

## Full Record: Journals

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Floyd-Thomas, Juan: **Rethinking "The Problem of the Color-Line": Black Ideological Diversity and the Foundations of Racial Uplift, 1895-1915**

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The years between 1895 and 1915 were an era filled in equal parts with grave uncertainty and vast potential for African Americans. On the one hand, those black men, women, and children living in the South during this period experienced adverse social, political, and economic changes that presaged the devastating force of (de facto) legalized violent anti-black racism as a global reality. On the other hand, a small and eclectic cadre of black thinkers and social activists struggled to initiate a more inclusive national dialogue on racial discrimination in particular and white supremacy in general. The public discourse on race relations in the United States, once dominated almost exclusively by Whites of every political stripe, was gradually integrated and transformed by the cohort of black leaders that came to prominence in the late nineteenth century.

By the turn of the century black intellectuals in modern American society were immediately regarded as "public" beings. Whether they were academics, independent scholars, authors, or members of the professional class, there was a steady rise in the number of educated black men and women who discussed current affairs, broad social issues, and often lectured on topics of general interest in popular fora. When this new crop of black intellectuals and their respective philosophies came to the forefront concerning public debates on race, those self-same individuals in turn became pivotal to more diverse understandings of race relations in early twentieth-century America. Given the heightened centrality of these figures within American culture, their ideas extended far beyond the boundaries of the United States. Ultimately, the same era that gave birth to the "color line," the most pernicious and intractable metaphor of American racism, also led to the rise of an unprecedented proliferation of ideological alternatives intended to uplift the race.

After the demise of Reconstruction, the status of African Americans was in a constant state of decline to the end of the nineteenth century. The transition from slavery to freedom for the majority of African Americans who lived in the South had been greatly compromised in the decades following the Civil War. With the Solid South serving as the political stronghold for the southern wing of the Democratic Party, the local and state governments throughout the former Confederacy systematically implemented a slew of legislative measures intended to circumvent the civil rights Amendments of the Constitution. Having codified black disenfranchisement through the formation of literacy tests, whites-only primary elections, and poll taxes, an insidious system of racial segregation was emerging by the 1890s. However, the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court decision brought forth legalized segregation and heralded the creation of the "color line" in American history. From 1876 to 1920, the emerging system of de jure segregation known colloquially as Jim Crow redefined nearly every aspect of southern life between Blacks and Whites, with African Americans suffering the most dismal fate imaginable. By the dawn of the twentieth century, many Blacks across the country were relegated to second-class citizenship wherein they had to endure economic privation, political disenfranchisement, and personal degradation. Although these years generally were considered the Progressive era of American history, they actually represented, in the words of Rayford Logan, the "nadir" of the African American experience.

Even though the circumstances and conditions of the proverbial color line seemed quite grim, African Americans developed various responses to their collective plight during this period. This paper presents the conceptual paradigms offered by five black leaders who sought to overcome the bleak reality of racial discrimination and social inequality in America, namely Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Henry McNeal Turner. By analyzing the intellectual milieux fomented by these renowned black leaders during the early twentieth century, this present work intends to illustrate some of the diverse approaches for achieving racial justice and social justice that arose in the midst of Jim Crow. There are a number of questions that drive this present investigation of black leadership during this critical period for the sake of future research. First, what was the core of each person's respective claim to legitimacy as a leader of the race? Next, what ideological vehicles did they promote in order to meet their objectives? Moreover, what were the sources and limitations of their authority? Finally, what legacy have these various leaders left for subsequent struggles for racial justice and social equality?

When discussing the rise of modern black leadership and the genesis of the civil rights struggle, one must invariably deal with the primacy of Booker T. Washington. Having employed his own bootstrap philosophy to raise himself out of bondage and into the national arena as the founder of the Tuskegee Institute, Washington appeared very well suited to enter the national dialogue concerning the best way to improve conditions facing black people in the New South. His success as a black educator coupled with his more personal triumphs in the face of racial adversity held great potential for Blacks and Whites alike that were interested in finding a solution to the "Negro Problem." By 1895, the United States had received Washington's insights on the issue of race relations and was never the same again.

