

RICE UNIVERSITY

**BLACK WOMEN AND THE WORLD: AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S
TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM, 1890-1930**

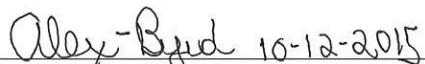
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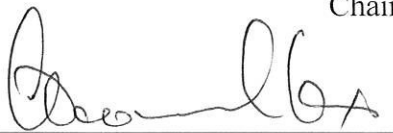
Laura Renée Chandler

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APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE:

 10-12-2015
Alexander X. Byrd, Associate Professor,
Chair, History

 10/12/2015
Edward L. Cox, Associate Professor,
History

 10/12/2015
Jennifer L. Bratter, Associate Professor,
Sociology

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ABSTRACT

Black Women and the World:

African American Women's Transnational Activism, 1896-1930

By

Laura Renée Chandler

This dissertation focuses on the transnational activities of African American clubwomen during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including their work as scholars, lecturers, missionaries and organizational leaders. My project shows that the work of African American women reformers went far beyond localized, domestic issues dealing with their homes and communities and instead encompassed efforts to deal with the global ramifications of American and European imperialism, black disenfranchisement, women's rights, and racial violence. Through their activism, scholarship and travels, African American clubwomen frequently wrestled with the machinations of racial and gendered hierarchies beyond the borders of the United States. I contend that African American clubwomen turned their marginalized position as black women in the U.S. into a privileged position of knowledge concerning the role of America in the world and the role that black women (of all nationalities) should play in the elimination of racial and gendered oppression worldwide.

In addition to documenting the activities of prominent African American women's organizations, such as the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs and the National Council of Negro Women, my dissertation focuses more specifically on the careers of three exemplary women within the African American women's club movement: Anna Julia

Cooper, Ida B. Wells, and Margaret Murray Washington. All of these women deployed a global vision in formulating their responses to race and gender discrimination, yet they did so from vastly different intellectual perspectives. Anna Julia Cooper critically examined the imbrications of American imperialism and American racist ideology; Ida B. Wells sought international collaboration as a way to transcend the obstacles impeding the struggle against racist violence in the United States; and Margaret Murray Washington sought the means to create a composite racial identity for women to color to combat racial discrimination in the post-World War I era. Scholarship on the international work of American reformers has shown a lack of familiarity with the history of African American women and has neglected using the archives and manuscript collections of African American women's organizations in telling the histories of American reformers in the world. My dissertation accounts for the different approaches to politics and culture manifested by these women, yet it also seeks to build a framework for integrating the work of African American women within studies of internationalism and transnationalism.

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Throughout the years, I benefited tremendously from several friends and colleagues—too numerous to name here—who made this process more bearable by encouraging me to laugh, have fun, and see the brighter side of things. Thank you.

Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to the three most important people in my life—my grandmother, Mary Deola Wilson, my father, John Lee Chandler, and my mother, Iris Fretena Chandler. My mother passed away one year before this project was completed, but I know she joins me in the celebration. The three of you taught me the true meaning of unconditional love. In everything I do, I know I am loved. I can think of no greater gift.

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Black Women and the World: Global Perspectives of African American Women's Activism: An Introduction

This study focuses on three exemplary women within the African American women's club movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells, and Margaret Murray Washington. It examines the range of transnational activities in which African American women were engaged as scholars, activists, lecturers and organizational leaders. As reformers and activists, Cooper, Wells and Washington extended themselves far beyond the local realms of their homes and communities. They also encompassed efforts to deal with the global ramifications of American and European imperialism, black disenfranchisement, women's rights, and racial violence. Through their activism, scholarship, and travels, these women frequently wrestled with the machinations of racial and gendered hierarchies beyond the borders of the United States; furthermore, they turned their marginalized position as black women in the United States into privileged positions of knowledge concerning the role of America in the world and the role that black women (of all nationalities) should play in the elimination of racial and gendered oppression globally.

Cooper, Wells and Washington deployed expansive visions in formulating their responses to race and gender discrimination, yet they did so from vastly different intellectual perspectives. Anna Julia Cooper critically examined the imbrications of American imperialism and American racist ideology; Ida B. Wells sought international collaboration as a way to transcend the obstacles impeding the struggle against racist violence in the United States and, in the process, encountered and informed a transatlantic discourse about race, gender, national belonging, and the role of the state; and Margaret Murray Washington

sought the means to create a transnational organization for women of color to combat both racial and gender discrimination in the post-World War I era. My dissertation examines the different approaches to history, politics and social organizing manifested by these women, yet I also argue for greater integration of the work of African American women within studies of internationalism and transnationalism. Cooper, Wells, and Washington often refused to live by the cultural and political dictates of their era, which were predicated upon the perceived inferiority of both their racial and gendered identities. While they worked painstakingly to dismantle the infrastructure of white supremacy in the United States, Cooper, Wells, and Washington never lost sight of the global context in which their oppression and the oppression of their people occurred.

Black Women's Resistance to White Supremacy and Global Turns in American History

The latter part of the nineteenth-century was the worst period experienced by African Americans since enslavement. Historian Brenda Gayle Plummer has noted that the “fin de siècle” was an “era of profound and disruptive change,” for Africa and the African Diaspora.¹ The dismal state of affairs was the result of an unrelenting dispossession of the social and political opportunities African Americans garnered during the period of Reconstruction. Throughout the South, the disenfranchisement of black Americans and institutionalization of Jim Crow segregation were well under way. The 1896 Supreme Court decision, *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, made segregation a legal fixture in American life; and a racial ideology that touted the superiority of Anglo-American government and culture supported the burgeoning

¹ Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1996), 13. Historian Rayford Logan has most famously referred to this period as “the nadir,” in *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901* (New York: The Dial Press, 1954).

expansion of U.S. Empire into the Caribbean and Central America. Through racial violence, intimidation, political trickery, and disenfranchisement, white southerners ensured that former slaves and their descendants would have little access to the rights of citizenship for generations to come.²

For their part in what literary scholar Shirley Wilson Logan refers to as the ongoing “verbal warfare for human dignity,” African American women united to form the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) in 1896.³ With the NACW, African American women came together in a collective, national voice to declare the moral integrity of black womanhood, to denounce the unjust treatment of African Americans, and to affirm the role of black women in the struggle for liberation. The work of these women became a vital component to African Americans resistance against institutionalized, state-sanctioned

² Scholarship on this period is far too extensive to be listed in full, but a sampling of such works includes William B. Gatewood, *Black Americans and the White Man's Burden, 1893-1903* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Darlene Clark Hine, ed. *The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986); Leon F. Litwack *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979); James Loewen, *Sundown Towns: The Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: Touchstone Books, 2006) and David Brown and Clive Webb, *Race in the American South: From Slavery to Civil Rights* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007); Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975); C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Peter J. Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South: Richmond, Virginia, 1865-1890* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1984); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1997); Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1998); Milfred C. Fierce, *Slavery Revisited: Blacks and the Southern Convict Lease System, 1865-1933* (New York: Africana Studies Research Center, Brooklyn College, City University of New York, 1994); Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South From Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

³ Shirley Wilson Logan, *“We Are Coming”: The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth Century Black Women* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 1. For more on the history of the founding of the NACW, see Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Perennial, 1984), 93-117. See also, Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 21-86; Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, *Afro-American Women of the South and the Advancement of the Race, 1895-1925* (Memphis: University of Tennessee Press, 1991).

violence and racism.⁴ All of the women in this study, Cooper, Wells, and Washington, not only praised the creation of a national organization for African American women, but also played vital roles in the early development of the NACW and its programs.⁵

The work of black clubwomen was motivated by two main concerns: first, to combat prevalent stereotypical images of black womanhood, and second, to provide an avenue for black women to offer critical social services for black communities while also combating the violent and exploitative injustices visited upon black communities as a result of Jim Crow racism.⁶

Women's bodies have long served as the markers of racial boundaries within the nation and beyond—delineating racial expectations in everything from the most mundane aspects of

⁴ On the founding of the NACW and false impressions of black womanhood from an 1897 edition of *Progress of A Race*: “We are weary of the false impression sent broadcast over the land about the colored woman’s inferiority, her lack of virtue, and other qualities of noble womanhood. We wish to make it clear to the minds of your fellow countrymen and women that there are no essential elements of character they deem worthy of cultivating that we do not desire to emulate; that the sterling qualities of purity, virtue, benevolence and charity are not any more dormant in the breast of the black woman than in the white woman. While the white race has chronicled deeds of heroism and acts of mercy of the women of pioneer and other days, so we are pleased to note in the personality of such women as Phyllis Wheatley, Margaret Garner, Sojourner Truth, and our venerable friend, Harriet Tubman, sterling qualities of head, heart and hand.” H. F. Kletzing and W. H. Crogman *Progress of a Race* (1897; repr., Alexandria, Va.: Chadwyck-Healey, 1987), 193; Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 93-96; White, *Too Heavy a Load*, 21-30.

