by claiming that doing so would refute any African American capability of autonomous behavior he unwittingly, perhaps, continues to widen an existing chasm that is premised on "false consciousness." Such a hypothesis, however, does point to the existence of what he calls a segregated social formation lived "by the majority of African Americans during that period." Why was it important, for instance, for African Americans to continue to maintain their own cultural space? He excludes historic references to a rich African American tradition in America that highly valued (by necessity) its separate social spaces, beginning with the demand for free Saturdays during slavery. Instead, he claims,

> Negro history inevitably remains in the subconscious of America's most creative white

> people and the South remains in the sub-conscious of the recent black migrant.

Confusing as this assertion is, Stewart compounds the problem. American modernists were unable, he says, to break with an identity based on a Victorian construct and, therefore, he attributes any interest in African American art to Europe's fascination with the primitive.[10]

Indeed, arts and artifacts of Africa, on exhibit in Munich's ethnographic museum, had influenced Reiss's passion for ethnography, according to art historian John W. Ewers. Reiss's images of African Americans that appeared in *Survey Graphic* did not allude to the Fauvist or Cubist "primitivism" favored in Paris. Instead, Reiss "captured the mood of racial pride that Locke and other Black intellectuals wished to project." His art was far removed from any construct of "the primitive." Reiss, who had left southern Germany where he had studied at Munich's Academy of Fine Arts, had had a family tradition of painting German peasants and plain people. Continuing his studies at the School of Applied Arts, the artist was encouraged to develop a style based on the Germanic *Jugendstil*, which had its roots in the French Art Nouveau of the 1890s and England's Arts and Crafts Movement.[11]

While Paris continued its amorous affairs with blacks that had begun before World War I, the importance of this convergence between l'art nègre and modernist art became the subject of historian Jody Blake's *Le tumulte noir: Modernist Art and Popular Entertainment in Jazz-Age Paris, 1900-1930*. Blake addresses this decisive cultural gulf whose deep waters remain a mystery in America. "The factors," Blake wrote,

> that drew the French to jazz-age entertainment, ...offer uniquely valuable clues to the larger implications of artists' enthusiasm for and borrowing from African sculpture.

Blake concluded, "Primitivism emerges as a critique of society as well as of art and part of a larger revolution in European culture." Attitudes in America also began to change during this period, especially after Locke, the Harlem Renaissance's philosophic father announced, "All significant black art should have its cultural roots in African soil." This "larger revolution," however, did not rely so much on Africa or Europe for its inspiration. Instead, two unique American contributions to culture—jazz and the skyscraper—came to be represented in the era's designs and art, independent of any participation in worlds' fairs or expositions.[12] In fact, "in marked contrast to European designers," American designers and artists rarely had had a chance to participate in world fairs; when modern designs did begin to appear, "American designs were more streamlined and sleek" and they incorporated African elements as they alluded to the country's slavery past.[13]

Endsheet of catalogue to the exhibition of Reiss works, Anderson Galleries, New York, 1922-1923.
Copyright the estate of Winold Reiss.

That the sleekness of designs came as much from an immigrant community that valued ethnography as it did from an exposure to the Paris 1925 Salon of Decorative Arts is often overlooked. Since before World War I the American Designers' Gallery, AUDAC and Contemporar had promoted artistic change. "Most design firms were indifferent at best," Duncan discovered about the lack of participation in world fairs and promotion. The main exception was the New York World's Fair in 1939 which exposed the average consumer who had survived the Depression to designs that had appealed to an elite and wealthy clientele. They had had access to the progressive European designs from the 1925 Paris exposition shown in a 1926 traveling museum exposition. Yet American industrial art lagged behind Europeans for lack of financial support until the 1933 New Deal public arts program was implemented.[14]

Luckily for Reiss and Douglas, a prevailing prejudice against artists who labored in both the fine and commercial art spheres worked in their favor. The German immigrant had illustrated four covers for *Scribner's* magazine beginning in 1915. He

> subtly modernized American taste by re-interpreting romantic themes...with the bright colors and stylized expressions characteristic of Jugendstil and the European Arts and Crafts movements.

Prejudice against Germans subsided gradually after the Great War and commissions increased for interior designs for the newly opening dance halls, restaurants and ballrooms in New York and Chicago. Reiss continued to rely on his reputation as one of the foremost interior designers. He also influenced budding American artists at his art studio, among whom was Douglas. Reiss and Douglas would be able to rely on their interior murals for financial support during the Great Depression.[15]

America's intellectuals, artists and writers, were involved in bringing about "social change through a racial art" which Donna Cassidy explains was a growing dilemma. Douglas, she claims, successfully bridged the cultural divide, creating "an art that merged white and black with both European and African roots." Cassidy reminds us, however, that the artists' task was to "dismantle old stereotypes" out of which emerged the New Negro who, like white Americans, rejected "European influences." It was Locke, she claims, who advocated a compromise position that drew on modernist, abstract design and "Realist American Scene painting." The negotiations for this new outlook focused on the present and mirrored past black life in the United States in the emerging musical and urban jazz scene. Both Douglas's work and jazz are uniquely American, yet it was the controversy over a white artist's drawings and illustrations in *Survey* that afforded Douglas an opportunity to emerge as a major modernist American painter. His paintings were added to the subsequent *The New Negro*.[16]

The treasury of portrait drawings, however, belonged to Reiss. His group in *Survey* included the New Negro pantheon and reflected Locke's broad base of acquaintances—James Weldon Johnson, Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, Countee Cullen, W.E.B. Du Bois—all, except Zora Neale Hurston. Reiss drew Hurston and Alain Locke after the Harlem issue appeared. His most arresting portraits, according to Cassidy, were of black urban working class women. Reiss most often is associated with these striking portraits because his work "broke new ground in American portraiture of Blacks,"

Aaron Douglas, illustration to a Langston Hughes poem "Weary As I Can Be."
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departing from "caricatured images of Black plantation mammies and minstrel coons."[17]

Locke's choice of a white artist to illustrate an issue on black culture was severely criticized, based on an emerging class issue. The bold renderings of largely dark-skinned African Americans evoked sharp negative reactions. "Controversy raged" among the black bourgeoisie, writes Cassidy, as Reiss was the subject of heated debates over his inclusion of darker skinned, newly arrived working class African Americans. Even Reiss's sitters could not escape criticism and Cassidy discovered that DuBois himself "questioned publicly whether Blacks were too often depicted as lower class in the literature of the 1920s."[18]

Yet Reiss also distinguished himself through his understanding of the black aesthetic. Drawing on a free, improvised composition style, Reiss "sought to create designs that captured the rhythm, tension, and expressive form of Black culture and Harlem itself." To accompany a J.A. Rogers essay entitled "Jazz at Home" which appeared in *Survey* and *The New Negro*, Reiss had made jazz drawings, layering forms into

stark contrasts of black and white dissonances. It was not long before his visual designs affected others, although the difficulty of avoiding any stereotypical African influence was obvious. Ewers explains, "It would be left to Aaron Douglas... to evolve a less stereotypical design based on African themes."[19]

Douglas's inspirational wellspring was all around Harlem. Spirituals, jazz, and blues had reached a new pinnacle of popularity. African Americans had pioneered theatrical and nightclub dances and tap dancers gave riveting performances. It would be up to Douglas to incorporate a modernist geometric design on dust jackets of newly appearing popular magazines. By nineteen thirty he had received his first major commission for a series of murals at Fisk University's new library. As with jazz, Douglas's art was not a reflection of a pure African art form. His was a representation of the modernist influences found in New York, and especially Harlem and Greenwich Village, to which music was central. In addition, "Black modernism," according to Joanna Skipwith, "presents an interesting repudiation of these compromised aesthetic schemes" because Harlem had significant ties to non-European populations in other parts of the world. In this New York environment, art was entering the new public sphere through early twentieth-century media, where it left the relatively innocent ambiguities of the music hall very far behind. Vanity Fair magazine had popularized this "music hall modernism" of the era, stating that it "combined elitism and commonality, breaking down the notion of intrinsic value."[20]

Support for the emerging consumer-driven ethos of the Jazz Age was not limited to magazines, however. Not far from Harlem, for instance, the first commercial art gallery had opened in a remodeled brownstone in 1925. Called the Downtown Gallery, its owner Edith Halpert applied modern marketing techniques to modern art and designs. And one of the decade's humorists, John Held, exemplified the idea of breaking with "intrinsic value."[21]

The ability to blur not only fashion and behavior, but to illustrate America's infatuation with youth, depicted how Held and others of the Jazz Age relished the mannerless manners of the 'twenties, finding in the dance-mad younger set a "gaudy notion of sin." Archie Green describes the Jazz Age, or the Roaring Twenties, as a term "which implies musical form but essentially has come to mark a time period, 1918-29," with fixed names and images that all are "representative of some highly visible aspects of American life." Held's art, however, does not include black musicians or any "of the low-life settings where jazz was born." In 1925, the year of *Survey Graphic*, Held's flappers gave way to block prints that "would come to be characterized as *New Yorker* humor." Held's humor resisted any moralizing or sentimentality of the "traditional parodist," which was a plus for a magazine that exhibited a detached and sophisticated attitude. It was assumed that such sophistication "could exist nowhere else but in the metropolis." Art critic Joshua Taylor explained that the cult of the city required a "self-conscious detachment" exemplified in the polished writing established in the 1925 *New Yorker* magazine.[22]

The cadre of people who represented the "voice of sophistication" during the period did not include Held because of his young and uncouth subject matter. But it was his "detached" style, which lacked any acidity and satire, that made him superior and an observer of the absurd. Held did address the major white topics of that age and in the process managed

Winold Reiss illustration in Survey Graphic, 1925, entitled *Interpretations of Harlem Jazz.*
Copyright Estate of Winold Reiss, photo courtesy Shepherd Gallery, New York.

to avoid any references to African Americans. The Jazz Age cartoonists also included Ralph Barton and Mexican Miguel Covarrubias. The latter may have fallen into a tradition of stereotypical "primitive" depictions of African Americans. Perhaps Held wanted to avoid any such social commentary, but for Covarrubias an exaggeration and simplification of form made abstract design ethnically familiar and brought him to the brink of caricature. It was Reiss, however, "who moved away from stereotyped lips and faces to a more modernistic rendering of African American features." His affiliation with the common people of any color during a prolonged period of extreme segregation and growing racism may account for the lack of acknowledgment.[23]

What was perceived as a lack of sophistication in white and elite black circles actually resulted in a remarkable body of gifted artist-designers. David Ryan recognized that this period of restless creative probing, exquisite attention to detail, "and endless tensions, dualities and contradictions, from the x-rated, languid curve to the no-nonsense right angle" characterized these master form givers of the century. Is it surprising that the sophisticates of the art world did not embrace the designers of nightclubs, saloons, hotel lobbies, skyscrapers, or the muralists of the railway stations? "These issues," warned Ryan, "reflect a lack of knowledge, if not implied resistance to design in our society."[24]

The decade of the 1920s is also recognized as a period when 60 art museums were organized and older ones added spacious quarters. Despite this growth, "New York proponents of modern art," according to William Scott and Peter Rukoff, "resisted the wholesale adoption of moder-nism" although the vitality and ethnic variety of the city are credited with shaping what by the 1930s became "the American scene." The city's newness, its influx of black migrants from the South, its skyscrapers and "its democratic vista in part explains why the most radical forms of European modernism had little impact on New York artists of the 1920s." While the world's established elites continued to look to France in particular for a grounding in sophistication the modern American artists and designers such as Douglas and Reiss improvised American designs based on African-American, Indian and European folkways.[25]

Notes

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2. Gerard Clarfield, *United States Diplomatic History: The Age of Ascendancy*, Vol. 2 (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1992), 361-364.