For many African American leaders of the day, there would be no relief to the immediate oppression of Blacks as long as Booker T. Washington's ideas held absolute sway in any ongoing national dialogues on the fate of African Americans. In his 1895 speech during the Cotton States Exposition in Atlanta (usually called the "Atlanta Compromise"), Washington's proposal for black advancement was a rather complex affair. Whereas many critics focus on the multiple nuances Washington applied to his call for both races to "cast down your bucket where you are," this is not the only rhetorical manipulation used by the Wizard of Tuskegee in the Atlanta Compromise. While he was outlining the practicality of white capitalist exploitation of black labor in the South, a more egregious aspect unfolded within this self-same declaration of mutual dependence. Within this call for accommodation by black Southerners, Washington raises two points that garnered him the ire of black civil rights activists on the one hand and the adoration of white elites on the other hand. First, he opined that

there was transformation and redemption for Blacks in their voluntary submission to the whims of white Southerners. Washington contends:

there is no defense or security for any of us except in the highest intelligence and development of all. If anywhere there are efforts tending to curtail the fullest growth of the Negro, let these efforts be turned into stimulating, encouraging, and making him the most useful and intelligent citizen. Effort or means so invested will pay a thousand per cent interest. These efforts will be twice blessed-'blessing him that gives and him that takes.'<sup>2</sup>

Second, and more important, Washington's thinking reinterpreted rights, whether they are considered "civil" or "natural," to be synonymous with "privileges." In no uncertain terms, Washington rationalizes this situation by arguing that "the wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremist folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing... . It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercise of those privileges."<sup>3</sup> This semantic distinction between rights and privileges in this instance denied the urgency of the historic moment in which he lived.

Based on the principles espoused in his "Atlanta Compromise," one scholar has argued that Washington:

consistently counseled patience in matters of racial injustice; he pronounced protest and racial agitation ineffective tactics and advised instead that living respectable lives and acquiring wealth was a much surer route to equality. In addition, in spite of the steadily deteriorating racial situation and the upsurge in racial violence, he continually expressed faith in the good will of southern Whites.<sup>4</sup>

However, despite Washington's proclamations to the contrary, race relations in America during the 1900s were far from improving; in fact, they were reaching a most tragic crescendo. C. Vann Woodward has noted:

all along the line signals were going up to indicate that the Negro was an approved object of aggression. These "permissions-to-hate" came from sources that had formerly denied such permission. They came from the federal courts in numerous opinions, from Northern liberals eager to conciliate the South, from Southern conservatives who had abandoned their race policy of moderation in their struggle against the Populists, from the Populists in their mood of disillusionment with their former Negro allies, and from a national temper suddenly expressed by imperialistic adventures and aggressions against colored people in distant lands.<sup>5</sup>

The centrality of Bookerite ideology in the United States during the earliest years of the twentieth century was a dilemma of the highest order to the future prospects of racial uplift. According to Woodward, "The resistance of the Negro himself had long ceased to be an important deterrent to aggression. But a new and popular spokesman of the race, its acknowledged leader by the late 'nineties, came forward with a submissive philosophy for the Negro that to some Whites must have appeared an invitation to further aggression."<sup>6</sup> As John Hope Franklin indicates, the sad irony of the era of Bookerite hegemony was that "lynchings decreased only slightly, the Negro was effectively disenfranchised, and black workers were systematically excluded from the major labor organizations."<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, in an era epitomized by the flourishing of ideas about improving social relations between Blacks and Whites, Washington and his associates were very reluctant to give any credence to different perspectives on race and racism.

Washington and his followers had a veritable stranglehold on public attention concerning the status of Blacks in America. During the 1890s, only a handful of journalists and writers dared to challenge the Tuskegee machine in any direct manner. As the anti-Bookerite criticism began to wane and fade from the nation's periodicals, William Monroe Trotter, the editor of the Boston Guardian, used his newspaper as a major platform to decry Washington's accommodationist philosophy. Trotter was also an outspoken black colleague of DuBois' and a fellow member of the Niagara Movement who openly challenged the Wizard of Tuskegee in his editorials. Under Trotter's guidance, the Guardian emerged as the most famous and militant opponents of Washington's influence. In one of his most uncompromising editorial comments, Trotter contends "no thinking Negro can fail to see that, with the influence Mr. Washington [wields] in the North and the confidence reposed in him by the White people on account of his school, a fatal blow has been given to the Negro's political rights and liberty."<sup>8</sup>

In the summer of 1903, Trotter and a group of his supporters confronted Washington in a Boston church while he was giving an address to an audience of more than two thousand people with awful results. The small group asked Washington a series of probing and astute questions, which eventually led to a raucous commotion. Not only did the scene erupt into fistfights, Trotter and at least one of his associates were arrested for inciting the violence. The power of the Bookerites to suppress any dissenters - by force, if necessary - from challenging Washington's reign revealed the ugly nature of such uncontested power. This ultimately marked the truly unclear legacy of Washington's influence over American race relations following his death in 1915.