⁵ This dissertation discusses the early work of Cooper, Wells and Washington with the NACW. For Cooper, see chapter 1; for Wells, see chapter 2; for Washington, see chapter 4. Also a special 1920 issue of *Progress of a Race* was dedicated to the club work of Margaret Murray Washington, J. W. Gibson, J. L. Nichols, W. H. Crogman, *Progress of a Race: or, The Remarkable Advancement of the American Negro, from the Bondage of Slavery, Ignorance, and Poverty of the Freedom of citizenship, Intelligence, Affluence, Honor and Trust* (Naperville, Ill.: J. L. Nichols & Co., 1920).

⁶ For a discussion of black women’s experiences with rape and the ways in which the ideology of white supremacy blamed black women for their own sexual assaults, see Darlene Clark Hine, “Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance,” in *Unequal Sisters*, ed. Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois (New York: Routledge, 1994) 292-297; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1993); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “African American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race,” in *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1995); Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I A Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1999); Sharon Harley, “The Middle Class,” in *Black Women in America* ed. Darlene Clark Hine, Elsa Barkley Brown, and Rosalyn Terborg Penn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 786; Temple Tsense-Hills, *I am the Utterance of my Name: Black Victorian Feminist Discourse and Intellectual Enterprise At the Columbian Exposition* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2006) 34-39; Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load*, 56-72.

public life (work) to the most intimate aspects of the private sphere (sex).⁷ This racial boundary-keeping was especially destructive for African American women as it furthered their own degradation as well as that of the race as a whole. The justifications for horrendous acts of violence committed against African American communities were deeply rooted in stereotypical ideas about the deviant sexuality of black women and men. In a world where (white) women were perceived as the wellsprings of civilization and respectability, the logic of white supremacy insisted that the depraved and lascivious nature of black communities originated with the compromised character of its women. In this sense, perceptions of black womanhood were the pivots upon which white supremacy turned.⁸

⁷ This insight comes from studies that focus upon the role of race and gender in the making and administering of empire. Important selections include: Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 22-203; Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Laura Briggs, "Gender and US Imperialism in Women's History," in *The Practice of U.S. Women's History: Narratives, Intersections, and Dialogues*, ed. S. J. Kleinberg, Eileen Boris, and Vicki Ruiz (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007); Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, ed. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Ruth Roach Pierson, Nupur Chaudhuri, and Beth McAuley, ed., *Nation, Empire, Colony: Historicizing Gender and Race* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

⁸ For more on depictions of white womanhood and civilization, see Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1995), 3-44; Louis Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 22-31; W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "White Women and Historical Memory," in *Jumpin' Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights* ed. Jane Dailey, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, and Bryant Simon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 115-139; Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 1-44. For more on the representations of black female sexuality and the centrality of these representations to white supremacy, see Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman*, 42-96. "Sociologists, psychiatrists, and the male literati accused Black women of castrating not only their men but their sons; of having low self-esteem; of failing badly when compared to the virtues of White women. Black women were unfeminine, they said; how could they expect the unflagging loyalty and protection of Black men?" Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 319. Perhaps most famously, Anna Julia Cooper proclaimed the doubly oppressed status of black women within white patriarchal system when she declared, "[o]nly the BLACK WOMAN can say 'when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me.'" Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (1892; repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 31.

Hateful stereotypes about black womanhood often explained their exclusion from white-led women's organizations.⁹ Convinced of their own racial superiority, white women constructed spaces for themselves within national and imperial ventures and often made the case for their own enfranchisement and empowerment by degrading the status of non-white, colonized peoples.¹⁰ Through their activism, African American women sought to bring white-Anglo women into confrontation with their own racial and imperial privilege, and this is certainly the case with Cooper, Wells, and Washington.

Despite the challenges of working with white female reformers, black women still held closely to beliefs in the moral superiority of their gender, and they found ways to deploy this ideology through their work.¹¹ In 1896, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, president of the Woman's Era Club of Boston, contended that white women used ideas about the immorality of black women to exclude them from their clubs, "[y]ear after year, southern women have protested against the admission of Colored women into any national organization on the ground of the immorality of these women, and because all refutation has only been tried by individual work, the charge has never been crushed, as it could and should have been at the first."¹² With the advent of their own clubs, black women finally had the ability to prove their own moral superiority and their ability to lead the movement for racial uplift. Later in

⁹ Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women and the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1998), 107-135.

¹⁰ Newman, *White Women's Rights*, 102-115. See also, Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

¹¹ Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 95-97. Historian Kevin Gaines has been particularly critical of the cultural and political philosophies of nineteenth century clubwomen. Gaines has criticized many black leaders—male and female—in the early twentieth century for reaffirming what he refers to as a “‘scientific’ Western ethnological persona,” which reaffirmed white, Victorian, middle class values and notions of racial supremacy, see Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 35-50, 106-110, 129.

¹² “Address of Josephine St. P. Ruffin, President of Conference,” *A History of the Club Movement Among the Colored Women of The United States of America* (1902; repr., Washington, DC: National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc., 1979), 33.

the same speech Ruffin spoke to the global significance of the black women's club movement, "[i]t is to break this silence not by noisy protestations of what we are not, but by a dignified showing of what we are and hope to become that we are impelled to take this step, to make of the gathering an object lesson to the world."¹³

Nearly forty years of scholarship on black women's activism has chronicled the powerful and varied ways that African American women have resisted violence, disenfranchisement and oppression in the United States and made possible the successful civil rights campaign that would come to a head in the mid-twentieth century.¹⁴ This study contributes to further exploration of black women's contributions by positioning black women's lives, experiences and activism in the broader international and transnational circulation of *fin-de-siècle* people and ideas.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ The body of scholarship on black women's history is rich and extraordinary. Selected works that influenced this study include, Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Toni Cade Bambara, ed., *The Black Woman: An Anthology* (New York: New American Library, 1970); Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Black Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981); Cheryl D. Hicks, *Talk with You Like a Woman: African American Women, Justice and Reform in New York, 1890-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Darlene Clark Hine, *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-Construction of American History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed, ed. *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible:" A Reader in Black Women's History* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson, 1995); Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, ed., *All the Women are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press, 1982); Ann D. Gordon and Bettye Collier-Thomas, ed. *African American Women and the Vote, 1837-1965* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Gerda Lerner, *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984); Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg Penn, ed. *The Afro-American Woman: Struggle and Images* (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1997); Elsa Barkley Brown, "Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of Saint Luke," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 13, no. 3 (1989): 610-33; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

All of the figures examined here are subjects of biographies, yet many students of United States history have only cursory knowledge of their careers and activism.¹⁵ Furthermore, they are rarely treated as iconic American citizens who informed our thinking about American identity through their transnational and international activism. Both Ida B. Wells's and Anna Julia Cooper's early work combine threads of national belonging, state power, and the turmoil experienced by colonized people during the age of high imperialism. Cooper's later work at the Sorbonne and Margaret Murray Washington's organizing speak to the histories of decolonization, black intellectual ferments in both American and European urban centers, as well as the global significance of black protest.