3. Ibid., 365.

4. Wayne Craven, *American Art: History and Culture* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 1994), 480; Alastair Duncan, *Modernism: Modernist Design 1880-1940* (Minneapolis: Norwest Corporation, 1998), 178.

5. Duncan, *Modernism*, 179.

6. Duncan, *Modernism*, 181-183.

7. *Survey Graphic: Harlem Mecca of the New Negro*, 1925 (Reprint, Black Classic Press, 1980); Steven Watson, *The Harlem Renaissance: Hub of African-American Culture 1920-1930* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1995), 24-26.

8. Donna M. Cassidy, *Painting the Musical City: Jazz and Cultural Identity in American Art, 1910-1940* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 119.

9. Suzanne Schell Stromberg, *Afro-American Art of the Harlem Renaissance* (Masters Thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1973), 15; Cassidy, *Painting the Musical City*, 116, 117; Jeffrey C. Steward and John C. Ewers, *To Color America: Portraits by Winold Reiss* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 17; George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995), 30.

10. Jeffrey C. Stewart, "Paul Robeson and the Problem of Modernism" in *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Richard J. Powell and David A. Bailey (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1997), 92-93, 97. For an insightful description of the importance of Saturday night during slavery see Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 16-18; and Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 579. Primitivism is also the subject of Robert Martin Adams's article "What Was Modernism?" in *The Hudson Review*, Vol. 31:1 (Spring 1978): 19-33.

11. Stewart and Ewers, *To Color America*, 18.

12. Donald F. Davis, "Aaron Douglas of Fisk: Molder of Black Artists," *Journal of Negro History*, 69:2 (Spring 1984): 95-99; Jody Blake, *Le Tumulte Noir: Modernist Art and Popular Entertainment in Jazz-Age Paris, 1900-1930* (University Park, P.A.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 44.

13. Duncan, *Modernism*, 217.

14. Duncan, *Modernism*, 214.

15. Steward and Ewers, *To Color America*, 41-69.

16. Alain Locke, *Survey Graphic*, Vol. VI, No. 6, March 1925, reprint (Baltimore: Black Classic Press).

17. Cassidy, *Painting the Musical City*, 55.

18. Cassidy, *Painting the Musical City*, 57, 58.

19. Cassidy, *Painting the Musical City*, 126; Survey Graphic, 665; Steward and Ewers, *To Color America*, 62.

20. Stromberg, *Afro-American Art of the Harlem Renaissance*, 62; Michael North, *Reading 1920: A Return to the Scene of the Modern* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 153; Paul Gilroy, "Modern Tones" in *Rhapsodies in Black, 104.*

21. William B. Scott and Peter M. Rutkoff, *New York Modern: The Arts and the City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999), 124.

22. Shelley Armitage, *John Held, Jr.: Illustrator of the Jazz Age* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1987), 164, 165, 174.

23. Armitage, *John Held Jr.*, 149. Ewers, *To Color America*, 61-62.

24. David Ryan "Modernism at Norwest," in Duncan, *Modernism*, 13-16.

25. Scott and Rutkoff, *New York Modern*, 131, 132.

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"A Cuchi Moya!"—Star Trek's Native Americans

Katja Kanzler

Not too long ago, millions of people around the globe were preoccupied with imagining the coming millenium, indulging in a host of speculations ranging from the end of history to collapsing computer systems. In those years and months preceding the—eventually disappointingly uneventful—1 January 2000, Science Fiction seemed to dominate public discourse. While people unfamiliar with the genre struggled for words to express their fears and hopes for the future, SF aficionados found themselves in well-known territory. For decades, Science Fiction had offered those involved in a cultural phenomenon stigmatized as escapist entertainment the opportunity to playfully work through their visions of the future, exploring both scenarios they might hope for and those they were deeply afraid of.

Against this background, it is not surprising that particularly people marginalized by the current social order use fantastic fictions to either unmask present socio-cultural practices as oppressive or to imagine alternative ways of living where they would be no longer disenfranchised. The catchy *Aliens and Others*, title of Jenny Wolmark's fine study of feminist Science Fiction,[1] points to the way in which the genre-specific trope of the alien has typically been employed as a projection space for the racial or sexual Other. The possibility SF thus offers to defamiliarize the heavily politicized positions of those who are racially, ethnically, or sexually "different" can entail liberatory as well as oppressive effects, as the genre can, on the one hand, provide fresh and new perspectives on discourses so overdetermined by history and politics, while it, on the other, allows a mainstream culture to displace and repress its own social guilt and responsibility.

Instead of examining the metaphorical association between aliens and Others or the ways in which minority authors have used the figure of the alien, I would like to address the representational practices of a decidedly mainstream SF "text": *Star Trek*, the multi-media franchise born in 1965 as a short-lived television series (*Star Trek: The Original Series—TOS*, 1965-69) which has grown to see three more televisual incarnations (*Star Trek: The Next Generation—STNG*, 1987-94; *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine—DS9*, 1993-99; and *Star Trek: Voyager—VOY*, since 1995) as well as nine feature films, numerous novels, computer games, etc. *Star Trek* particularly invites an investigation of its representations of "aliens and Others" for two reasons: first, the show is tremendously popular. According to a 1991 survey, 53% of all Americans classify themselves as *Star Trek* fans[2]. A search of the World Wide Web on a random day produced 376,512 sites related to *Star Trek*, the Helsinki-based page "Women of Star Trek" or the "Church of Shatnerology." The *Star Trek* shows can be seen virtually all around the globe, in countries ranging from the Czech Republic to South Africa or Indonesia. This popularity evidences that *Star Trek* speaks to the sensibilities of a considerable portion of (not only) the American public and routinely exposes many people to its narrations.

The second reason why *Star Trek* particularly proposes itself for the kind of interrogation I am about to engage in lies in the fact that the program has always marketed itself as multicultural. The show has, since its inception in the mid 1960s, presented itself to its audiences as a Science Fiction program that explicitly sets out to compose a future in which people of all races, species and genders live together harmoniously. Gene Roddenberry, the man who created *Star Trek*, cast himself in the role of a visionary whose quotable insights into the destiny of the human "race" became the core of the program's market identity. Among such often quoted soundbites were, for example:

> Intolerance in the 23rd century? Improbable! If man survives that long, he will have learned to take a delight in the essential differences between men and between cultures,[3]

or

> Diversity contains as many treasures as those waiting for us on other worlds. We will find it

impossible to fear diversity and to enter the future at the same time.[4]

Star Trek's effort to construct for itself a multicultural image can be traced to primarily two strategies. First, the program has been striving for a diverse cast of characters, from *TOS*' featuring a Black woman and an Asian man among its bridge crew, to *DS9* and *VOY* showcasing an African American (male) and a (White) female in their respective Captain's seats. The second strategy lies in the kinds of stories *Star Trek* chooses to tell. With reliable regularity, the program features self-conscious "issue"-episodes that are obviously designed to tell a parable on current political issues. These episodes follow a typical pattern in projecting real-life racial (or other) issues onto alien species. In "Let That Be Your Last Battlefield," the crew of the Enterprise encounter the humanoid alien Lokai, whose face is half black and half white, and who is apparently on the run in a stolen shuttlecraft. Soon, a law enforcement officer, Bele, comes hunting after Lokai. The two look exactly alike, only Lokai is white on the right side of his body and black on the left, while Bele's colors are distributed the other way around. When Lokai urgently pleads with the Enterprise-crew to grant him political asylum, they learn that the aliens' planet is riven by a deadly race-war, a war which, by the episode's end, will have killed all life on the planet. When confronted with the madness of an ultimately genocidal hatred, the crew of the Enterprise tries to make sense of it by putting the conflict in the context of their own (human) history:

Chekov: There was persecution on earth once. I remember reading about it in my history class.

Sulu: Yes, but it happened way back in the 20th century. There is no such primitive thinking today.

The episode is thus able to address the late 1960s' reality of brutal race riots in a safe and unthreatening context. It simplifies the complex structure of race relations by locating the source of all tensions in each race's dislike of the other's physical appearance, a difference the episode seemingly strives to make as superficial and ludicrous as possible. The dialogue between Chekov and Sulu then affirms that humanity has long overcome this state of racial prejudice, thus casting themselves in a role of enlightened superiority. In striking similarity to the (ideo-)logic of the colonial encounter, the crew of the Enterprise attempt to educate and save the "primitive" aliens, yet they remain unsuccessful. The episode concludes with disquieting and unresolvedly painful images of an eventually genocidal race war.

Considering this general representational practice, the rare cases in which *Star Trek* does not follow its own rule deserve particular attention. One such exception is that *Star Trek* addresses one, and only one, ethno-racial group directly—Native Americans. In his *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*, Robert Berkhofer proceeds from the premise that "Native Americans were and are real, but [that] the *Indian* was a White invention and still remains largely a White image, if not a stereotype."[5] to trace the trajectory of that image from the first colonial encounters to 20th century cultural productions. His analyses provides a frame of reference to judge how far *Star Trek*'s representational practices perpetuate or challenge a traditional image-making which, as Berkhofer outlines, has been heavily involved in the colonial business of dis-empowering the Other.