By 1903, noted black historian and sociologist W.E.B. DuBois made a profound statement that would subsequently dominate thoughts and discourse on race for generations to come. DuBois wrote in prose that was as poignant as it was simple: "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line - the relation of the darker races to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea."<sup>9</sup> Oddly, as often as his immortal words have been repeated, they have seldom been addressed in their entirety or full scope. With that one passage, DuBois brought together three previously disparate ideas: the ways that people thought about and dealt with race would be the definitive crisis of the future; the dilemma of racial prejudice could be described in a clear and succinct manner so that that anyone could understand it; and the problem of the "color-line" was a global one. With his visionary assessment, DuBois' efforts provided a previously unexplored avenue for other Blacks to articulate ideas and political agendas focused on ending the "problem of the twentieth century".

In essence, DuBois represented the unfolding of two complementary processes within African American thought at the turn of the century that would resonate throughout the world. On the one hand, DuBois was instrumental in helping to shed light upon a growing range of ideas and strategies by black men and women intent upon ending racism and other forms of social injustice without surrendering to the

hegemony of America's dual logical errors - ignorance and arrogance - regarding race. On the other hand, DuBois' scholarly efforts to bolster a public forum for dealing with matters of race allowed for some modicum of black ideological diversity that galvanized itself into a cohesive politics of racial uplift. As explained by historian Kevin Gaines, the political schema of racial uplift "represented the struggle for a positive Black identity in a deeply racist society, turning the pejorative designation of race into a source of dignity and self-affirmation through an ideology of class differentiation, self-help, and interdependence."<sup>10</sup> In addition, historian Judith Weisenfeld further explains that the politics of racial uplift during the turn of the century

encompassed a broad spectrum of opinions but tended to emphasize racial solidarity and action from within the community on behalf of all African Americans. Thus, most racial uplift activists saw a strong organizational base as a critical component of any approach to racial uplift. Articulators of philosophies of racial uplift, across a range of approaches, called for African Americans to marshal their means and create institutions of civil society that could mediate between African Americans and Americans and hasten the progress of the race."

When DuBois offered his now famous quote to the world at large, he was not only making a profound observation of the troubled state of American race relations in his own time, he was engaged in a much greater mission: ultimately overturning the Bookerite ideology of racial accommodation that dominated national discourses on race and racism at the turn of the century. As a challenger of Booker T. Washington's vision of racial uplift, DuBois' *The Souls of Black Folk* cannot be read as merely a benchmark text of African American scholarship or one man's brilliant musings on race, identity, and power during an uneasy moment in time. I would suggest that, above all else, DuBois' volume must be seen as a manifesto that upset racial ontology on either side of the proverbial "color line." Although he can be credited with an astute and succinct summation of the immanent worldwide crisis of race relations at the dawn of a new era, I question whether his words were revelatory. It must be noted that, in a society deeply mired in the enduring legacy of slavery, miscegenation, lynching, and other manifestations of America's racial past, DuBois' words must have seemed quite obvious. Nevertheless, there was a deeper significance to his observation about the color line that affected America on a discursive level. With the publication of *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903, the ideas presented in DuBois' masterful volume not only established him as one of America's most luminary scholars, it also provided a window of opportunity for new and different perspectives concerning race in the United States. The words of DuBois are so portentous because he opposed the prevalent logic of race relations of his day.

Moreover, because his insurgent arguments about integrationism stood in stark (and arguably radical) contrast to Bookerite notions of racial uplift, DuBois emerged at the forefront of the twentieth century's new black intellectual vanguard of an anti-Bookerite consensus. As one scholar has noted, "it is difficult to define precisely the political and social ideology of Washington's opponents... because the group consisted of numerous elements with divergent views who often were united only in their antagonism toward Washington and his dominance of black America."<sup>12</sup> In essence, DuBois' polar opposition to Booker T. Washington therefore provided a wedge that made a wider range of black dissent possible as well as understandable within American society. Not only were the insights of people such as Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Henry McNeal Turner among others better able to break through the overpowering din of Washington's accommodationist blather, but these various viewpoints also demonstrated more rational-critical alternatives to the problem of the color line.