Focusing on the transnational and international activism of these women brings both their histories and legacies into conversation with the global turns taking place within African American history and the field of American history more broadly. In the last two decades, scholars of the African American experience have begun highlighting the inherently international and transnational nature of African American history and posited that black internationalism serves as the most promising way to study the activities of informal non-

¹⁵ Selected monographs on Cooper, include, Karen Baker-Fletcher, *A Singing Something: Womanist Reflections on Anna Julia Cooper* (New York: Crossroad Books, 1994); Errol Tsekani Browne, "Anna Julia Cooper and Black Women's Intellectual Tradition: Race, Gender and Nation in the Making of a Modern Race Woman, 1892—1925" (PhD Dissertation, UCLA, 2008); Leona C. Gabel, *From Slavery to the Sorbonne and Beyond: The Life and Writing of Anna J. Cooper* (Northampton, MA: Smith College Library, 1982); Louise Daniel Hutchinson, *Anna Julia Cooper: A Voice from the South* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1982); Vivian M. May, *Anna Julia Cooper, Visionary Black Feminist: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2007). Selected monographs on Wells include, Mia Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Macmillan, 2010); James West Davidson, *'They Say': Ida B. Wells and the Reconstruction of Race* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Paula Giddings, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009); Linda McMurray, *To Keep the Waters Troubled: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Patricia Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). Selected monographs on Washington include, Linda Rochell Lane, *A Documentary of Mrs. Booker T. Washington* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001). The following books are about Booker T. Washington, but include much information about his wife, Margaret: Louis R. Harlan, *The Wizard Of Tuskegee, 1901-1915*, vol. 2 of *Booker T. Washington* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Raymond Smock, *Booker T. Washington: Black Leadership in the Age of Jim Crow* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2009).

governmental actors in a global context.¹⁶ This scholarship offers interpretations of black racial identity that not only transcends national and cultural borders, but also greatly promotes the role of transatlantic travel as central to the formation of black people's social, political and cultural identities. These transnational approaches illuminate black identity as a mercurial modality—the result of innumerable exchanges and negotiations that complicate the relationship between the nation-state and multiple identities and social connections.¹⁷

¹⁶ Writing for a special issue on transnationalism in the *Journal of American History*, Robin D. G. Kelley argued that scholars of African American history have a long tradition of paying attention to international contexts. Examining four generations of African American historians and activists, Kelley demonstrates that black internationalism was a determined effort to expose the fallacies of American democracy as well, as an attempt to create Pan-African solidarity in the face of imperialist violence and exploitation. While Kelley makes mention of educator and black clubwoman Anna Julia Cooper's anti-imperialist view in *A Voice from the South* and anti-lynching crusader Ida B. Wells-Barnett's highly publicized and very effective European tour in the 1890s, the international vision and contributions of African American women are noticeably absent from Kelley's narrative. Kelley's narrative privileges the contributions of black male scholars and makes little attempt to make a space for the voices of black female activists and scholars. This absence in Kelley's work reflects a much larger gap in extant historiography, which has failed to consider the presence or possible distinctiveness of black women's international vision. Kelley's periodization for these generations are 1) "The Age of Imperialism," which focuses primarily on the European scramble for Africa. Kelley highlights historian George W. Williams and his argument that Africa is central to black American identity, 2) WWI, and is characterized by Hubert Harrison's call to support liberation struggles throughout the world in *When African Awakes*, 3) the rise of fascism in Europe which he characterizes by C. L. R. James and Herbert Aptheker, and 4) a postscript on African decolonization in the post-war period. Robin D. G. Kelley, " 'But a Local Phase of a World Problem: Black History's Global Vision, 1883-1950,' " in "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History," ed. David Thelen, special issue, *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (Dec., 1999), 1047-1050.

¹⁷ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 2. This emerging focus on black internationalism particularly informed the fields of U.S. diplomatic and foreign policy history despite the traditional separation of African American civil rights struggles from major developments in the history U.S. foreign policy. For a concise discussion of these more traditional works which lay outside of this project, see Plummer "The Changing Face of Diplomatic History: A Literature Review," *The History Teacher* 38, no. 3, also see *Rising Wind*. For an excellent summation of the field of diplomatic history, see Andrew J. Rotter, "Saidism Without Said: Orientalism and U.S. Diplomatic History," *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 4 (October 2000). Historians such as Plummer and Gerald Horne have been critical of the erasure of African Americans' contributions within traditional histories of U.S. foreign policy, and they have sought to elucidate the importance of African American, non-governmental actors in the context of America's engagement with the world. For other works that also engage in this practice see, Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2000); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). See other important works in the field of black civil rights and foreign policy: Hazel M. McFerson, *The Racial Dimension of American Overseas Colonial Policy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997); Katherine Harris, *African and American Values: Liberia and West Africa* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985); Douglas Little, "Cold War and Colonialism in Africa: France, the United States, and the Madagascar Revolt of 1947," *Pacific Historical Review* 59, no. 4 (1990): 527-552; David Ryan and Victor Pungong, ed. *The United States and Decolonization: Power and Freedom* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Paul G. Lauren, *Power and Prejudice: The Politics*

While it is useful to remember that black intellectualism has a particularly transnational lineage, the bulk of research thus far has centralized the experiences of black male intellectuals and has, as a result, marginalized the ways in which global travel was significant to African American women's work as well.¹⁸

More broadly, scholarship on the transnational activism of American reformers has shown a lack of familiarity with the history of African American women and has neglected using the archives and manuscript collections of African American women's organizations in telling the histories of American reformers in the world. This is especially regrettable because of calls within the last twenty years to internationalize the field of American history by using unconventional sources and methodologies that reveal the mutually constitutive nature of national identities and international contexts. This study intervenes in several important conversations about "America and the World," and elaborates on the relationship

and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination. 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (Cambridge, Eng., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Marc Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japan and China: Black Internationalism in Asia, 1895-1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Also see by Horne, *Black and Red: Du Bois and Afro-American Response to the Cold War* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986); *Black Liberation/Red Scare: Ben Davis and the Communist Party* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1994); *Communist Front?: The Civil Rights Congress, 1946-1956* (Rutherford, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1988); *Race Woman: The Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois* (New York: NYU Press, 2000). Robin D. G. Kelley's work on Alabama communists brilliantly illuminated the international impact on labor struggles in the South, see Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1990). Also see Yvette Richards, *Maida Springer: Pan-Africanist and International Labor Leader* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000); Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). Also see Brenda Gayle Plummer, ed., *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988* (2003); Kate A. Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922-1963* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Manning Marable, and Vanessa Agard-Jones, ed. *Transnational Blackness: Navigating the Global Color Line* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

¹⁸ For more on the critiques of Gilroy's conceptualization of the Black Atlantic, see Michelle Wright, *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 1-5. To address this problem, Wright argues that studies of Black Atlantic subjects must also consider not only gender, but sexuality, and other identities traditionally marginalized within the Black American experience.

of African American women's history to the recent turn in U.S. history towards international and transnational perspectives and comparative methods over the last two decades.¹⁹

Through their scholarship and activism, Cooper, Wells, and Washington showed the historical moments traditionally considered part of a nationalist narratives of the United States carried import beyond the borders of the United States and often were central aspects of America's imperial imperative. Beyond this, they also proved that markers of national identity—citizenship, race and national belonging—often took gendered cues that impacted the lives of black women in unique ways. Examining African American women's transnational activism expands traditional disciplinary concerns within the historiography and enriches our understanding of the ample and varied experiences of African American women who refused to accept the limited opportunities afforded to them by white supremacy.