The only ethno-racial group the program addresses in non-defamiliarized form is not African Americans (the largest "racial minority" in the United States) or Latinos (the fastest-growing "minority") but Native Americans, a group with minimal visibility and demographic impact, yet of considerable cultural presence. *Star Trek*'s choice of Native Americans becomes even more interesting when one takes into consideration that the program explicitly hails from the cultural tradition of the Western—both Roddenberry's oft-quoted description of *Trek* as "*Wagon Train* to the stars" and *TOS*' and *STNG*'s designation of space as the "final Frontier" in their respective title sequences evidence this cultural association. "Indians" emerge from this context as a group that evokes a highly idealized and distorted image of one period in American history, mostly set in the 19th century, that mainstream American culture nostalgically yearns for as a cultural scenario that epitomizes "America" like no other. On the other hand, however, Native Americans also represent the United States' history as a colonizer, a history the cultural narratives of the Frontier repress just as vehemently as *Star Trek* represses the colonial implications in its own narrative framework of interstellar "exploration."

Three episodes cover the whole range of *Trek*'s representation of Native Americans from the earliest instance in *Star Trek: The Original Series* to *Star Trek: Voyager*'s recurring Native American character, Commander Chakotay. First, in *TOS* "The Paradise Syndrome," the Enterprise arrives on an alien planet, where an accident wipes out Capt. Kirk's memory. He is soon after found by the planet's inhabitants who resemble Earth's Native Americans. Due to the circumstances of Kirk's sudden appearance, the tribe takes him for a god and adopts him into their community. The amnesic Captain, taking on the name "Kirok", for a time enjoys the simple life, he gets married and is happy to learn that his wife is pregnant. After a while, however, the tribe find out that "Kirok" does not have supernatural powers, and they stone him and his wife. In the last minute, the Enterprise, having finally found its Captain, steps in and beams the two away from the site of their execution, yet while Kirk can be saved, his wife and unborn child die.

Although standing apart from the other, later episodes featuring Native Americans which are all linked through a common narrative thread, the episode introduces important aspects of *Star Trek*'s representation of Native Americans, a representational practice that quite clearly continues traditional Western image-making of the "Indian." The Native American tribe,[6] whose presence the narrative rather clumsily explains as being brought there by some mysterious aliens who wanted to save them from extinction, serves as the symbolic counterpoint to the technologically and socially advanced life on a starship. The social "evolution" *Trek* so stresses for humanity seems not to take place within Native American culture—the tribe's way of life in the 23rd century still resembles that of the 19th century, i.e. of the brief historical period from which the cultural image of the "Indian" originates and to which popular representations obsessively return.[7] The image the episode draws of Native Americans clearly hails from the notion of the "noble savage,"the "positive" version of the dichotomous Western image of the "Indian."[8] It entails a romantic yearning for the simple life Native Americans come to represent, a life decidedly free of technology and complex social structures, while at the same time marking that way of life as clearly inferior (and therefore doomed to extinction).

The episode evokes this inferiority in several ways, employing well-established cultural strategies. For example, it is quite typical that the White individual coming into the Native American tribe "naturally" takes on a leadership position, thus implying that, even without any of the institutional power he might be able to draw on in his "civilized" life, his superiority is so obvious that even the "natives" notice it. In addition, the apparent lack of social development the episode implies also designates Native Americans as inferior to a humanity as imagined by *Star Trek* which, it becomes painfully obvious here, does not include every human community. This aspect of the tribe's image is particularly important, not only because it makes Native Americans different from the core group in *Star Trek*'s most central social quality, but also because it rules out the possibility of Native Americans ever joining the core group. A community that is unable to adapt to changing social and technological conditions, it seems to be the lesson in Social Darwinism the episode inevitably entails, will have to die sooner or later.

Taking the thus highly conservative "The Paradise Syndrome" as a point of reference, it is interesting to look at the ways in which subsequent episodes both perpetuate and change *Star Trek: The Original Series*' representational practices. Chronologically, the next episode is *STNG*'s "Journey's End," in which the Enterprise is ordered to remove a community of Native Americans from a planet on which they had settled. This time, the episode gives a more elaborate explanation of the tribe's presence on the alien planet: The community left Earth many years ago in order to search for land where they could build a new home.[9] The episode makes clear that the Native Americans had to go on that journey only because they had been robbed of their homeland and that they were looking not just for any piece of land but for one with which they could enter a spiritual relationship as they had done with their original homeland.

Looking more closely at the role in which the episode thus casts Native Americans reveals a highly interesting colonial narrative. "Journey's End" is able to address colonialism directly—an issue it uneasily strives to reject in the subplot concerning Capt. Picard[10]—only in a narrative that, first, draws on the Native Americans' role in a historical colonial encounter, and that then imagines a scenario in which it reverses that role. More specifically, the episode can only develop a convincing narrative of a colonizer who refuses to give up the land of which he has taken

possession by casting a group in the role of colonizer which has previously undergone the experience of being colonized. Within *Star Trek*'s multicultural framework, Native Americans emerge as (possibly) the only group who can explicitly act as colonizer and still motivate audience sympathies.

There is another subplot in "Journey's End" that points to a second narrative function Native Americans serve in *Star Trek*'s contemporary multicultural economy. When the Enterprise becomes involved in the business of re-locating the tribe, Wesley Crusher, the son of the ship's doctor, happens to be on board. Currently training to become a Starfleet officer, Wesley is in a deep personal crisis concerning what he wants to do with his life, a crisis that manifests itself in rebellious behavior against authorities as well as against his friends. A member of the Native American tribe takes interest in him, who later turns out to be the alien "the traveler" who had predicted for Wesley an extraordinary future several years ago and who had now returned to take Wesley with him on a search for new levels of existence. Significantly, then, this alien, who represents one of *Star Trek*'s most esoteric storylines, chooses a Native American identity to motivate the discontent White teenager Wesley Crusher to pay attention to his spiritual self. Even more so, once Wesley has made the decision to join the traveler in search for places "where thought and energy meet," the alien instructs Wesley to begin his studies in the Native American community because they supposedly have special insights that could lead him on the right path.

Native Americans clearly take up the function of spiritual mediator here. They thus fill a void in the image of *Star Trek*'s core group, which the program so insists on imagining as rational and forward-looking that there seems to be no room for developing a spiritual identity. This phenomenon allows two conclusions concerning *Trek*'s representational politics. First, it points to contemporary multi-culturalism's need for spirituality, a need that apparently grows more urgent the more the multicultural core group stresses its own tolerance, which is a decidedly rational concept. Second, it illustrates how multi-culturalism is still incapable of fusing that spirituality and rationality. Spirituality needs to be represented by some ethnic Other, a role, *Star Trek* demonstrates, that Native Americans still fit exceedingly well. The fact that the rational self can never be spiritual, however, inevitably implies that the spiritual Other also cannot be rational. This conclusion not only imposes itself by conversion, but also because, otherwise, the Other would be superior to the member of the Eurocentric core group, a hierarchical distribution *Star Trek*'s evolutionary logic has certainly not intended. Traditional White images of the "Indian" silence any suspicions of aboriginal superiority by making sure to mention the natives' impending genocide, a narrative element that not only produces the sentimental effect desired by the romantic genre in which the texts are typically written, but which also clearly states that spirituality is a luxury in the evolutionary struggle for existence. *Star Trek*, symptomatically, employs that element as well. In both episodes the Native Americans are under threat and need the help of the Federation in order to survive. In "The Paradise Syndrome," the planet on which the tribe lives is about to be destroyed by an asteroid and only the Enterprise's technological know-how can prevent the catastrophe. In "Journey's End" Picard gets his only moments as the forceful and determined leader he usually is when he protects the Native Americans from the violent Cardassians under whose jurisdiction the tribe's settlement now falls. *Star Trek*'s multicultural imaginary thus perpetuates central elements of traditional White narratives of the "Indian," which maintain that the "Indian" only stays "Indian" as long as he remains untouched by civilization, a logic which, in itself, already dooms Native Americans to extinction:

> Since Whites primarily understood the Indian as an antithesis to themselves, the civilization and Indianness as they defined them would forever be opposites. [...] If the Indian changed through the adoption of civilization as defined by Whites, then he was no longer truly Indian according to the image [...].[11]

Although *Star Trek* seems to be aware of the ludicrousness of a Native American culture that remains unchanged through centuries of dramatic social and technological development, the program still cannot shed the mutually exclusive logic of the rationality versus spirituality binarism. Already "Journey's End" attempts to update the Native American culture it imagines by having the members of the tribe not just encounter their own spirits in their vision-rituals but also the gods of other species. The effort to portray a Native American culture that convincingly fits in the 24th century becomes even more obvious in the context of Commander

Chakotay. That *VOY*-character initially does appears to personify the synthesis of rationality and spirituality: He is a Starfleet officer, obviously capable of functioning in such a highly advanced environment, yet he holds on to his "Indian roots." This synthesis particularly manifests itself in the character's visual appearance, wearing a Starfleet uniform yet having his "Indianness" marked by a facial tattoo. Counterbalancing this interesting visual coding, however, is Chakotay's recurring narrative function as, again, the ship's spiritual authority. Whenever Capt. Janeway is in doubt concerning the decisions she has to make, she consults with Chakotay to, quite literally, borrow his spiritual helpers. Filmic codes mark these vision quest scenes as extraordinary, standing apart from the rest of *VOY*'s televisual narrations: the ritual words Chakotay speaks, "A Cuchi Moya," remain in what appears to be his native language—a rather surprising phenomenon considering *Star Trek*'s ever-present "Universal Translator" which automatically translates even the most distant alien language into convenient English—and the scenes are accompanied by a specific musical theme featuring panpipes, an instrument most popularly associated with South American Indians. The scenes thus not only establish a clear contrast to the program's otherwise "rational" storylines, but they also employ, again, well-worn imagery to evoke romantic stereotypes of the "Indian." Although *Star Trek: Voyager* hence makes an explicit effort to draw a more nuanced picture of Native American spirituality, the program is still unwilling to complicate the binary construction of the spiritual versus the rational.

I want to use the character of Chakotay to address another problematic aspect of Native American representations: casting. As Berkhofer observes, film producers (until quite recently) frequently hired White and Asian actors to play "Indian" roles, and if they did cast Native American actors "for background action,"[12] they did so completely insensitive to tribal affiliations. I would even extend Berkhofer's observations in claiming that—until the large-scale success of *Dances With Wolves* (1990) severely challenged mainstream audiences' viewing habits—actors and actresses who were marked by *any* ethnoracial difference could play the "Indian." For example, the only "Indian" entire generations of German audiences could see—the Karl May character "Winnetou" featured in several German films made in the 1960s—was played by a White French actor. Along precisely the same lines, Miramanee, "Kirok"'s short-term wife in "Paradise Syndrome," was played by an actress by the name of Sabrina Scharf.