While still representing a marginal viewpoint within the larger schema of American race relations, DuBois introduced the notion that fostering the "Talented Tenth," a highly educated and conscientious black leadership, was more advantageous than the mass industrial training sought by Booker T. Washington. Interestingly, Frederick L. Broderick argues:

Washington's program gave DuBois an anvil on which to hammer out his own ideas. At the core of DuBois's [sic] philosophy was the role assigned to the Talented Tenth because, like all races...the Negro race would be saved by its exceptional men, trained to the knowledge of the world and men's relation to it...DuBois [even] pointed to the thirty college-trained teachers on Washington's own staff as an effective argument for training in the liberal arts.<sup>13</sup>

Of course, mainstream acceptance of racial equality and social justice were still far off but it is undeniable that the multiplicity of ideas and approaches did allow for a whole host of new options ending racism. The prospect for new, more insurgent voices raised against the racist social order in America were greatly enhanced by DuBois' arguments advocating protest and racial integration instead of accommodation and segregation. The limited access to public discourse and subsequent legitimacy, as well as the denial of political and economic resources experienced by Blacks in America, was also occurring elsewhere around the globe. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the most pressing concern for peoples of color - especially those of African descent - would be how to lead lives which were not unduly circumscribed by the global nature of racial segregation and the oppressive social mechanisms (unfair state or institutional practices, unequal economic relations, degrading racial stereotypes, etc.) that kept such a Manichean framework firmly in place. Believing that Washington's unchallenged role as Black America's premier power broker was a means of bludgeoning the country's black intelligentsia, DuBois contended:

one danger must be avoided and that was to allow the silly idealism of Negroes...to mislead the mass of laborers and keep them stirred up by ambitions incapable of realization. To this school of thought, the philosophy of Booker Washington came as a godsend and it proposed, by building his prestige and power, to control the Negro group. The control was to be drastic: the Negro intelligentsia was to be suppressed and hammered into conformity. The process involved the real force back of the Tuskegee Machine. It had money and it had opportunity, and it found in Tuskegee tools to do its bidding.<sup>14</sup>

Whereas the debate that took shape between Washington and DuBois were most certainly vital to the future of black leadership and mass political action in the United States, there were numerous other perspectives brought into the public forum. In the wake of DuBois' open animus towards the Tuskegee machine, the perspectives of Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Henry McNeal Turner also contributed to the ideological diversity appearing in Black political leadership as well as thought during this period.

As an alternative model of black leadership, the insights of Anna Julia Cooper alluded to a larger, more pragmatic vision of national issues. In Cooper's monograph, *A Voice from the South*, she illustrates a staunchly black feminist posture by arguing the interlocking reality of

race and gender. Her arguments are buttressed by her explication of black women's status within emerging discourses of race relations as well as their roles as social reformers. In addition, Cooper opines that a keen sense of historicism should be incorporated into any program to foster black empowerment. But, even though she affirmed the notion that all the struggles to end Jim Crow should be placed in their proper historical context, Cooper was mindful that "this survey of the failures or achievements of the past, the difficulties of the present, and the mingled hopes and fears for the future, must not degenerate into mere dreaming nor consume the time which belongs to the practical and effective handling of the crucial questions of the hour."<sup>15</sup> For Cooper, the merits of any worthwhile racial uplift effort would be revealed neither by ambiguous wordplay nor lofty aspirations but rather by the definition and implementation of a cogent plan. Much like her latter-day counterparts, Cooper's call to action posed a significant challenge to some of the critical flaws within the thinking of contemporaneous black male leaders while also debunking the racist assumptions of Whites.