The goal of truly transnational and international histories should be to dismantle the connection between national boundaries and nationalist perspectives and elucidate the complexities of human experience. Such work would reveal the social constructedness of the nation and national identity. According to Ian Tyrrell, studies in U.S. history which utilize transnational or international perspectives and methods, perform three valuable tasks: They demonstrate the resonance of U.S. actions beyond national borders, analyze the ways that national development is buttressed or hindered by global events, and examine the ways that

¹⁹ Thomas Bender, ed. *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). See also, "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History" ed. David Thelen, special issue, *The Journal of American History*, 86, no. 3 (December 1999); Daniel T. Rodgers, 'Exceptionalism,' in *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past*, ed. Anthony Molho and Gordon S. Wood (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 21-40; George M. Fredrickson, "From Exceptionalism to Variability: Recent Developments in Cross-National Comparative History," *Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (September, 1995): 587-604; Michael McGerr, "The Price of the 'New Transnational History,'" *American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (October, 1991): 1056-67; Ian Tyrrell, "American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History," *American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (October 1991): 1031-1055; Ian Tyrrell, "Ian Tyrrell Responds," *American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (October, 1991): 1068-72; G. Allardyce, "Toward World History: American Historians and the Coming of the World History Course," *Journal of World History* 1, no. 1 (1990): 23-76;

groups or individuals are capable of operating at national and international levels. Works that engage in these methods not only add to our understanding of human experience, but also provide more complicated understandings of U.S. history.²⁰

So how is one to distinguish between “international” and “transnational” history? In order to understand the importance of black women’s activism globally, this project engages in a negotiation of these two strategies or perspectives. In an essay entitled, “Transnational Practices and Interdisciplinary Feminist Scholarship: Refiguring Women’s and Gender Studies,” Amy Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal make the case that Women’s Studies serves as the perfect forum in which to engage in transnational studies of women in various parts of the world and to uncover the complex and unequal nature of these women’s relationship to one another.²¹ Kaplan and Grewal prefer the term “transnationalism” because it points to a radical critique of the concept of the nation and searches for a greater understanding of the movement of ideas and circuits of information that do not rely upon the cohesiveness of nation-states or national identity for analysis. On the other hand, the term “internationalism” relies heavily upon the categories of the state and nation, and instead critiques concepts within the boundaries of the nation or outside of it.²² While these categories will not always be hard and fast, there will be times when the boundaries of the nation and national

²⁰ In his essay, “American Exceptionalism in An Age of International History,” Ian Tyrrell examines the “long tradition of exceptionalism” within American historiography, which he argues fails to address U.S. history within a global context. Tyrrell posits that studies that claim to be “comparative” in their approach tend to reify national frameworks instead of deconstructing them. Ian Tyrrell, “American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History,” 1031-1055; Ian Tyrrell, “Ian Tyrrell Responds,” 1068-72. See also, Thomas Bender, ed. *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*; Daniel T. Rodgers, “Exceptionalism,” in *Imagined Histories*, 21-40; George M. Fredrickson, “From Exceptionalism to Variability: Recent Developments in Cross-National Comparative History,” 587-604; Michael McGerr, “The Price of the ‘New Transnational History,’” 1056-67; G. Allardye, “Toward World History” 23-76.

²¹ For more on women’s studies in international perspective, see Patricia Grimshaw et al. *Women’s Rights and Human Rights: International Historical Perspectives*. (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

²² See Amy Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal, “Transnational Practices and Interdisciplinary Feminist Scholarship: Refiguring Women’s and Gender Studies,” ed. Robyn Weigman *Women’s Studies on Its Own: A Next Wave Reader in Institutional Change* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 66-81

institutions will be important to understanding the activism of black American women.²³

Yet, there will also be times, especially when attempting to understand African American women's negotiation of black subjectivity throughout the Caribbean, United States and Africa—a subjectivity that does not always have direct connection to national identities—that my project will be transnational in its scope.

“Black Women and the World:” African American Women’s Transnational Activism

African American women’s historians have begun to outline a history of African American women’s transnational activism. While the work is still emerging, much of this scholarship has offered frameworks to understand how black American women both viewed and engaged with the world.²⁴ Michelle Rief completed a dissertation in 2003 entitled,

²³ Mrinalini Sinha, Angela Guy and Angela Woollacott, ed., *Feminisms and Internationalism*. (New York: Blackwell Publishing Limited, 1999), 182; also see Sinha, et. al. for a brief discussion of nationalism or the creation of national bodies as enablers of women’s international activism. This was certainly the case with the founding of the National Association of Colored Women. Black clubwomen realized that they would need a strong national organization in order to make international impact.

²⁴ In the text I briefly discussed earlier works in this field, for more, see Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Horne, *Race Woman*; Erik S McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Erik S. McDuffie, “‘For the Full Freedom of...Colored Women in Africa, Asia, and in these United States...’: Black Women Radicals and the Practice of a Black Women’s International,” *Palimpsest: A Journal on Women, Gender and the Black International* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1-30; Barbara Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013); Ula Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Patricia Schechter, *Exploring the Decolonial Imaginary: Four Transnational Lives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). Women’s historians have been hugely successful in moving their field to the forefront of international and transnational studies, and have proven the importance of using gender as a category of analysis in international contexts. Unfortunately, most histories of women’s international activism have privileged the activism of primarily white American women’s organizations such as the International Council of Women (ICW), the International Women’s Suffrage Association (IWSA) and the Women’s International League of Peace and Freedom (WILPF). Although African American women were members of these organizations, they were never dominant within these movements, and often experienced racism and exclusion. This means that histories which define women’s internationalism around the activities of these organizations have marginalized the activism and vision of African American women. My work aims to decenter narratives which privilege white western women as global activists, and will explore the ways in which black women sought their own avenues to express their concern for international and transnational issues. For a complete treatment of the history of these organizations and their founding see Leila Rupp’s *World’s of Women: The Making of an International Women’s Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). For other histories of women’s international organizations see Ian Tyrrell, *Women’s World/Women’s Empire: The Women’s Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1800-1930* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Harriet Alonso, *Peace As a Women’s Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women’s Rights* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press,

“‘Banded Close Together:’ An Afrocentric Study of African American Women’s International Activism, 1850-1940, and the International Council of Women of the Darker Races.” In this work, Rief begins to outline the contours of a history of black women’s international activism beginning with black women on the international abolitionist circuit. Tracing black women’s activities from the founding of the International Council of Women, to black women’s WWI activism, and black women’s involvement in the organization of Pan-African Congresses, Rief’s work reflects the range of possibilities that are available to those seeking to write a history of black women’s international work. In her final chapter, which is dedicated to the ICWDR, argues that the ICWDR was still active in the early years of the Second World War.²⁵

Rief concludes that black women’s activism reflected their local concerns and commitment to issues racial equality.²⁶ Although Rief states that her work is influenced by Molefi Asante’s concept of Afrocentricity, it is not clear in her work how Afrocentricity helps her distinguish the activism of black American women from that of black men. Additionally, I would argue that Afrocentricity is not the appropriate framework through which to examine black women’s international activism. In order to arrive at a more fully realized explanation of black women’s international activism, the concept of intersectionality (of race, gender, class, nation, etc.) is a better point of departure.²⁷

Two works on black women’s international activism are dedicated to African Americans women’s involvement in the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom

1993); Deborah Steinstra, *Women’s Movements and International Organizations* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994); B. Anderson, *Joyous Greetings: The First International Women’s Movement, 1830-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁵ Rief, “Banded Close Together,” 173-175.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 215-220

²⁷ Intersectionality lies at the heart of Black feminist theory, for a discussion of this see Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 8-12, 66-67, 273-274, 127-148.

(WILPF). Joyce Blackwell-Johnson's *No Peace Without Freedom: Race and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915-1975*, published in 2004, and Melina Plastas' 2001 dissertation "'A Band of Noble Women': the WILPF and the Politics and Consciousness of Race in the Women's Peace Movement, 1915-1945," consciously center black women in their studies of WILPF, and find that African American women changed the path of the organization as well as significantly informed the organizations definitions of peace and freedom by making the cause of racial justice central to the movement.