When developing the figure of Chakotay, *VOY*'s producers seemed to have been aware of these as well as other flaws in traditional representations of Native Americans and they were apparently determined to draw a more correct image. This effort becomes evident in that the *VOY* production team not only hired a science consultant—as had been the rule since *STNG*—but that they also hired an expert, Jamake Highwater, to check each script for accuracy concerning Native American issues.[13] Despite such obvious efforts not to repeat the ignorant White images of Native Americans of the past, however, *VOY* did perpetuate traditional patterns in casting the character of Chakotay.

First of all, while clearly striving to mark Chakotay as Native American, writers and producers seemingly regarded the character's tribal affiliation as only marginal to the figure's identity. Initially, Chakotay's tribal ancestry remained unresolved for a long time.[14] It was then decided upon as Sioux (the Plains Indian again), to be soon after changed to Hopi, to be finally left open again. Indeed, *VOY* began employing the character of Chakotay as precisely that kind of generic "Indian," referring to him only as being "'from a colony of American Indians.'"[15] One contributor to the <native-l@csd.uwm.edu> discussion group summarizes many viewers' dissatisfaction with seeing, once more, a generic "Indian":

> [...T]he show *can* be faulted for not creating a tribal identity for Chakotay, which would help frame him a little better. All we know about his culture is that he has a tattoo, a spirit guide, and uses a machine to imitate the effects of peyote. Also, haunting, "native" reed instruments play on those rare occasions we get to see his private living space [...].

It was not until audience pressure concerning another representational faux pas forced the production team to write a specific tribal heritage into the character that this generic Indianness was specified.

This second faux pas concerns the actor casted to play Chakotay. Robert Beltran is Mexican American, and although he tried to justify his playing an "Indian" role by evoking the Mestizo heritage of many Mexicans,[16] many viewers experienced his presence

as "yet another non-Indian actor [...] in a part that is identifiably Indian and uses trappings from the culture."[17] Only very gradually, and at Beltran's own suggestion, did the producers effectively solve the problem of their own casting decision by specifying Chakotay's tribal affiliation as "south of border", i.e. Mayan, Aztec or Inca[18].

Although *VOY* thus explicitly sets out to draw an image of Native Americans that satisfies audience's heightened sensitivities regarding the accuracy of such representations, the program clearly fails in its own project of political correctness. In this context, it is ironic that the only moments in which *VOY*'s narrations do lastingly disrupt traditional representational politics lie outside of the type of self-conscious multicultural discourse to which *Star Trek* usually subscribes. This lasting disruption is achieved when *VOY* uses humor to address stereotypes of Native Americans. Two such instances exemplify the mechanisms at work. First, in *VOY*'s pilot episode, "The Caretaker," Tom Paris tries to save Chakotay's life in an extremely tight situation. While Chakotay attempts to dissuade Paris from risking his own life, Paris jokes about how, if he succeeds, Chakotay would be forever in his debt. To his question, "Isn't that some Indian custom?" Chakotay replies, "Wrong tribe!" Second, in the two-part episode "Basics," the starship Voyager falls into the hands of the hostile Kazons, who maroon the crew on an inhospitable planet. Being robbed of all their technology, the crew has to struggle with the most quotidian problems in order to survive. They, first of all, try to make a fire. When they remain unsuccessful for a long time, Chakotay remarks dispiritedly that he was the only Indian for light-years around and not even capable of making a fire.

In both these scenes, humor is used to relax a tense situation. The scenes do not set out to address Native American culture, they rather evoke "Indianness" in a mere functional way, almost incidentally. In order to achieve this effect of relaxation, the scenes bring up specific stereotypes of Native Americans, which the "real" Indian Chakotay then proves wrong. He does that, in the first scene, by pointing to the great diversity of existing Native American cultures in contrast to the generic "Indian" culture the stereotypical image holds on to, and in the second scene, by demonstrating that the skills stereotypically ascribed to Native Americans belong to a specific historical environment and that they do get lost once they are no longer practiced.

The scenes are effective in challenging the logic of traditional image-making for two reasons. First, they manage to address and effectively critique central problems in the cultural image of the "Indian" which *Star Trek: Voyager* could not prevent itself from repeating. And, second, the critique works in these scenes precisely because they leave the self-conscious multicultural mode the series otherwise adheres to. The scenes are among the few moments when *Star Trek* allows itself to acknowledge the existence of cultural stereotypes among its own core group, something the program is only able to do—without disrupting *Trek*'s very premise—in a humorous mode. The laughter these scenes produce allows the core-group-identified audience to interrogate their own prejudice in a context that is unthreatening yet that clearly endorses the Native American point of view, as, to put it casually, the laughs are on the ignorant Whites.

In conclusion, an analysis of Native Americans as "non-estranged Others" reveals symptomatic features of *Star Trek*'s imagination of core- and marginalized groups. This imagination is a decidedly complex one, negotiating between traditional representational practices, to which both producers and audiences are accustomed, and *Star Trek*'s own multicultural image. Out of this ideological tension, *Star Trek*'s representational politics emerge as a constantly up-dated version of a Western imaginary in which Native Americans continue to merely serve a symbolic function for a decidedly White core culture, providing a projection space in which those of that core culture's needs and desires that would disrupt the group's self-image can be played out. These needs and desires encompass the yearning for a spirituality that has been written out of White identity in the process of its multiculturalization, or the need for a cultural referent that allows the core culture to still imagine certain narrative constellations typical of the Science Fiction genre, such as the sympathetic colonizer, when the group's self-imposed multicultural conscience marks these as taboo. Thus, although the visual surface of *Star Trek*'s representational practices does adapt to changing audience sensibilities, the representational politics remain essentially unchanged. The program can truly challenge that politics only in those moments when it leaves its own safely contained multicultural logic in humorous narrations that

transgress the limitations of a marketable political correctness.

Notes

1. Jenny Wolmark, *Aliens and Others: Science Fiction, Feminism and Postmodernism* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994).

2. Quoted in: John Tulloch and Henry Jenkins, *Science Fiction Audience: Watching Doctor Who and Star Trek* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 4.

3. Stephen E. Whitfield and Gene Roddenberry, *The Making of Star Trek* (New York: Ballantine, 1968) 40.

4. Edward Gross and Mark A. Altman, *Creating The Next Generation* (London: Boxtree, 1995) 128.

5. Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vinatge Books, 1979) 3.

6. Judging from the paraphernalia the episode features, the tribe appears to belong to the family of the Sioux, the one Native American culture "Indians" have stereotypically been reduced to. See Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 89-90.

7. See Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 97.

8. For a succinct discussion of the "good Indian"—"bad Indian" dichotomy, see Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 28-30.

9. This episode as well as later ones suggest that this tribe was not the only one to leave Earth. The implied question then, whether there are still any Natives Americans left on Earth, dangerously writes a late "success" into the history of the colonial genocide in North America.

10. It is revealed that Picard, who uneasily agrees to remove the tribe in order to prevent a large-scale interplanetary war, has an ancestor who participated in brutally putting down the Pueblo revolt of 1618. While the episode thus evokes historical guilt, it has, at the same time, Picard reject this responsibility, a point of view the narrative clearly endorses.

11. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 29.

12. Ibid., 103.

13. Stephen Edward Poe, *Star Trek Voyager: A Vision of the Future* (New York: Pocket, 1998) 288.

14. Ibid., 206.

15. Ibid., 221.

16. Ibid., 302.

17. Quoted from a contribution to the online-discussion-group <nativelit-l@csd.uwm.edu>.

18. Ibid.

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Asian Americans and American Immigration and Naturalization Policy

Yvonne Walter

> The question is no longer,
> "How do people become Americans?"
> but rather "How has America
> become its people?"[1]

Since its beginnings, the United States has been heralded as a nation of immigrants, a safe haven for those who have to leave their homes, be the reasons hunger, political or religious persecution, the desire for land or the possibility of finding work. This self-perception as a country of immigration has been carved in stone at the foot of the symbol of the immigrant nation, the Statue of Liberty.

> ...Give me your tired, your poor,
> your huddled masses yearning to breath free,
> The wretched refuse of your teeming shore...

The poet Emma Lazarus' assuring words are testimony for the entry of millions of immigrants who soon became Americans and helped to shape this nation.

The welcoming of new immigrants, however, has been a selective process and it is no coincidence that the Statue of Liberty, erected in New York, has been welcoming European immigrants to the American shores. In the West, the detention center at Angel Island, in view of the former maximum security prison at Alcatrez, was used for decades to interrogate Chinese immigrants before they were allowed to enter the United States, and in the Southwest, a barbed wire fence was built to control Mexican and South American immigration in the last decades of the twentieth century. Two hundred years earlier, Africans were involuntarily brought to Southern shores to endure a life of hardship and forced labor for themselves and their descendents under slavery.

The immigration history of Asians in the United States is the result of race-conscious immigration and naturalization policies practiced by the government of the U.S.. Although the concept of race was never officially ascribed to policies and laws regarding the immigration of Asians, the repeated patterns of exclusion, denial of citizenship and unequal laws applied successively to immigrants from different Asian countries have made it obvious that their racial difference from the white American mainstream was the reason for this legislation.[2] Immigration, in the case of Asians, has been racialized.

For my analysis of race-biased legislation against Asian Americans and their consequences I will concentrate on two areas of legislation of the American legal system regarding Asian immigrants: naturalization laws and immigration policy. Naturalization is the process that leads to the acquisition of citizenship. This process starts upon the petition of the immigrant after a certain waiting period. The requirements and tests that lead to a successful completion of the naturalization process are also mandated by law but are not the object of analysis here. The process of immigration is regulated by the U.S. legislature with the help of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) which is the executive agency.

I will base my argument on Chinese immigrants, who were the first Asians to come to the United States in larger numbers, as an example for Asian immigration. Starting in 1850, Chinese immigration lasted unregulated for only 30 years and never made up more than 5% of the entire immigration for any given year during this period.[3] In this regard, it is interesting to note that the numbers of immigrants were proportionally small compared to the negative public attention these immigrants received, particularly at the West Coast, nor to the harsh response of lawmakers. No other immigrant group had to endure a similar number of exclusion laws and consistent denial of citizenship. The reasons for this discriminatory treatment of immigrants from the Pacific rim are grounded in racist beliefs of white European supremacy and the stereotypes of Asians as homogeneous masses of people who look different and would create a danger to American social and labor life, the so-called "yellow peril" image.