Central to Cooper's ideological response to the physical and symbolic violence of Jim Crow racism was her sense that religious authority, the consolidation of black leadership, and the defense and promotion of redemptive gender roles for African Americans served as the key ingredients for racial uplift. Paramount to her stated beliefs, however, was the theory that the moral convictions of this racial uplift must be centered fundamentally in the realities of black women. Although she unequivocally sought the common advancement and salvation of all African Americans as the penultimate goal of her thoughts, writings, and activism, Cooper held steadfast to the perception that black women were the moral and organizational vanguard for this struggle. She articulates this dimension of her philosophy most clearly by stating, "only the Black Woman [sic] can say 'when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me: "<sup>16</sup>

Cooper's assessment of this array of social problems made her contribution to a growing black intellectual ferment even more notable because she sought to infuse the nascent black clubwomen's movement with an extremely practical sense of activism. Through her critical gaze as a prototypical African American feminist, she rendered a thorough albeit conflicted analysis of the black political and cultural atmosphere of her day in addition to offering her views on American identity, the burgeoning women's movement, organized labor, and the declining state of religious and moral authority in America. Cooper's deliberate application of racial uplift ideology to everyday life via the black women's club movement offered a new framework that was significantly different from the economic determinism of Booker T. Washington and the philosophical invectives of W.E.B. DuBois. Although Cooper's prospects for black America's future was a moderate merger of Bookerite and DuBoisian ideals, her hermeneutic approach was governed by the belief that a middle-class, religious black women's movement could shift the state of American race relations.

Moving in a decidedly different direction, Ida B. Wells-Barnett provided a more insurgent element of protest and organization in defense of civil rights. Following the lynching of three black businessmen in her hometown of Memphis, Wells-Barnett began her investigation of the root causes of lynching and its relationship to the racist system of Jim Crow segregation. By all accounts, white lynch mobs in the United States had murdered an estimated 3,300 Blacks from 1882 to 1930. Instrumental to this effort was her use of journalism as a means to counter and ultimately overturn the prevailing logic of black people's culpability in their own victimization at the hands of White lynch mobs. As Nell Painter asserts, Wells-Barnett's 1895 pamphlet, *A Red Record*, argued that the vast number of black men who were lynched never had been accused of rape; in this manner, she began her assault on the warped logic that fueled the rote assumptions of the lynch mob mentality that pervaded the American South.<sup>17</sup> It was Wells-Barnett's contention that the allegations of black men raping white women as the most common justification for lynching and other forms of white vigilante (really, terrorist) behavior. She eventually surmised that, rather than upholding some fictive purity of white womanhood, the white lynch mob was a necessary function of white supremacy in America. Wells-Barnett viewed lynching and other racially motivated hate crimes by white Americans as a means of defending the "unwritten law" of Jim Crow that black people should never seek to transcend their subordinate status in the United States.<sup>18</sup> Despite such attacks, lynching remained the most vicious and relentless manifestation of Jim Crow racism ever imagined.

In turn, Wells-Barnett mounted a nationwide campaign in print and person to encourage civil rights organizations (especially among clubwomen) to attack lynching and other varieties of racism.<sup>19</sup> Her particular vision for ending lynching combined the mass exodus of Blacks from the South, widespread economic boycotts, and armed self-defense.<sup>20</sup> Openly calling for retaliatory violence decades before either the African Blood Brotherhood or Malcolm X, Wells-Barnett obliquely endorsed this idea of "self-help" by stating that, when faced by the dreadful force of racist violence, "a Winchester rifle should have a place of honor in every black home, and it should be used for that protection which the law refuses to give."<sup>21</sup> Among the most prominent black journalists of her generation (including the likes of T. Thomas Fortune, William Monroe Trotter, Frances E. Harper, and John Edward Bruce), Wells-Barnett demonstrated a broader, more expansive sense of the media's potential to overturn the inactivity of moderate black organizations and the disdain of the federal government. Facing the possible loss of life, limb and livelihood at every turn, she used the black press not just to inform people about these injustices but also to incite them to take action against them. In spite of her attempts, it still took a several decades before civil rights groups followed Wells-Barnett's example in pressuring Congress to enact legislation to directly address the illegality of lynching.

When compared to the more strident militancy of Wells-Barnett's journalistic assault on lynching, institutionalized sexism and racism, Cooper's contribution to discourses on the "race problem" would unquestionably seem much more staid. In consideration of this fact, it is important to think about this recurring aspect of political dissent and ideal opposition in the United States during the early half of the twentieth century. When viewed alongside the perspectives of their black male contemporaries, Cooper and Wells-Barnett were more than simply products of their context and time. The struggle for cultivating an empowering racial identity and consciousness was equally mired by racism and sexism during this era, a situation that later devastated the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. But the divergent strategies of Cooper and Wells-Barnett illustrated a crucial yet often overlooked aspect of black women's activism, namely that black female leadership occurred without constant worry or contention. As Deborah Gray White opines:

Black women were never a monolithic group. Race and gender united them as often as religion, sexuality, and ideology pitted them against each other. Black women's association history is...not a story of harmonious sisterhood, nor one about women selflessly sacrificing themselves for the good of the group. It is about women with missions that varied and often clashed, about women who aimed for progress

and unity, but who sometimes fell short, about women who sometimes found the job of representing and fighting for themselves burdensome.<sup>22</sup>

It has been a grave disservice to black women's organizational efforts not only by ignoring their presence and external obstacles they faced in their attempts to end oppression and inequality in America. Without such a balanced portrait of black women's herculean work to sustain their own agendas and interests despite the efforts of white men, white women, and black men.

In further contrast to the accommodation of Washington and the integration of DuBois, Bishop Henry McNeal Turner of the A.M.E. Church offered another interesting perspective on the crisis of American race relations. Much like DuBois, Turner was highly critical of Washington's "Atlanta Compromise" and the ideals of racial accommodation it promulgated. Following Washington's 1895 speech, Turner commented that the Wizard of Tuskegee Institute would "have to live a long time to undo the harm he has done our race." The fiery A.M.E. bishop lambasted Washington most of all because the Bookerite ideology of racial segregation, bootstrap capitalism, and black acquiescence to racist terror would be used by conservatives "to prove that the Negro race is satisfied with being degraded."

Whereas Turner was wholly opposed to Washington's brand of racial accommodation, he was not altogether taken with DuBois' call for protest in order to achieve greater racial integration either. Turner's particular solution to America's racial crisis was emigration (more commonly known as the "Back-to-Africa" movement). Taking a direct cue from the proto-black nationalism of Paul Cuffee, Martin Delany, and Edward Blyden among others, Turner believed that African Americans should repatriate Africa and work towards restoring the continent religiously, culturally and economically. This measure marked a significant departure from the positions of either Washington or DuBois with regards to Turner's utter pessimism about the possibility of freedom and equality as the ultimate outcome of race relations in the United States. Quite to the contrary, Turner urged African Americans to not only see themselves as a separate nation but also insisted that pursuing this nascent notion of black nationalism was an active response to racism in America. In other words, Turner felt that the creation of an independent Black in Africa was a better option than submitting to second-class citizenship awaiting generosity or suffering the dilemma of double consciousness which denied Blacks a positive racial and national identity.

The most decisive failure of Turner's repatriation scheme rested largely on the crisis of a colonized African continent. Although the lure of leaving the United States to a scintillant and welcoming ancestral homeland stirred the collective imagination of numerous African Americans during this period, what part of Africa could black men, women, and children go to in order to escape from White supremacy? The prospects of finding refuge anywhere on the African continent appeared virtually nonexistent. The European invasion and colonization of Africa during the late nineteenth century (typically referred to as "the scramble for Africa") created a situation wherein all but two nation-states - Liberia and Ethiopia - were subjected to Western domination and exploitation. As Marcus Garvey, Turner's ideological and spiritual successor, later discovered, these two states were neither ready, willing, nor able to receive African American emigrants en masse, rendering the Back-to-Africa movement a vain hope at best.

Although the idea of emigration had very limited success or lasting influence among African Americans, the Back-to-Africa movement had at its core an undeniable critique of racial oppression in the United States. Even though Washington and DuBois made overtures to exhibit heightened unity and pride for the race, Turner's vision of African American men and women returning to their ancestral homeland would remain a nominal issue until the 1920s. Even though this might not have been a deliberate facet of Turner's thinking, his efforts to promote the formation of an African American settler state on the African continent suggested yet another international dimension to black people's liberation from racial oppression. It seems that redemption of a positive racial identity and consciousness was not possible in America. The twentieth century would bring about a corollary debate regarding whether or not racial uplift would be the sole province of African Americans. This dual quandary would ultimately govern all the programs for racial uplift that have arisen during the twentieth century.