Plastas couches her analysis in the language of local and global. She claims that African American women saw an intrinsic connection between their local concerns and their global activism. To these women, "the mentalities of oppression and structures of inequality which flourished in small towns and cities of the United States mirrored the mentalities which created world wars." In their analysis there could be no global peace without just relations locally and nationally.²⁸ Plastas conducts a rather sophisticated analysis about the nature of identity, belonging, and nationhood in the context of black women's involvement in WILPF. Plastas finds that the racial location of white women shaped their feelings on war and their feelings about the directions of the movement. Plastas analysis emerges from her frustration with other historians of the women's peace movement who tend to only use gender as a category of analysis. The use of whiteness as a category of analysis, Plastas claims, allows the reader to understand how white and black women internationalists experienced the racial climate of the war years differently.²⁹

Both Blackwell Johnson and Plastas conclude that although WILPF declared to be an anti-racist organization that was open to all women, it was the racist views of the members and

²⁸ Melinda Plastas, "'A Band of Noble Women: the WILPF and the Politics and Consciousness of Race in the Women's Peace Movement, 1915-1945" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York, Buffalo, 2001), 57.

²⁹ Ibid., 6.

their reluctance to work side by side with black women that hampered the organizations ability to recruit and maintain black female members. Both authors make explicit the fact that because of their lived experiences as black women, they felt especially qualified to educated white women about the connection between racial injustice in America and injustice in the world.³⁰

Cooper, Wells, and Washington offer exemplary material for constructing the history of African American women's transnational activism. This project contends that black American women's use of internationalism and transnationalism was their attempt to assert their humanity and subjectivity in spaces that were self-determined and less restrictive. In the process, they laid the foundation for African American women to rethink the contours of national identity and national belonging and illuminated the global nature of gender and race inequality.

Each woman examined in this study is, in her own right, a foremother of black feminist thought and activism. Cooper, Wells, and Washington were co-founders of the first regional and national organizations for African American women and throughout their lives played key roles in shaping the development of these organizations. Through transnational activism, these women saw a world of possibilities in advancing their struggles against oppression. The lives of Cooper, Wells, and Washington also make the case that the transnational is the appropriate framework through which to understand the history of black women's organizing more broadly. From the earliest conception of the black women's club movement in the late

³⁰ Blackwell-Johnson, *No Peace, No Freedom*, 37; Plastas, "A Band of Noble Women," 6. While both of these books are important contributions to a history of black American women's international activism, they both reflect the problem mentioned above that the history of black women's activism is usually only visible through the lens of international organizations dominated by white women, which makes it difficult to consider black women's international activism on its own terms. Blackwell Johnson's work particularly lays out an extensive history of black women's interest in Haiti, Liberia and Ethiopia. See esp. chapter 5, 111-139.

nineteenth century, these women were traveling the world, aligning themselves with global humanitarians, and critiquing American policies toward African Americans through the lens of empire. Cooper, Wells, and Washington mandate that we ask different types of questions about black women's activism and recognize that black women viewed their own work through a broader, more encompassing perspectives.

"Black Women and the World," which contains four substantive chapters, takes as its point of departure the social and political movements occurring during the age of empire and considers what a deeper contextualization of black women in this historical period reveals about the nature of black women's activism. Chapter 1, "The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper: Civilization, Progress and the American South as the Model for Empire," re-envision Cooper's canonical 1892 publication *A Voice from the South*. This work, which has rightfully been considered a foundational black feminist text for the way it articulates the intersectional challenges black women faced in the late nineteenth century due to both racism and sexism. Less frequently analyzed however is Cooper's engagement with themes of transnationalism and colonialism. This chapter argues that Cooper articulated a transnational perspective that was informed by the deteriorating race relations in the American South in the post-emancipation era, while simultaneously engaged in outlining the contours of an emergent American imperialism. In ways that were keenly nuanced and theoretically anticipatory for her time, Cooper saw the model for America's engagement with its burgeoning empire in the U.S. South's violent and unjust treatment of African Americans.³¹

³¹ The chapter analyzes Cooper's *A Voice from the South* in light of *critical regionalism*—a practice that considers the deployment of the traditional concept of region in a critical transnational mode. For a thorough discussion of critical regionalism see Harilaos Stecopoulos, *Reconstructing the World: Southern Fictions and U.S. Imperialism, 1898-1976* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008), 1-17. *Critical regionalism* is the product of the new southern studies, which has demonstrated how the traditional concept of region can be used to elucidate the workings of several political and cultural formations: nation, empire, international and transnational. For more on new southern studies see, Carolina Levander, "Confederate Cuba," *American*

Chapter 2, “International Woman: Ida B. Wells and the Transatlantic Campaign Against Lynching,” uses the concept of “respectable citizenship” to bring together the intersectional themes of race, gender, religious piety and domesticity within Wells’ anti-lynching campaign. Traveling to Britain in order to buttress her campaign against state sanctioned violence against black people, Wells used the lives and experiences of African Americans to create her own definition of the ideal citizen and to delineate the attendant responsibilities of the federal government to protect the privileges of citizenship. While abroad, Wells’ used her position as an African American reformer to engage in a common transnational project with her British benefactor, Catherine Impey, and the broader British reform community, to question the relationship between race and national belonging. Rather than activating a British sense of superiority through her narration of horrific instances of American extralegal violence, these humanitarians were drawn to Wells’ anti-lynching campaign because of their own anxieties about the ways that racial violence compromised the civilizing mission and national and imperial legitimacy.

Chapter 3, “The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper: Slavery, Citizenship and Revolution: Cooper’s PhD Thesis at the Sorbonne,” examines Cooper’s 1925 PhD thesis written at the University of Paris, Sorbonne. In her dissertation, entitled *L’Attitude de la France à l’égard de l’esclavage pendant la Révolution* (France’s Attitude Toward Slavery During the Revolution), Cooper utilizes the iconic French Revolution to critique the West’s unwillingness to abandon racial antipathy and its failure to live up to its own professions of freedom and equality. Cooper’s dissertation is a cautionary tale that highlights the inextricable connection between France’s racial, economic and imperial hegemony and the eventual emergence of the Haitian

Literature 78, no. 4 (December 2006), 821-845; Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn, “Introduction: Uncanny Hybridities,” in *Look Away! The U.S. South in New World Studies*, ed. Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 1-20.

Republic through violent revolution. Cooper anticipated many works that theorize the formation of modern nation-states within the nexus of slavery, empire, and racist exploitation. Her dissertation deserves greater attention because of the insights she offers regarding emergent national, international and imperial identities.

Much like her early publication *A Voice from the South* (1892), Cooper's dissertation posits that domestic attitudes toward race and citizenship were fomented within transnational networks of imperial power. Her subjective experience as a black American southern woman living at the margins of American society laid the foundation for her to reframe the relationship between the margins and the center on a global scale. This chapter argues that Cooper not only engaged in transnational historical practices throughout her scholarly career, but she also provided a new trajectory for historians who are interested in African American responses to the histories of slavery, nationalism, and imperialism—a trajectory that is conscious of the lived experiences and intellectual contributions of African American women.

Chapter 4, the final substantive chapter of this dissertation entitled, "The International Council of Women of the Darker Races (ICWDR) and Fostering Race Pride in "People of Color the World Over," examines the founding of the ICWDR in the 1920s and traces the desire and necessity of black clubwomen—led by the visionary leadership of Margaret Murray Washington—to create an autonomous political space for women of color to pursue international and transnational activism. The creation of the ICWDR in the early 1920s was a preliminary moment where collectively black women not only began to articulate an agenda that challenged the imperial politics of the early twentieth century, but they also explicitly claimed their place as participants in twentieth-century diasporic and transnational struggles.

The founding of the ICWDR is important to the history of black women's organizing in that it marks a moment when black women began to rethink and redefine their role as activists and race leaders and struggled to reframe their protest to fit their own lived experiences and visions of freedom.