The first immigration of Asians dates back to the 18th century[4] but images and stereotypes of people

from this continent are even older and were well established in the United States when the first wave of Asian immigrants reached American shores. These images were deeply ingrained in the European and, later, American imagination through military or other unequal encounters with Asians ranging from the conquests of the Greeks in India, the mythic and sensual tales of Marco Polo's China, and the "yellow invasion" of Europe by the Mongolians in the fourteenth century to the colonizing attempts of Great Britain and France in East and Southeast Asia and the forced opening of Japanese harbors by the American Commodore Perry in 1853. As Said argues in *Orientalism*, in all these encounters Asians were perceived as weaker, darker, more sensual, homogeneous, in a word, racially different from Europeans.[5] The construction of Asians as the racially Other, inferior to the majority of Americans who were and are white has had an impact on the policies regarding Asian immigration. Therefore, *orientalism*, the construction of Asians as culturally and racially different, from the white, Anglo-Saxon norm has an additional component in the United States: Asians and Asian Americans are perceived as foreigners, forever aliens who are unable to completely assimilate into the American mainstream.

The first laws concerning immigration in the United States that were passed reflect the racist thinking of those days. During the colonial period, immigration was not regulated. On the contrary, certain incentives were used to attract new settlers to people a virgin land (in the white European perspective). Land, work, and immediate citizenship were offered to interested Western Europeans and at the same time, black slaves were brought to the Eastern shores. In 1790, America had become exceedingly diverse in its ethnic and racial background. Congress took over control of immigration and naturalization proceedings by passing "An uniform standard for Naturalization" which allowed only white men to become American citizens.[6] Although this law was changed several times, the racist exclusion of non-white persons remained in place until African Americans acquired citizenship after the Civil War and the naturalization laws were changed to include persons of African nativity and descent in 1870. Chinese Americans, however, and subsequently all immigrants from the Asian continent were still considered aliens, *ineligible for citizenship*.

At the same time, though, the 15th amendment to the Constitution marked a tremendous achieve-ment in the struggle for racial equality in the United States since it granted citizenship to anyone born within the borders of the U.S., regardless of race or geographical origin of the parents. The American born descendants of Asian immigrants were able to profit from that amendment, though much later, when a second generation had grown in the different ethnic communities of the Asian diaspora. The children had thus acquired by birth what their parents were denied throughout their lifetime.

Asian immigrants did not readily accept their denial of citizenship papers and in fact, particularly at the beginning of Chinese immigration to the United States, several petitioners were allowed to naturalize despite existing laws. Once the number of naturalization-seeking Asians increased, however, the courts rejected all attempts of Asian immigrants to become Americans and, in line with the immigration laws, the Supreme Court finally ruled twice that Asians were ineligible for citizenship. In the famous Ozawa v. U.S. (1922) the petitioner argued that he had lived most of his life in the United States, spoke fluent English and was not familiar with Japanese customs and language at all. The Supreme Court nevertheless decided that Ozawa was not eligible because

> [T]he intention [of the naturalization acts from 1790 on] was to confer the privilege of citizenship upon that class of persons whom the fathers knew as white, and to deny it to all who could not be so classified.[7]

The Court furthermore argued that "white" was to mean "Caucasian," and that Ozawa as a Japanese "is clearly of a race which is not Caucasian..."[8]

In 1923, the Asian Indian Bhagat Sigh Thind went to court on the grounds that he as an Indian was of Caucasian origin. The Court ruled that "Caucasian" and "white" were not necessarily synonymous and that "Caucasian" was commonly understood as European.[9] Furthermore, the Court argued that because of the racial differences of Asians, assimilation into the American society was not likely.

> ...[I]t cannot be doubted that the children born in this country of Hindu parents would

> retain indefinitely the clear evidence of their ancestry. ...What we suggest is [...] racial difference, and it is of such character and extent that the great body of our people instinctively recognize it and reject the thought of assimilation.[10]

The ban on naturalization was finally lifted during World War II. Clearly as a gesture towards China as an ally in the Pacific theater, Chinese immigrants were given the right to naturalize in 1943, Filipinos followed in 1946 and the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 finally abolished race-oriented regulations of naturalization.[11] After an immigration history of more than 100 years, Asian immigrants could now become naturalized Asian Americans.

While naturalization was virtually impossible for Asian immigrants during the 19th century, immigration itself was not restricted early on. The first Asians to come to the United States in larger numbers were Chinese from the Southern provinces and for the first thirty years of Chinese immigration, from about 1849 to 1880, there was a constant flow of immigrants to California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska. Chinese laborers engaged in fishing, gold mining, laundry and railroad work, usually for less pay than white workers and under unfavorable working conditions. Nevertheless, the wages these men earned and sent home were sufficient enough to support their families in China, something they would not have been able to do without migrating. America became such a desirable place of immigration that long after the California gold rush was over, the Chinese still called the country *Gold Mountain*.

Most laborers intended to remain sojourners, working for a time in the United States and then returning home with their acquired wealth. However, low wages in the U.S. and gloomy reports about the economic situation in China prolonged their stay and later turned the sojourners into immigrants determined to stay in the United States to settle permanently. The increasing numbers of immigrants, their willingness to remain and heightened concerns about the Chinese as competitors for jobs aroused the fear and suspicion of the American population in this area. Though Chinese were just one immigrant group among various other groups that mainly arrived from the East cost, and even more so during the California gold rush after 1849, they were visibly identifiable as not being American, meaning white.

Soon the California and other legislatures responded to protests from the white population and issued a number of ordinances and laws to make a living in these states more complicated for the Chinese, with the intentions of forcing them out of these areas. The foreign miners tax from 1850 was to be collected from all non-citizens but was actually only taken from the Chinese, often even more than once. Other legislation, like the laundry ordinances of San Francisco, had the same objective of limiting Chinese immigration. Most of these measures, though a burden for the Chinese population, failed in keeping Asian immigrants away from the West Coast areas.

Finally in 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first law in the United States that denied immigration to a specific ethnic group.[12] The law excluded Chinese laborers from entering the United States. Merchants, tourists, and students, however, were allowed to stay for a limited period of time. The Chinese already residing in the country were not affected by this law and could travel back to China for visits without being held back at the borders. However, six years later the Scott Act denied people who had left the United States for family visits a re-entry.[13] Chinese who had been in the U.S. for years were suddenly stranded without the possibility of getting back home. The Geary Act (1892) forced Chinese immigrants to register, something that they feared would eventually make it easier for immigration officials to deport them. Therefore, many Chinese did not comply with the law. The Chinese Exclusion Law was extended for ten years in 1892 and finally made permanent in 1904.

Thereafter, prospective immigrants (usually biological children of citizens or of those Chinese who claimed to be children of citizens after the earthquake of 1906, when most public records in San Francisco were destroyed) had to undergo harsh interrogations about the correctness of their documents and their intentions. In 1910, Angel Island Detention Center was set up in San Francisco Bay to control the entire Chinese oversea travel. Before they could enter the United States, Chinese immigrants were detained in the facilities of this tiny island for an agonizing period ranging from two weeks to two years. Until 1940, an estimated 50,000 Chinese passed through this island before they could settle in the United States.[14]

Until 1965, Chinese immigration was almost non-existent and the results this exclusion policy had on the Chinese communities in the United States were apparent for a long time. Since the large majority of Chinese immigrants were male laborers, families could not be formed in the United States.[15] Many of the laborers had wives in China who had to attend the family estate in the absence of their husbands which could last for decades, and in many cases, throughout the lifetime of the couples. This *split-family formation* or *mutilated families* not only had negative psychological effects on the families but prolonged the Asian patriarchal structures in families in the United States after 1965. The numerical and social dominance of Chinese males, along with a residential segregation and cultural differentiation, prolonged the acculturation process for Chinese immigrants and is another factor for the prevailing perception of Asians as foreigners.

The lack of Chinese women in the United States created a high demand for Chinese prostitution. Women were lured or sold into prostitution and brought to the United States, often disguised as merchant wives. Soon Chinese prostitution – not the prostitution of white women – was seen as a nuisance along the West coast and lawmakers reacted with the Page Law (1875) which allowed customs officers at harbors to deny entry to Asian women, who they thought would engage in prostitution in the United States.[16] Thus, many of the few Chinese women who actually came to the U.S. were returned upon the custom officers' will. Again, a group was singled out because of racial differences and while white women from the East coast could quite freely satisfy the demand for sexual pleasures along the male-dominated frontier line, Chinese women were kept out of the country under the pretense that the government worried about their moral and physical well-being.

Exclusion laws were subsequently passed for immigrants from other Asian countries. Since Japan was a powerful nation in the Pacific region at the beginning of the 20th century, the United States government did not dare to exclude Japanese laborers, who had been brought into the country after the Chinese exclusion Act. Rather, a Gentlemen's Agreement was signed by both governments in 1907, halting the immigration of Japanese laborers but allowing for the immigration of brides and wives.[17] Thus, a second generation of Japanese Americans could grow up long before Chinese Americans were able to form families. South Asian Indians were excluded in 1917 with the passage of an immigration act which established the *Asian barred zone*, a geographical region, mainly comprising East, South, Southeast Asia, the Asian part of Russia and parts of Persia, from which immigration was no longer allowed.[18]

American nativism finally culminated in the immigration act of 1924 with the establishment of "immigration" quotas.[19] Originally passed to limit immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe, it also denied entry to all aliens ineligible for citizenship, thus completely stopping Asian immigration. A small quota of visas for Asian countries could only be used by whites who happened to be born there.[20]

After 1924, only Filipinos were still allowed to enter the United States as immigrants. The Philippines had been an American colony since 1898 and Filipinos subsequently were American nationals. Ineligible to acquire citizenship as non-white, they nevertheless were not aliens and thus not subject to immigration laws. The Tydings-McDuffy Act of 1934, however, excluded Filipinos from entering the United States in exchange for the promise of independence within the next ten years.[21]

The exclusion of one ethnic Asian group after another, when at the same time European mass immigration could flow more or less uninterrupted, discloses the racist character of U.S. immigration laws in the past, even though the category of exclusion was ethnicity. In their excellent work *Racial Formation in the United States*, Michael Omi and Howard Winant argue that the dominant paradigm for race has been ethnicity. By insisting that the Chinese, Japanese, or Asian Indian immigrants are just as ethnically defined as, for example, immigrants from Germany, Italy or Ireland, the ethnic paradigm assumes a similar immigration experience for all ethnicities, which is finally to end in complete assimilation into the American mainstream society (as has been the case with European ethnicities). The ethnic paradigm, however, denies the existence of racial inequalities and different (racialized) immigration experiences for racial minorities, since the category *race* does not exist within the theoretical framework of this paradigm. By excluding an entire racial category (all Asian immigrants) according to ethnic features, the immigration laws nevertheless reveal their racist intentions.[22]

World War II was not only a watershed for the beginning of the removal of race-biased naturalization laws but also of the introduction of more egalitarian immigration laws. In 1943, China was accorded a symbolic quota of 105 immigration visas, and, even more important, an act passed in 1943 made it possible for American servicemen to bring home their Chinese wives, who were not counted within this quota.[23] Similar laws were subsequently passed for immigrants from other Asian countries.