Although the writings and activities of both Washington and DuBois demonstrated a growing concern for Africa and criticism of imperialism, they both rejected Turner's thoughts on African Americans' emigration to Africa. While dismissing Henry McNeal Turner's emigrationist agenda in an outright fashion, Washington's works such as *The Future of the American Negro* and *A New Negro for a New Century* illustrated a more nationalistic stripe than typically associated with Bookerite ideology. He outlines the reality that the wanton nature of European expansionism in Africa made Turner's recolonization scheme virtually impossible. Washington's critique of Turner largely stems from the belief that black people cannot escape from Whites since Westerners invaded the African continent.<sup>23</sup> However, Washington also called for greater racial solidarity and pride among African Americans.<sup>24</sup> This development corresponds with Washington's more vocal assault on discrimination during the last decade or so of his life. Meanwhile, DuBois also did not agree with Turner's burgeoning "Back-to-Africa" movement. In spite of the remarkable contributions, his writings and efforts have lent to contemporary understandings of pan-Africanism and cultural nationalism, DuBois remained most especially fixated upon the black experience in America.

However, the upshot of the DuBois-Washington conflict had little to do with their divergent ideologies and clashing personal worldviews but rather DuBois' insurgent challenge to both the Tuskegee Machine's hegemony over American race relations as well as the Bookerites' monopoly over the available largesse of white philanthropy. In the words of political scientist Adolph Reed, it is very important to recognize the extent to which the DuBois-Washington feud resulted from their mutual realization that:

if broadly cultured black and white men were to be allies...their alliance could not be one of equals, since Whites controlled the monetary and other resources necessary for social- or racial-uplift activities. Therefore, assertion of black aspirations had to come from outside the Afro-American community in general and from upper-class Whites in particular. DuBois's conflict with Washington should be considered in the context of competition for access to...white patronage.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, Reed contends that the DuBois-Washington debate as the initial crux of black ideological diversity demonstrated a prevalent "tension between the specific agendas and the legitimacy claims of different elements of the black elite and the various white support

groups - New South ideologues, northern industrialists and reform intellectuals - to which those elements related for patronage and for other forms of validation."<sup>26</sup>

It is also important to recognize that Washington, DuBois, Turner, Wells-Barnett, and Cooper each laid claim to a notion of race that had relative aspects of essentialism and cultural nationalism. Not only did each concentrate on the hardships and limited opportunities endured by black men and women in this country at the turn of the century, they linked the resolution of racism to African ancestry. But this crucial concern becomes totally fragmented in their respective visions of how to resolve the so-called "Negro problem" within the American context. These diverse approaches to the resolving America's racial crisis form the intellectual foundation for subsequent movements for racial liberation in the twentieth century. Moreover, while their insights often have been downplayed or totally left out of general historical narratives, the thoughts of Cooper, Wells-Barnett, and Turner also had significant influence on shaping the political vision and social imagination of black America. By laying the groundwork for a growing pool of strategies and thoughts about racial uplift, these thinkers established the parameters by which most Blacks could envision the future of the race. Ultimately these notions were part of the intellectual milieu of twentieth century American race relations that witnessed the formation and rise of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association by the early 1920s.

Using America's heady brew of ethnocentrism, materialism, and patriarchy as the critical reference for African American progress has posed a thorny problem for the creation of a broad-based black mass movement. The premise of finding worth and meaning in blackness as a racial and historical indicator was consistently underscored by the race's proximity or distance to white Americans. Aside from the maddening and desperate aspects of this logic that was so brilliantly stated in DuBois' concept of "double consciousness," this quite simply seems to be a self-defeating proposition for advancing the state of the race. Whether one espoused an accommodationist, integrationist, or proto-black feminist position, none of these could stir the black masses to the fullest extent if their ultimate goal was to still designate whiteness as the default sense of civilization and normalcy. Can a program for ending racial oppression and establishing social justice in America and elsewhere be effective if it remains, in a manner of speaking, "whitewashed"? This is a question that has continued to plague the African American struggle for racial equality and social justice throughout the twentieth century.