Chapter 1:
The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper I: Civilization, Progress, and the American South as the Model for Empire

Anna Julia Cooper wrote about the challenges of being a black woman educator and reformer. She wrote about myriad issues dealing with race and gender in the United States, over a career of nearly nine decades, but she is most often recognized for *A Voice from the South*. Published in 1892, the book made a profound case for the place of black women in late nineteenth-century American reform and, more broadly, examined the challenges facing African Americans since emancipation. Scholarship on Cooper has most often viewed *A Voice from the South* as representative of a nascent black feminist epistemology in the nineteenth century, which sought to combat the marginalization of black women within both racial uplift and women's rights movements.³² Cooper's analysis revealed how intertwined the women's movement and racial uplift were with a wide range of national and international questions including American cultural identity, U.S. territorial and overseas expansion, imperial conquest, and the negotiation of power between what was considered the "stronger"

³²Selected works include, Anna Julia Cooper, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper: Including a Voice from the South and Other Important Essays, Papers, and Letters*, ed. Charles Lemert and Esme Bahn (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000); Karen Baker-Fletcher, *A Singing Something: Womanist Reflections on Anna Julia Cooper* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 1-25; Errol Tsekani Browne, "Anna Julia Cooper and Black Women's Intellectual Tradition: Race, Gender and Nation in the Making of a Modern Race Woman, 1892-1925" (Ph.D diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2008); Leona Gabel, *From Slavery to the Sorbonne and Beyond: The Life and Writings of Anna J. Cooper* (Northampton, MA: Department of History of Smith College, 1982), 25-45; Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Perennial: 1984), 101-123; Kathy Glass, "Tending to the Roots: Anna Julia Cooper on Social Labor and Harvest Reaping," in *Courting Communities: Black Female Nationalism and "Syncre-Nationalism" in the Nineteenth-century Novel* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 77-100; Hazel Carby, "'On the Threshold of the Woman's Era': Lynching, Empire and Sexuality in Black Feminist Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1, Race, Writing, and Difference (Autumn, 1985), 262-277; Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 97-120; Louise Daniel Hutchinson, *Anna Julia Cooper: A Voice from the South* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982), 103-116; Vivian May, *Anna Julia Cooper, Visionary Black Feminist: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 45-78; Mary Helen Washington, "Anna Julia Cooper: A Voice from the South," in *Black Women's Intellectual Traditions: Speaking Their Minds* ed. Kristin Waters and Carol B. Conaway (Burlington, VT: University of Vermont Press, 2007), 249-268.

and “weaker” populations throughout the world.³³ Through a careful consideration of what she believed was America’s religious, moral, and political mission, Cooper interrogated the meaning of American identity and America’s relationship to the rest of the world while also re-conceptualizing the African American contribution to global progress and western civilization. In the process, Cooper did not simply try to make space within an existing culture for African Americans; she asserted fairness as the very core principle of democratic practice and portrayed African Americans and African-descended peoples as world-historical actors upon whom Western civilization and progress depended. *A Voice from the South* declared the importance of coexistence and diversity at a time when white Europeans and Americans based imperial conquest on the fate of white civilization to rule over “weaker” populations throughout the globe. Through her critique, Cooper legitimated an African American (more explicitly a *feminine* African American) value system that exposed the racial chauvinism deeply embedded within both the American South and American culture more broadly and, in the process, de-legitimated white supremacy’s claims to advanced civilization.

In addition to examining Cooper’s feminist contributions, this chapter elaborates on Cooper’s use of the American South to launch a trenchant critique of American Empire and

³³ Cooper’s writing anticipated many works within the field of history that trace the trajectory of American social movements in the context of empire. See the following, Allison Snider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age: U.S. Expansion and the Woman Question, 1870-1929* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Louise Michele Newman, *White Women’s Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Tracey Jean Boisseau, *White Queen: May French-Sheldon and the Imperial Origins of American Feminist Identity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2003); Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); and Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

the global expanse of white supremacy.³⁴ Reorienting the vision of *A Voice from the South* as an African American woman's engagement with the nature of U.S. imperialism and its manipulation of racial and gendered hierarchies serves a number of important purposes. First, it reaffirms what we know about the international and transnational content of African American social and political thought and makes the case for a more serious consideration of black women's contributions to black internationalism and transnationalism.³⁵ Second, through a close reading of *A Voice from the South*, this chapter shows that Cooper utilized a

³⁴ This argument is influenced by Harilaos Stecopoulos's concept of critical regionalism—a critical practice that rethinks regionalism from a transnational perspective. For a thorough discussion of critical regionalism see Stecopoulos, *Reconstructing the World: Southern Fictions and U.S. Imperialism, 1898-1976* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008), 1-17. *Critical regionalism* is the product of the new Southern studies, which has demonstrated how the traditional concept of region can be used to elucidate the workings of several political and cultural formations: nation, empire, international and transnational. For more on new Southern studies see, Caroline Levander, "Confederate Cuba," *American Literature* 78, no. 4 (December 2006), 821-845; Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn, "Introduction: Uncanny Hybridities," in *Look Away! The U.S. South in New World Studies*, ed. Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 1-20.

³⁵ In his 1999 essay, "But a Local Phase of a World Problem: Black History's Global Vision, 1883-1950," Robin D. G. Kelley examines four generations of African American historians and activists and argues that their concern with international events was not just a form of escapism but a determined effort to prove black humanity and subjectivity. Acknowledgement and interaction with the world beyond the confines of American borders greatly encouraged black American reformers and intellectuals to re-conceptualize their relationship to American social and political culture. Additionally, early African American reformers and intellectuals rejected the idea of the uniqueness of their oppression and considered the commonalities of their experience with other colonized people throughout the world. Histories of black internationalism have always been primarily concerned with examining internationalism as part of a clearly articulated strategy among black Americans and showing African Americans as constructive, non-governmental actors. Recent studies of black internationalism grounded in the field of women and gender studies have contributed new ways of interpreting this strategy of black resistance and have thereby exposed some of the underlying assumptions of the field that have led to the omission of black women's contributions throughout the diaspora. Robin D. G. Kelley, "But a Local Phase of a World Problem," *Black History's Global Vision, 1883-1950*, *The Journal of American History*, vol. 86, no. 3 (Dec., 1999), 1047-1050.

A focus on gender is noticeably absent from Kelley's essay. Michelle Wright, Carole Boyce Davies and Ula Taylor have been very open about their critiques of scholarship on the Black Atlantic and the omission of women's voices. Wright argues that cultural studies on the Black Atlantic focus almost exclusively on the black male subject. In response to this, Wright highlights the work of black feminist writers such as Audre Lorde and Carolyn Rodgers, and in the process, identified the trope of the black mother who speaks for and through multiple subjects within the African diaspora. Through this cultural trope Wright makes the reader aware of the relational aspects of black subjectivities within the African Diaspora. (i.e., black woman as creator life and therefore in dialogue with multiple black subjectivities because of her contributions—Wright argues that the black nationalist traditions assume that black male subjects only beget black male subjects.) Also see Michelle Wright, *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Kevin Gaines, *African Americans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 110-135; Carol Boyce Davis, *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Yvette Richards, *Maida Springer: Pan-Africanist and International Labor Leader* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000); Ula Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

marginalized position as an African American women in American society—and all that it revealed to her about raw power and injustice—to critique the meaning of U.S. national identity in an age of empire.

Since the emergence of African American women's history as a field of study, scholars have revealed the varied strategies of resistance African American women developed to provide social, cultural and political services to their communities—locally and nationally. The recent transnational turn in U.S. history has strongly emphasized the examination of the mutually constitutive nature of national identities and activities and international contexts. By focusing the international dimensions of Cooper's earliest work—*A Voice from the South*—this chapter reveals an early example of the connection between African American women's national and domestic histories and the international circulation of people and ideas in the age of empire. Cooper's work exemplifies a nineteenth-century African American woman's perspective that not only sought to bridge the differences between ethnic and gender particularity and national identity, but was also keenly aware of the ways America's national and imperial identities were articulated at the nexus of race and gender. Cooper's treatment of American exceptionalism demonstrated the ways in which American cultural identity was deeply embedded within the histories of other nations and the global circulation of goods, literature and discourses.³⁶

Early Life

The years that Cooper spent in Washington, DC were absolutely central to who she was a scholar and as a reformer. In addition to writing *A Voice*, Cooper made connections in the

³⁶ I am grateful to Caleb McDaniel for his insight on this—the radical contextualization of American exceptionalism as a historical phenomena brought to life by American's engagement with the histories of other nations.

city that placed her in the frontline of late nineteenth-century racial uplift and allowed her to interact with some of the most formidable black intellectuals and reformers of the era. This early work undoubtedly shaped the theory and practice that comprised Cooper's reform career and activism. The product of post-Civil War optimism and struggle, these years were critical to shaping Cooper's intellectual identity. The independence Cooper gained as a result of widowhood in her early years as an educator and the personal and professional connections she developed within a flourishing black nationalist community fostered Cooper's expansive and enduring appreciation for the African American experience in America and beyond.