The McCarran-Walter Act (1952)completely discarded race as a restrictive factor for immigration by establishing a quota of 170,000 visas for the Eastern Hemisphere, or 20,000 immigration visas alloted to every single Asian country.[24] The law was not entirely color-blind, however, since people of Asian descent who lived in non-Asian countries (and even those who were citizens of these countries) were counted within the Asian quota while prospective European immigrants were not. The frustration surrounding this supposedly progressive act was summarized in Congress by the Chinese American Senator Fong from Hawaii:

> ...It is offensive to the peoples of Asia and the Pacific that they should be accountable to quotas by race when other immigrants are accountable to quotas by their place of birth. We cannot justify this provision of our law by pointing to the more discriminatory laws which existed prior to 1952.[25]

The most important change of immigration policy, however, came with the Amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 with profound implications that the framers had neither expected nor intended. This amendment entirely discarded the quota system and established a preference system under which the unification of families and the immigration of professionals were especially supported. Besides the partly negative effects this new immigration policy had on third-world countries (brain-drain), it radically changed the make-up of the Asian American communities in the United States, since Asians could profit most from that law. The split families could be united after decades of separation and many highly-skilled workers were allowed to immigrate and bring their families. The Asian emphasis on extended family structures caused a so-called *chain immigration*, where first a nuclear family, and later uncles, cousins and other relatives would apply for visas. Within three decades, the percentage of Asian immigrants of the entire immigration to the United States jumped from virtually nothing to about 30%.[26]

A Cambodian refugee works in a grocery store. For many recent Asian immigrants it is difficult to increase their socio-economic position in the United States.

Despite the color-blindness and racial equality this law has been celebrated for, the implications for the Asian American communities are not without difficulties and ambiguities. Currently, the Asian American population in the United States is more than 60% foreign-born and of those first generation immigrants many do not speak English sufficiently to secure high-skilled jobs or to move within American society without problems.[27] The large number of highly successful Asian Americans, usually descending from generations of Asians who have been in the country for a long time, cannot hide the fact that another large number of Asian Americans, often first generation immigrants or recent immigrant groups, live below the poverty line, that, in fact, some Asian American groups are the poorest segment of

the American society.[28] Furthermore, the success of the former account for the perception of Asian Americans as a model minority and voices are getting louder to exclude this group from affirmative action programs and other supportive measures for historically disadvantaged racial minorities. The University of California system has already deleted Asian Americans from the list of preferred category in the college admissions process. Especially in California and along the West Coast, where most of the Asian Americans on the U.S. mainland still reside, anti-Asian sentiments are growing and racist violence is not rare (and neither limited to the West coast).[29]

Racial discrimination in immigration and naturalization legislation is only one instance of discriminatory practices against Asian Americans throughout their history in the United States. Although the race-bias in laws regarding the permanent settlement of aliens in the U.S. and their legal status has been abolished, the implications of these legal practices are far-reaching and the scars are still visible within the Asian American communities and will continue so for some time.

Even though I analyzed naturalization and immigration policies separately, both areas belong together and are mutually dependent. A just and equal immigration process allows prospective immigrants to smoothly integrate into the host society. Immigrants usually want to participate in the social and cultural processes of their receiving country, even though they may maintain cultural practices of their own national origin. A naturalization process that supports these intentions should be the basis for political equality among a nation's citizens. In the case of Asian immigrants in the United States these preconditions were not given for a long time, thus excluding Asians from participating in American society and fostering the feeling of marginalization. The reversal of these discriminatory policies has been one step on the way for an equal citizenship.

Notes

1. Rene Tajima, "Site-Seeing Through Asian America," in *Mapping Multiculturalism*, ed. Avery F. Gordon and Christopher Newfield (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 292.

2. Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1996), 19.

3. In fact, the entire immigration from China never comprised of more than 5% of the entire immigration to the United States until the 1950s. For a detailed account of Asian immigration data see: Herbert Barringer, et al., *Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States* (New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1993), Table 2.1., 24-26.

4. The first recorded Asian immigrants — apart from American Indians who are now considered natives to the Americas — were ship-jumping Filipino sailors of the Manila galleon trade. See e.g. Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 25.

5. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); see also Gary Y. Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle, London: University of Washington Press, 1994), ch. 1, 5.

6. An Act to Establish an Uniform Rule of Naturalization, March 28, 1790, 1st Congress, Sess. II, Ch. 3, 1790.

7. Takao Ozawa v. US, 260 U.S. 178 (1922).

8. Ibid.

9. U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind, 261 U.S. 204 (1923).

10. Ibid.

11. Immigration and Nationality Act of June 27, 1952, Public Law 414, Statutes at Large 66: 163.

12. 22 Stat. 58 (May 6, 1882).

13. 25 Stat. 504 (October 1, 1888).

14. On Angel Island see e.g. Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 231-239.

15. American women, no matter of what ethnicity, who married aliens ineligible for citizenship, acquired the legal status of their husband and therefore lost their citizenship. White women, since they were allowed to naturalize, could retain their citizen status upon divorce. The Cable Act, 42 Stat. 1021 (September 22, 1922), was amended in 1931. Nevertheless, these legal constraints kept many American women from marrying Asian immigrants.

16. 18 Stat. 477 (March 3, 1875).

17. The agreement also included Korean immigrants, since Korea had been under Japanese rule since 1895.

18. Immigration Act, 39 Stat. 874 (February 5, 1917).

19. Immigration Act, 43 Stat. 153 (May 26, 1924).

20. Harry H. L. Kitano and Roger Daniels, *Asian Americans: Emerging Minorities*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1995), 14.

21. A promise, that the U.S. government actually fulfilled in 1946 after the end of World War II.

22. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 9-24.

23. Kitano and Daniels, *Asian Americans*, 42; also: Magnuson Act of December 17, 1943, Public Law 199, Statutes at Large 57: 600; and Act of July 2, 1946, Public Law 471, Statutes at Large 60: 1353.

24. See note 10.

25. Letter of Senator Hiram L. Fong to Rep. Francis L. Walter, Chairman, Immigration and Nationality Subcommittee, House of Representatives, *Congressional Records* 922, Vol. 106, 86/2, Extension of Remarks, September 1, 1960, 19201.

26. See note 2.

27. In 1990, 63.1% of the 7, 226,986 Asian Americans were foreign born <www.census.gov80/population/www/documentation/twps0029/tab08.html>.

28. For example in 1990, Laotians (67.2%), Hmong (65.5%), Cambodians (46.9%), and Vietnamese (33.5%) had a much higher poverty rate than the average American poverty rate of 9.6 %. In fact, only Filipinos and Japanese fared better than the U.S. average with a poverty rate of 6.2 % and 4.2 % respectively. United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990s: A Report of the United States Commission on Civil Rights* (February 1992) 17.

29. Ibid., 22-49.

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Resources

Further Readings on Race Relations

by J. Kelly Robison

The list of works on race relations in the United States is long and varied. Most of the scholarly literature in existence reflects the history of slavery and black-white relations, but the field of Chicano studies, Asian American studies and the relations between the majority white population and other ethic groups is growing. This short bibliography is only a sample of the literature on this topic and includes some of the best-known works in the field as well as some newer arrivals.

From the lengthy bibliography of general works on race relations in the United States, relatively few examine race relations in an objective fashion. Such is the case of *Race Matters* (1994) by Cornel West, director of Princeton University's Afro-American Studies program. While this work is a call for social change, it does examine race relations in a critical, though unobjective manner. Another work of similar type is Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.'s *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (1992). Michael Levin's *Why Race Matters: Race Differences and What They Mean* (1997) examines the genetic and intellectual differences between races and explores what these differences mean in the larger arena.

From the history of race relations bookshelf, Winthrop Jordan's *The White Man's Burden* (1974) is an excellent introduction to the historical background of race relations between Black and White. *Race and Manifest Destiny: the Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (1981), by Reginald Horsman, examines the westward expansion of the United States and its people in light of the prevailing White American ethnocentrism of the first half of the nineteenth century. *Peoples of Color in the American West* (1994), edited by Sucheng Chan, et al, takes a look at race relations in the great melting pot of the American West, where different ethnic groups mixed and mingled (and often fought) in greater variety than in the East.

One favorite topic of historians and students of history is the history of slavery in the United States. The bibliography for slavery works is very long, but one of the best is Kenneth M. Stampp's *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (1972). Stampp examines slavery as an economic institution, finding that it was quite successful in that respect, but it was a social failure because it enslaved the masters as well as the slaves and was at odds with American society at large. Eugene D. Genovese's excellent *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (1974) views slavery from a class-systems standpoint, disagreeing, in the end, with Stampp on the subordinate actions of the slaves. *Time on the Cross* (1974), by Robert W. Fogel and Stanley Engerman, refutes traditional views of slavery by stating that slavery was a profitable institution and not dying out by the Civil War.

Socially and culturally, perhaps even more so than economically, slavery defined the South. An excellent work that examines the culture of slavery, and the culture that slavery made, is Charles Joyner's *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (1984). Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (1988) and *Ar'N't I A Woman? : Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (1999, reprint edition), by Deborah Gray White, are two of the best works about women and life under slavery.

T. H. Breen and Innes, Stephen's *"Myne Own Ground": Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1640-1676* (1980), Gary B. Nash's *Red, White and Black: The Peoples of Early North America* (1997, revised edition) and Wesley Frank Craven's *White, Red, and*

Black: The Seventeenth Century Virginian (1971) all discuss race relations during the American colonial period. Carl N. Degler's *Neither Black Nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (1971) is a good comparative study of race relations.

Of the myriad works dealing with Black/White race relations after the Civil War, C. Vann Woodward's *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1966), though an elder work, is still one of the best for succinctly narrating the history of segregation from the Civil War to the Civil Rights Movement. For the period shortly after the Civil War, I would recommend Thomas Holt's *Black Over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina during Reconstruction* (1977). *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (1980), by William M. Chafe, is a good book on the history of the Civil Rights Movement examined using Greensboro as a case study. Harvard Sitkoff's *The Struggle for Black Equality: 1954-1980* (1981) is another nice general study of the time period. Stephen B. Oates's *Let the Trumpet Sound: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (1982) is probably the definitive scholarly study of the life of the great Civil Rights leader set in the context of the struggle for civil rights.