Caught in a quagmire of Jim Crow laws, poverty, minstrelsy, disenfranchisement, and racist terror, black leaders of the early twentieth century faced seemingly insurmountable challenges with a wide array of alternatives towards eradicating the color line. But the modern quest for black freedom that they initiated would later be pursued and expanded radically in the wake of Washington's death. This transition was the consequence of four historic factors. First, the outbreak of World War I in Europe in 1914 worked in tandem with the Great Migration to liberate hundreds of thousands of African Americans from the bleak prospects of the serf's life in the Jim Crow South. Second, the emergence of "New Negro" militancy articulated by the likes of A. Philip Randolph, Marcus Garvey, and Alain Locke amongst others embraced an increasingly racialized awareness of political, economic, and social interests as well as a more empowering sense of racial pride. Next, the establishment of black enclaves such as Harlem, South Philadelphia, Chicago's South Side, and the Roxbury section of Boston marked the dawning of a vibrant and cosmopolitan urban black culture that irrevocably transformed not only the African American experience but also changed the nation and the world at large. Finally, aware of the hardships and exploitation suffered by them and their forebears, a host of younger African Americans such as Adam Clayton Powell Jr., Dorothy Height, Hosea Hudson, Ella Baker, Charles Hamilton Houston, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Alonzo Herndon and others rose through the ranks of various moderate and grassroots organizations to agitate for more aggressive modes of civil rights protest.

By 1915, the ranks of black leadership as well as the foundations for racial uplift had been established in the United States. Seeking numerous remedies to the escalating violence and oppression of American racism, the dawn of the twentieth century witnessed greater utilization of various ideological perspectives as alternative means for liberating Blacks from the menace of the color line. Even though the literature of the early civil rights movement often depicts this as a period of great frustration and lethargy, this paper argues that considerable advances were being made to promote a greater level of redefinition and experimentation within the struggle for black liberation. In 1903, sociologist Kelly Miller summarizes this notion beautifully by stating "the progress of all peoples is marked by alterations of combat and contention on the one hand, and compromise and concession on the other. Progress is the resultant of play and counterplay of these forces. Colored men should have a larger tolerance for the widest latitude of opinion and method. Too frequently what passes as an irrepressible conflict is merely difference in point of view."<sup>27</sup> Thus, the synthesis of diverse ideological contributions to ending racial inequality remained a distinct probability. Whereas the visionary ideals of Washington, DuBois, Cooper, Wells-Barnett, and Turner have been viewed as discrete agendas that were complementary at best, we must consider the likelihood that their alternatives were much more closely related than has been noted previously. Contemporary efforts to end the problem of the color line will depend on recognizing the ideological diversity of black leadership and assimilating such disparate visions of social change into a unified front.

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2 Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery: The Autobiography of Hooker T. Washington* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), 153-58.

3 Ibid.

4 Cary D. Wintz, *Black Culture and the Harlem Renaissance*, (Houston, TX: Rice University Press, 1988), 37.

5 C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, rev. 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 81-82.

6 Ibid, 82.

7 John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr. *From Slavery to Freedom* 6th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1988), 250-51

8 "Why Be Silent?" *Boston Guardian*, 20 December 1902.

- 9 W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Random House, 1994), 12.
- 10 Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 3.
- 11 Judith Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 20.
- 12 Cary D. Wintz, *Black Culture and the Harlem Renaissance*, 40.
- 13 Francis L. Broderick, "The Fight Against Booker T. Washington," in Hugh Hawkins, ed. *Booker T. Washington and His Critics* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1974), 77.
- 14 W.E.B. DuBois "My Early Relations with Booker T. Washington," in Hugh Hawkins, ed. *Booker T. Washington and His Critics* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1974), 51.
- 15 Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice From the South* (1892; reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 27.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 31.
- 17 Nell I. Painter, *Standing at Armageddon* (New York: Norton, 1987), 223.
- 18 Ida B. Wells-Barnett, "Lynch Law in America," *Arena* 23 (January 1900): 15-24.
- 19 Alfreda Duster, ed., *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (1970), 35-78, 322-28, 392-94; Nell I. Painter, *Standing at Armageddon* (New York: Norton, 1987), 223-24; and Thomas C. Holt, "The Lonely Warrior: Ida B. Wells and the Struggle for Black Leadership," in John Hope Franklin and August Meier, eds. *Black Leaders of the Twentieth* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 39-61.
- 20 Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 86.
- 21 Ida B. Wells-Barnett, "Self-Help," in Roy Finkenbine, ed. *Sources of the African-American Past: Primary Sources in American History* (New York: Longman, 1997), 113.
- 22 Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy A Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York: Norton, 1999), 16-17.
- 23 Booker T. Washington, *The Future of The American Negro* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1899), 157-160.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 160-183.
- 25 Adolph Reed, *W.E.B. DuBois and American Political Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 60.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 Kelly Miller, "Washington's Policy," in Hugh Hawkins, ed. *Booker T. Washington and His Critics* (Lexington, MA: DC Heath, 1974), 94.

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