Born in Raleigh, North Carolina on August 10, 1860, Anna Julia Cooper (née Haywood) was the daughter of an enslaved woman named Hannah Stanley Haywood and a white father to whom to she claimed to, "...owe nothing ...beyond the initial act of procreation."³⁷ There is much speculation that Cooper's father was Dr. Fabius J. Haywood, her mother's owner and a member of the affluent Haywood family of Raleigh.³⁸ The Haywoods amassed significant wealth through land ownership, moneylending and the ownership of slaves. By 1860, the Haywood family (with thirteen members) owned a total of 271 slaves. Cooper's mother was a servant in the Haywood home and, in addition to Anna, gave birth to two sons:

³⁷ "Negro College Graduates," Anna Julia Cooper Papers box 23-1, folder 1; Manuscript Division, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University (hereon MSRC). Some scholars have declared that Cooper's father was her mother's master (his last name was Haywood, Cooper's maiden name). Cooper never explicitly confirmed this in any of her writings and it is simply deduced. The year of her birth is also in question. In a survey conducted in the 1930s, Cooper indicated that her date of birth was August 10, 1860, however, many scholars have listed her date of birth as 1858, 1859 and 1860. The 1870 census listed her age as twelve, meaning she would have been born in 1858. However, Cooper claims that she began school at the age of eight. The first school she attended, St. Augustine's, opened for the first time in 1868, meaning she would have to be eight at the time. I choose to believe Cooper's account that she was born in 1860 and began school at St. Augustine's when she was eight. Lemert and Bhan, ed., *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, 4-5; Gabel, *From Slavery to the Sorbonne and Beyond*, 7; Hutchinson, *Anna Julia Cooper*, 3. Vivian May also discusses the confusion about Cooper's birth in *Anna Julia Cooper, Visionary Black Feminist*, 190n2.

³⁸ Hutchinson, *Anna Julia Cooper*, 3-6.

Rufus Haywood and Andrew Jackson Haywood.³⁹ At the time of her birth, the nation was on the cusp of Civil War and African American communities were at once disquieted and hopeful about the meaning of the war for their own fates and for the future. Later in her life, Cooper recounted that family members believed her birth foretold the outcome of the war and that family members as well as neighbors stared into her crib for answers to their burning questions about imminent freedom.⁴⁰

Cooper came of age in an era where black Americans saw their greatest dreams delivered to them and then stolen away by a “redeemed” South all within a generation. What was once a bad situation became worse as Southern whites sought to reinstate social and political control through brutal and often violent means. What we know specifically of Cooper’s early years comes almost exclusively from her own writings produced much later in her life.⁴¹ There is virtually no existing record left by her family, which is not surprising and is quite typical of newly-freed families of that time. An 1870 census indicated that young Anna was the only literate member of her household and Cooper indicated in later writings that the extent of her mother’s literacy included only select parts of the Bible. Cooper never gave any indication of what her life was like as a young enslaved girl and she never mentioned anything about her mother’s experience other than praise for instilling her children with the highest morals. Whenever Cooper spoke of her youth she focused almost exclusively on her

³⁹ Ibid.; Gabel, *From Slavery to the Sorbonne and Beyond*, 7. At the time of Cooper’s birth in Raleigh the city’s population was comprised of 2693 whites, 1621 slaves, and 466 free people of color. John Hope Franklin *The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1943), 3-9, 17.

⁴⁰ Cooper wrote an autobiographical account of her birth and her family’s superstitions about her birth. Letter reprinted in full in Hutchinson, *Anna Julia Cooper*, 4.

⁴¹ The most extensive treatments of Cooper’s early life exist in Gabel and Hutchinson. Both engage in radical contextualization of local newspapers in North Carolina and personal records of Anna’s owners, the Haywoods, in order to speculate what Cooper’s life was like as a small child, Gabel, *From Slavery to the Sorbonne and Beyond*, 7-24; Hutchinson, *Anna Julia Cooper*, 3-44.

early education at St. Augustine's Normal School in Raleigh, N.C., an experience that was clearly definitive in her life as an educator and a reformer.⁴²

Cooper began her education at a very young age at St. Augustine Normal School and Collegiate Institute, which officially opened January 13, 1868. Already literate by the age of eight, she found herself teaching a classroom of freed slaves of all ages hoping to obtain the education denied to them under slavery. The school, founded by Episcopal missionaries, sought to train young African Americans as teachers for future generations of African Americans. Here Cooper honed her skills studying mathematics and Latin.⁴³

Education not only defined Cooper's life's work, it was also a key component to African American women's service to their communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The job of educating the masses of freedpeople fell largely upon the shoulders of black women of all ages. In fact, Cooper's first position teaching at eight years old was as a "pupil-teacher" a very common position at new schools in the South frequently short on funds. Pupil-teachers allowed schools to utilize students who possessed some skills and abilities to help the school manage the overpopulated institutions. Teaching was not only a socially acceptable occupation at a time heavily influenced by Victorian social mores, it was also a vital part of black women's self-help and uplift efforts for their families and communities. Many of the black female reformers of this time, such as Margaret Murray Washington and Mary McLeod Bethune, possessed backgrounds in teaching and education. Most importantly, education not only allowed these women to provide fellow African Americans the ABC's of learning, but also provided valuable lessons in hygiene, etiquette,

⁴² Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper: A Voice from the South*, 3-10. Cooper's early experience teaching formerly enslaved people would become an important touchstone throughout her life; in the 1930s she defined her life's work as "the education of neglected peoples." "Negro College Graduates Survey," AJC Papers, MSRC.

⁴³ Gabel, *From Slavery to the Sorbonne and Beyond*, 13.

family life and social justice. For many young black women of the South, teaching began as a necessary service to their friends and families and evolved into a consciousness, a mission, and a catalyst for further service.⁴⁴

After receiving her diploma from St. Augustine's in 1887, Cooper remained at the school to continue her teaching duties in Latin, Greek, and mathematics. In late 1877, Cooper married George A. C. Cooper, a St. Augustine Greek teacher and theology student who had moved to Raleigh from his birthplace Nassau, British West Indies, to prepare for the ministry.⁴⁵ George Cooper would be the second black man ordained as a bishop in the Episcopal Church in North Carolina in June of 1879; he died unexpectedly only a few months later. Cooper never remarried and, throughout her life, continued to acknowledge his memory, even commissioning a stained glass window in his honor at the St. Augustine chapel in 1931.⁴⁶ The death of Cooper's husband so early on in their marriage afforded Cooper a measure of independence in her education and career choices that would not have been possible if she were single or even still married.⁴⁷ As a widowed woman, Cooper could pursue her education and career as a teacher and scholar at a time when many married

⁴⁴ Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, *African American Women of the South and the Advancement of the Race*, 5-7. Neverdon-Morton argues that, at the turn of the century, educated black women believed that it was not only their duty to help African Americans develop better personal habits and education, but that they were by their very nature best-suited to bring these lessons to their communities. See also, Adam Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

⁴⁵ Cooper never wrote about her husband, their marriage, or the circumstances of their meeting. Given George's level of education and his professional endeavors, he most likely offered the kind of intellectual and emotional companionship that a strong, independent woman like Cooper needed. It is also notable that, like Cooper, he was the product of a post-emancipation society. While post-emancipation Bahamas had a historically different trajectory from the post-emancipation United States, George likely shared Cooper's awareness and interest in race and national identity, and he may have even sparked Cooper's interest in transnational black experiences. See Whittington B. Johnson, *Post-Emancipation Race Relations in the Bahamas* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2006).

⁴⁶ Vivian M. May *Anna Julia Cooper, Visionary Black Feminist: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 15-17; "Negro College Graduates, Individual Occupational History," Anna Julia Cooper Papers Box 23-1, Folder 1, MSRC.