Two interesting works that examine race relations in the post Civil Right Movement era are William Julius Wilson's *Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions* (1978) and Herman Gray's *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for Blackness* (1995)

A growing field of interest in American history is that of Hispanic Americans. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (1999), by Rodolfo Acuna, is a nicely done, general study as is the dated *Foreigners in Their Own Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans* (1973) by David J. Weber. Albert Camarillo's *Chicanos in a Changing Society : From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (1996), provides a solid base for the history of and problems surrounding present-day Hispanic/White relations. Arnold DeLeon's *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes Toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (1983) delves into white perceptions of Hispanics in Texas, a state with a long history of both conflict and cooperation between the ethnic groups. Conflict is the theme of Rodolfo Acua and Peggy Shackelton's *Cultures in Conflict: Problems of the Mexican Americans* (1970).

Publications about Asian Americans have been increasing since the 1990s. Two comprehensive works about the history of Asian Americans in the U.S. are Ronald Takaki's *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, (revised and updated, 1998) and Sucheng Chan's *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (1991). Roger Daniels' and Harry H. L. Kitano's *Asian Americans: Emerging Minority* not only includes a historical perspective of this minority but a look at contemporary issues. For stereotypes of Asian Americans I recommend Gary Y. Okihiro's *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (1994). Diane Yen-Mei Wong et al., *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings by and about Asian American Women* (1989) and its sequel, by Elaine H. Kim, ed., *Making More Waves: New Writing by Asian American Women* are fine collections of essays, stories and poems about the life of Asian American women in the U.S. There are quite a number of books dealing with the Japanese American experience in and after World War II. Roger Daniel's *Concentration Camps North America: Japanese in the United States and Canada during World War II* (1993) tells the story of Japanese internment while Mitchell T. Maki, Harry H. L. Kitano, S. Megan Berthold and Roger Daniels, *Achieving the Impossible Dream: How Japanese Americans Obtained Redress* (1999) gives a detailed account of the movement for redress for the former internees.

One of the better works on Native American and white interaction in recent years is Fergus M. Bordewich's *Killing the White Man's Indian: The Reinvention of Native Americans at the End of the 20th Century* (1996). Brian W. Dippie's *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (1982) looks at Native American/white relations in the late nineteenth and to the mid-twentieth centuries. Though a bit old, Lewis Hanke's *Aristotle and the American Indians; A Study in Race Prejudice in the Modern World* (1970) is an excellent study of the formation of European and white American perceptions of Native peoples in the Americas.

Internet Resources

The following web sites are only a few of the many out on the World Wide Web that contain information on race relations. Those chosen here deal explicitly with race relations, rather than those that in some way or another tackle the history and/or culture of specific ethnic groups.

http://www1.whitehouse.gov/Initiatives/OneAmerica/america.html
One America web site at the White House server. Includes the President's Initiative on Race and the Initiative on One America.

http://www.policy.com/issuewk/98/0713/071398b.html
Policy.com's page on race relations and the President's Initiative on Race. Contains links to other sites dealing with race relations in the United States.

http://www.nara.gov/exhall/exhibits.html
National Archives and Records Administration Online Exhibit Hall. Includes exhibits on Black Chicago and the Emancipation Proclamation, among other items.

http://www.fred.net/nhhs/project/civrts.htm
A page on Civil Rights in an American high school (North Hagerstown High School in Hagerstown, Maryland). Some nice features of this site on race and the dream of the Civil Rights Movement are student essays, a historical timeline, and a history trivia quiz.

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/race_relations/race_relations.html
A list of past programs of the PBS News Hour dealing with race.

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/race/
Two Nations of Black America from the PBS web site. This site contains essays, a short history of civil rights, interviews with prominent Civil Rights leaders, and audio sources.

http://www.pbs.org/skindeep/skindeep.htm
Skindeep is the web site for the PBS program of the same name. Includes a self-administered test on race in the United States and a discussion forum.

http://www.whc.net/irish/govt/ap/issues/issue-22.htm
Public Policy: Race Relations. Another High school site (Cathedral High School in El Paso, Texas). It consists, primarily, of links to other sites.

http://www.wcl.american.edu/pub/journals/lawrev/parker.htm
American University Law Review Online. An essay by Frank R. Parker called, *The Damaging Consequences of The Rehnquist Court's Commitment to Color-Blindness Versus Racial Justice*. February, 1996.

http://web.missouri.edu/~c617756/peace.html
THE PEACE PAGE. A personal web site at the University of Missouri. Devoted to multiculturalism and inter-racial understanding. Includes links to other sites.

http://web.uvic.ca/history-robinson/
Who Killed William Robinson? is a historical murder mystery based on factual evidence. Robinson was one of three African Americans killed in the Pacific Northwest. A Native American was tried and convicted of the crime. An excellent site for reviewing historical race relations.

http://dir.yahoo.com/society_and_culture/issues_and_causes/race_relations/
Yahoo! List of links on race relations.

Classroom Clips

Are U.S. Schools Really Violent?

by Leslie J. Herring

"High school is the threshold through which every young American must pass."[1] However structured this threshold must be, the law, which varies from state to state, declares that students between the ages of 14-16 must attend school before they are allowed to drop out.

In 1821, Boston opened the first public high school and 70 years later New York followed suit. Thereafter the idea spread throughout the U.S. and in 1894, a so-called "Committee of Ten," under the guidance of the president of Harvard, Charles R. Eliot, set out to standardize the high school curriculum.[2] Yet it was not until after World War II that the concept of a high school for everyone was grasped. For a century prior to that, there was a strong resistance as children were needed to provide extra income and the benefits of an education were not measured.

The original intent of high schools was to assist in helping students adapt to an ever-changing world. However, this idea was and still is far from reality.

> High school remains, as it always has been, the weak link in our education system because Americans have never been able to agree on what it should accomplish. The principal reason high schools now enroll nearly all teenagers is that we can't imagine what else they might do.[3]

Over the years, American high schools have become a highly criticized institution, yet seldom challenged and violence falls under one of the criticized categories. National as well as international media has been capitalizing on what appears to be an ever-increasing trend towards violence in the American schools. However, according to a study written by Thomas M. MacLellan for the National Governor's Association, violence has decreased in the past few years and what seems to be publicized is the amount of fear in students and teachers. Nevertheless, MacLellan's study does reveal some astonishing statistics about the amount of crime and violence associated with American schools. Theft, which accounts for 62% of all crimes against students, is the most common school related crime. Of the approximately 44,100,000 students enrolled in elementary and secondary schools throughout the U.S., almost 1,000,000 students carried a gun to school during the 1997-98 school year. However, students are not the only victims of violent crimes; teachers are also victimized. On the average, teachers are victims of approximately 18,000 violent crimes per year. Male teachers are the most often targeted victims of serious violent crimes. However, the study did not indicate whether these crimes happen on school grounds.[4]

These statistics do not help one feel secure about the current situation of violence in U.S. schools, therefore we felt it was necessary to invite teachers and principals to respond to the increasing amount of criticism that U.S. schools have been receiving. In February, educators from the U.S. were contacted to answer such questions as: Is violence a problem at your school? If so, what has your school specifically done to combat it? If violence is not a problem in your school, what policies does your school have? For those who have been in the system for awhile, what kind of change have you seen in your students over the years? What is your reaction or the reactions of your colleagues to the publicized violence that has been happening in American schools? What follows are two responses we received.

Notes

1. Thomas Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager* (New York: Avon Books, 1999), 139.
2. Ibid., 156.
3. Ibid., 157.
4. <http://www.nga.org/pubs/issueBriefs/1999/Sum990823SafeSchools.asp>

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Spring Brings More Than Flowers to School Plans

by Connie Cook

With the coming of warm weather, American schools are on alert for potential school violence problems. According to a CBS News survey, of the 103 violent school deaths tracked since the start of the 1996 school year, 50 (48%) occurred in the final three months of the school year. While it is too early to call this a trend, the evidence is strong.

Some educators think this happens because students build up resentments during the course of the year, and then try to "get even" as the end of the term approaches. Professional school psychologists suggest that there are 15 signs to look for that indicate a student may be prone to violence:

1. Social withdrawal
2. Excessive feelings of isolation and being alone
3. Excessive feelings of rejection
4. A victim of violence
5. Feeling of being picked on and persecuted
6. Low school interest and poor academic performance
7. Expression of violence in writings and drawings
8. Uncontrolled anger
9. Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating and bullying behaviors
10. History of discipline problems
11. Past history of violent and aggressive behaviors
12. Intolerance for differences and prejudicial attitudes
13. Drug and alcohol use
14. Inappropriate access to, possession of, and use of firearms
15. Serious threat of doing violence to others.

Teachers and administrators try to keep these warning signs in mind as they deal with students; if a child exhibits several of these signs, parents may be contacted or other health professionals asked to do an in-depth analysis of the student.

In addition to observing student personality traits more closely the final months of the year, school administrators review their crisis plans to make certain that all staff members know how to react in an emergency. Doors to the outside are kept locked, and more security safeguards are in place including cameras and extra adult personnel in the hallways.

Even though spring brings heightened awareness to the problem, the data shows that overall school violence is declining sharply. Violent deaths in schools dropped 40% between 1998 and 1999. However, those incidents which do occur receive exaggerated attention. A recent poll found that seven out of ten Americans believe a school shooting in their community is not only possible, they think it is likely. Consequently, school boards, parents and school personnel will remain alert to possible signs of spring violence.

Here at Meredith Middle School, where I am principal, we have instituted a number of safety measures in the last year. Our school has grades 6, 7 and 8 with about 250 students in each grade for a total of 750-770 students.

We are physically joined to a high school of 1,200 students in grades 9-12; because we are both on one campus, our middle school adopts many of the precautions that the high school uses. High school students are a much more mobile group because they have cars, some have part-time jobs during the day, and they come and go at different hours; for example, some students take advanced courses at local colleges and technical schools. High school students sometimes have rivalries with students from other schools based on athletic competitions or girl/boy friends. Consequently, high schools in Des Moines have always been more careful about security issues than middle schools.

Last September, the adjacent high school had a number of bomb threats; each time a threat was received, we also had to evacuate our middle school students to an alternate location and search the building to make sure that it was safe. Sometimes, we took the students to churches that were close; if the weather was good, we took the students to the football stadium, or to nearby parks until the school was thoroughly checked. As a result of these prank calls, our schools installed caller identification and "traps" on every telephone line into the building; all of the people making the threats were eventually caught and prosecuted.

However, during this time period, to make sure that our buildings were safe and secure, we instituted some new practices. All of the entrance doors around the buildings are locked and students and visitors must all come in one entrance where an adult monitor is always on duty. Visitors must sign in and wear a name tag; all students must show their I.D. to enter the building in the morning. This assures us that no strangers enter the building. Keeping all of the doors locked is a difficult job and this summer we will be installing a system that sets off an alarm if someone goes out of a door and it does not lock behind them. Also, students are not allowed to wear big bulky coats or vests or take book bags into the classroom; all of these items must be left in lockers and students take only the text books they need for class. This is because bags and coat pockets can often be a hiding place for weapons—as well as food and toys!

In our building, all restrooms are locked during the day and only unlocked during passing periods. This is to assure that if strangers did get into the building, they could not find an easy place to hide. Teachers check their rooms each morning when they enter the classroom and report anything that appears unusual; if the door to their classroom is not locked when they arrive, the teachers report that to the principal immediately. During the day, we have a "code" message which all teachers understand; if they hear that announcement over the public address system, the staff knows that they should check their

room and immediate hallway for any strangers or unusual objects. We also have a coded message for a crisis; when teachers hear that alert over the P.A., they know that they should lock the classroom doors, turn off the lights and move the students to the edges of the classroom and have them sit on the floor and wait for further instructions.

For years in public schools, we have had students practice monthly drills for fires, tornado/severe weather, and civil defense; now we have added drills to keep students and staff safe if a dangerous intruder entered the building. We believe that it is important for students to learn automatically how to behave and protect themselves if this happened. Schools are not the only place where dangerous people have harmed innocent victims, such as in airports, churches, office buildings, and shopping malls. However, schools are one of the few places where we can teach students what to look for and how to behave if a crisis occurs. Hopefully, they will never have to use these particular skills.

Brody Middle School Responds to a Question of Violence

by Trish Johnson

Spring is usually the time when violence increases, it seems, so we as teachers, administrators, parents, and students are especially concerned as the days become warmer. The first big school shootings took place during the spring and that trend has continued since.

I presented the question "Is violence a problem at our school?" to my seventh grade media students, and they expressed many opinions about the subject. As they looked at Brody Middle School in Des Moines, Iowa their conclusion was that there is not a lot of violence here. We occasionally have fights, but the over-all environment does not seem threatening. The students did seem to think that bullying is sometimes a problem and they could see how it could cause a student to finally explode and hurt or kill other students.

Those students who are bullied do not have high self-esteem and, probably, battle depression. Some of our students blame violence on those two things. If teenagers are excluded from certain peer groups or if their parents do not spend time with them, they could have low self-esteem and use violence to release their anger.

My students blamed the media for focusing so much on violence and giving too many details regarding how the terrible crimes were committed. If that information falls into the wrong hands, it would be easy to see how copy-cat crimes are committed. Many of my students were upset because, since a few teenagers are acting out violently, it might make the people of other countries think that all kids in all American schools are like that.

My students also blamed video games and musicians such as Marilyn Manson for increasing violence. The video games are graphic and show no real consequences if someone kills another on screen. The lyrics of Manson and others are graphic and disturbing and might also put ideas into kids' heads. I recently watched a documentary of the boy in Oregon who killed his parents (who were teachers) and then went to school the next day and started shooting people. When the police went to his house to search the premises, the love theme to the 1996 version of *Romeo and Juliet* was blaring repeatedly throughout the house. He had watched that movie in English class and seemed to have been taken in with the violence depicted. This is an example of how music and media could have affected this boy.

To combat violence in our schools, we are trying several approaches. At Brody Middle School, our principal started the group TAD (Tolerance to Acceptance for Diversity) which focuses on breaking down racial barriers and learning about other cultures. By educating students about other cultures, our principal hopes that the students can celebrate their differences and work on a higher level. Many students think this program is working.

Our school also has zero tolerance for offensive language used against someone or any kind of physical aggression. The consequences for these actions are serving time during an in-school suspension or out of school suspension.

Exterior "fixes" such as the installation of video cameras, and tough security still do not fix what is going on inside the students, and in my opinion that is where the changes will have to take place. Many middle schools are going toward a teaming approach, where around five teachers share the same students. As a result, the teachers can communicate to each other about how well each student is doing in each teacher's class. As teachers discuss the students, they identify students who are having difficulty in the classes. With teachers cooperating in this way, and passing on what they have observed to parents, the students are helped sooner, and less students "fall through the cracks."

The school shootings have affected teachers and students. The causes of these crimes are complex, but it is easy to point fingers. We will continue to impose outside fixes and consequences, but no real changes will take place until we take time to take care of the heart and soul of each one of our students.

In the fall of 2000, the Center for U.S. Studies will host a teacher workshop on "Violence in the American Schools." We are calling for responses and comments to the question of violence in American as well as schools throughout Europe to be used in a discussion during the workshop. Contributions may be sent to Leslie Herring, Center for U.S. Studies, Collegienstr. 62, 06886 Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Germany.

Documents

The two following texts are excerpts from the most famous court decisions regarding the legal status of racial minorities in the United States. Plessy v. Ferguson, known as the "separate-but-equal-case," was brought before the Supreme Court by Homer Plessy, a native of New Orleans, who was expelled from a train coach for white people after refusing to sit in a coach for blacks. Plessy, who was of mixed race (7/8th white and 1/8th black) was considered black according to a Louisiana statute and had violated an existing segregation law for public transport.

Brown v. Board of Education was a class action suit by a number of black students who had been denied entry to whites-only schools in the South reversed the Supreme Court decision of Plessy v. Ferguson by arguing that segregation was inherently unequal. In response to this court decision, more than one hundred Southern congressmen protested against desegregation in an open letter which is also printed here.

Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896)

Mr. Justice BROWN [...] delivered the opinion of the court.

A statute which implies merely a legal distinction between the white and colored races—a distinction which is founded in the color of the two races, and which must always exist so long as white men are distinguished from the other race by color—has no tendency to destroy the legal equality of the two races, or re-establish a state of involuntary servitude. Indeed, we do not understand that the thirteenth amendment is strenuously relied upon by the plaintiff in error in this connection. [...]

By the fourteenth amendment, all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are made citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside; and the states are forbidden from making or enforcing any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States, or shall deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, or deny to any person within their jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. [...] The object of the amendment was undoubtedly to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but, in the nature of things, it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political equality, or a commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either. Laws permitting, and even requiring, their separation, in places where they are liable to be brought into contact, do not necessarily imply the inferiority of either race to the other, and have been generally, if not universally, recognized as within the competency of the state legislatures in the exercise of their police power. The most common instance of this is connected with the establishment of separate schools for white and colored children, which have been held to be a valid exercise of the legislative power even by courts of states where the political rights of the colored race have been longest and most earnestly enforced. [...]

... [W]e think the enforced separation of the races, as applied to the internal commerce of the state, neither abridges the privileges or immunities of the colored man, deprives him of his property without due process of law, nor denies him the equal protection of the laws, within the meaning of the fourteenth amendment...

It is claimed by the plaintiff in error that, in an mixed community, the reputation of belonging to the dominant race, in this instance the white race, is 'property,' in the same sense that a right of action or of inheritance is property. Conceding this to be so, for the purposes of this case, we are unable to see how this statute deprives him of, or in any way affects his right to, such property. If he be a white man, and assigned to a colored coach, he may have his action for damages against the company for being deprived of his so-called 'property.' Upon the other hand, if he be a colored man, and be so assigned, he has been deprived of no property, since he is not lawfully entitled to the reputation of being a white man.

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. If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it. The argument necessarily assumes that if, as has been more than once the case, and is not unlikely to be so again, the colored race should become the dominant power in the state legislature, and should enact a law in precisely similar terms, it would thereby relegate the white race to an inferior position. We imagine that the white race, at least, would not acquiesce in this assumption. The argument also assumes that social prejudices may be overcome by legislation, and that equal rights cannot be secured to the negro except by an enforced commingling of the two races. We cannot accept this proposition. If the two races are to meet upon terms of social equality, it must be the result of natural affinities, a mutual appreciation of each other's merits, and a voluntary consent of individuals.

It is true that the question of the proportion of colored blood necessary to constitute a colored person, as distinguished from a white person, is one upon which there is a difference of opinion in the different states... [...] Under the allegations of his petition, it may undoubtedly become a question of importance whether, under the laws of Louisiana, the petitioner belongs to the white or colored race.

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)

MR. CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN delivered the opinion of the Court. [...] The plaintiffs contend that segregated public schools are not "equal" and cannot be made "equal," and that hence they are deprived of the equal protection of the laws. [...]

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms. We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does. [...] The effect of this separation on their educational opportunities was well stated by a finding in the Kansas case by a court which nevertheless felt compelled to rule against the Negro plaintiffs:

"Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to [retard] the educational and mental development of negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racial[ly] integrated school system."

[...]We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment...

The Southern Manifesto, 1956

We regard the decision of the Supreme Court in the school cases as clear abuse of judicial power. It climaxes a trend in 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.

In the case Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896 the Supreme Court expressively declared that under the Fourteenth Amendment no person was denied any of his rights if the states provided separate but equal public facilities. [...] This interpretation, restated time and again, became part of the life of people of many of the states and confirmed their habits, customs, traditions and way of life. It is founded on elemental humanity and common sense, for parents should not be deprived by Government of the right to direct the lives and education of their own children. [...]

This unwarranted exercise of power by the court, contrary to the Constitution, is creating chaos and confusion in the states principally affected. It is destroying the amicable relations between the white and Negro races that have been created through ninety years of patient effort by the good people of both races. It has planted hatred and suspicion where there has been heretofore friendship and understanding.

Without regard to the consent of the governed, outside agitators are threatening immediate and revolutionary changes in our public school systems. If done, this is certain to destroy the system of public education in some of the states.

With the gravest concern for the explosive and dangerous condition created by this decision and inflamed by outside meddlers: We reaffirm our reliance on the Constitution as the fundamental law of the land. We decry the Supreme Court's encroachments on rights reserved to the states and to the people, contrary to established law and to the Constitution. We commend the motives of those states which have declared the intention to resist forced integration by any lawful means. [...] We pledge ourselves to use all lawful means to bring about a reversal of this decision which is contrary to the Constitution and to prevent the use of force for its implementation.

In this trying period, as we all seek to right this wrong, we appeal to our people not to be provoked by the agitators and troublemakers invading our states and to scrupulously refrain from disorder and lawless acts.

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