⁴⁷ Claudia Goldin, "Marriage Bars: Discrimination against Married Women Workers from the 1920s to the 1950s" in *Favorites of Fortune: Technology, Growth, and Economic Development since the Industrial Revolution*, ed. Higonnet, Patrice, David S. Landes, and Henry Rosovsky (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 511-36.

women were not allowed to work in most public schools (although it was acceptable for widows to do so). After her husband's death, Cooper showed an unwavering determination to pursue higher education and to work fervently as a teacher and activist to educate underprivileged communities. In 1881, she entered Oberlin College, which was known for its progressive, coeducational, and racially-inclusive liberal arts education. Cooper's class included two other African American women who would also leave indelible marks on the racial uplift struggle, clubwoman and the first president of the NACW, Mary Church Terrell, and Ida Gibbs Hunt, a clubwoman married to U.S. Counsel William Henry Hunt.⁴⁸

While at Oberlin, Cooper found herself unable to engage in social activities to the same extent as some of her more affluent class members. However, she developed a reputation from her hard work and exceptional abilities. Cooper also did not live on the Ladies Hall on campus but instead lived at the home of Charles Henry Churchill and his family. Churchill, a prominent professor at the university, developed a relationship with Cooper that would last until his passing.⁴⁹ After a brief stint teaching at Wilberforce College in Ohio and earning a Master's degree in mathematics, Cooper moved to Washington, DC in 1887 to take a job at Washington High School. Administrators at Oberlin secured positions in the DC area for Cooper as well as for Cooper's fellow classmates, Terrell and Hunt.⁵⁰

When Cooper first arrived in DC, she was still in the process of house hunting and, for the time being, lived with Rev. Alexander Crummell and his wife, Jennie M. Simpson, who were themselves constructing St. Luke's Church at Fifteenth and Church Street in Northwest

⁴⁸ Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 108-117. Gibbs Hunt ultimately accompanied her husband on several of his overseas assignments including Liberia, France, Madagascar, and Guadeloupe. Gibbs Hunt's father, Mifflin Gibbs, had also served as a U. S. Counsel to Madagascar. It was during this assignment that she met William Hunt. For more on this family, see Adele Logan Alexander, *Parallel Worlds: The Remarkable Gibbs-Hunts and the Enduring (In)significance of Melanin* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010). Alexander is a distant cousin to Gibbs Hunt.

⁴⁹ Gabel, *From Slavery to the Sorbonne and Beyond*, 17-24; Hutchinson, *Anna Julia Cooper*, 30-36.

⁵⁰ Anna J. Cooper, *Personal Recollections of the Grimké Family* (n. p., 1951), 8-9.

Washington, DC.⁵¹ Cooper's writings indicate that she had been a long time admirer of Crummell's work. The previous year Cooper gave a speech before the colored clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Washington, DC where she praised Crummell for his plea to uplift young black girls of the South in his speech, "The Black Woman of the South: Her Neglects and Her Needs."⁵² Both Cooper and Crummell shared a common conservative vision of racial uplift that was quite typical of black nationalists of the era. They both emphasized personal responsibility among African Americans, the value of higher education, and a belief in civilizationist ideology, which touted that the improvement of the black condition lied in religious piety, cultural refinement, and moral behavior. Crummell held a significant interest the plight of African American women, and contrary to some of his male contemporaries who were interested in uniting all black people behind the authoritarian leadership of a single man or group of men, Crummell recognized the uplift and leadership of black women as a key component of the struggle of the race overall.⁵³ Crummell's valorization of black women no doubt appealed greatly to Cooper. More than a decade later, in 1897, Cooper would also become the only female member of the American Negro Academy, an organization founded by Crummell for the purpose of promoting higher

⁵¹ Ibid. Simpson played a crucial role in helping Crummell establish and run his church, as well as his social life in Washington, DC. Henry Louis Gates and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, eds. *African American Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 199.

⁵² Cooper's speech at the 1886 conference serves as the first chapter of *A Voice from the South. The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper* ed. Lemert and Bhan, 53-71.

⁵³ Alexander Crummell, *The Black Woman of the South: Her Neglects and Her Needs* (Cincinnati, OH : Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, date unknown). In this text, Crummell argues that the experiences of black women under slavery were more difficult than that of black men. He concludes that the uplift of the race must focus on improving the opportunities available to black women in the South; he says, "I am anxious for a permanent and uplifting civilization to be engrafted on the Negro race in this land. And this can only be secured through the womanhood of a race. If you want the civilization of a people to reach the very best elements of their being, and then, having reached them, there to abide, as an indigenous principle, you must imbue the *womanhood* of that people with all its elements and qualities. Any movement which passes by the female sex is an ephemeral thing." Crummell, *The Black Woman of the South*, 12. The exact publication date for this text is not known, but most estimates suggest it was published in the early 1880s.

education and cultural refinement among African Americans.⁵⁴ Her time with the Crummells brought her into contact with many prominent individuals and families in Washington, DC including Edward Wilmot Blyden, an influential politician in Sierra Leone and Liberia, frequently referred to as the Father of Pan-Africanism. This was also the time that Cooper developed her relationship with the Grimké family, of whom she would later write a book dedicated to their life and accomplishments and her relationship with them.⁵⁵ Although Cooper came from a very different socio-economic background than some of her elite contemporaries in Washington, DC, her writings indicate that she was an active, contributing member to the influential social and intellectual class of African Americans within the city.⁵⁶

In addition to her involvement in local black intellectual life, Cooper also became an active member of the black clubwomen's movement in Washington, DC—one of the largest and most active in the country, also home to other prominent black women such as Mary C. Terrell. It is not possible to overestimate the power and importance of the black women's

⁵⁴ Gabel, *From Slavery to the Sorbonne and Beyond*, 33-34.

⁵⁵ Cooper, *Personal Recollections of the Grimké Family*, 11-12.

⁵⁶ The following comes from Cooper's biography of the Grimké family; it recounts the weekly reading/culture group Cooper participated in with Crummell and the Grimkés:

As may be supposed, it took a pretty stiff course of study to hold us so long. The Friday meets we called the Art Club. We never organized, had no officials, no constitution, no dues. Besides our two families and whoever chanced to be visiting either of them, Dr. Blyden, when on this side of the Atlantic, Richard T. Greener, Mrs. Frederick Douglass (we were too dilettante for the Honorable Frederick), Mrs. John R. Francis, Mrs. John H. Smyth, (known locally as "Smythe-Smith), wife of the Ex-Minister to Liberia, and a few others met there. We drew no color line, in fact I believe we were not conscious of any. Visitors in my home such as Miss Alice M. Bacon of Hampton, Mary Churchill ("David Churchill" the author), when stopping over Sunday were pleased to meet my friends, the Grimkés, who were always in for music on that evening; likewise the denizens of "1706" had the pleasant privilege of meeting many choice New England spirits at Corcoran street on Fridays.

Anna J. Cooper, *Personal Recollections of the Grimké Family*, 9. It is important to note here that for the mid to late nineteenth-century African Americans interest in the viability of colonies in Liberia and Sierra Leone was at the forefront of African American expressions of internationalism and transnationalism. African American settlement in these nations and the Christianization of native Africans was for figures like Crummell the road to redemption for black Americans. Crummell forged a link between the civilization of the African continent and the uplift of black Americans. In the early part of her career Cooper certainly expressed an interest in the evangelizing of African peoples. As Brent Edwards suggests the interactions of black intellectuals in these kinds of "salons" were an important part of creating an international consciousness among African American elites. Brent Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

club movement during the last decades of the nineteenth century.⁵⁷ The 1890s saw the rapid growth of black women's clubs in all regions of the United States but especially within the urban centers of the Northeast and mid-Atlantic region.⁵⁸ For middle-class, educated African American women, the club movement was an important way to fight for the major causes for their race and sex, not as auxiliaries to white female or black male led organizations but on their own terms with their perspectives at the forefront. The work of black clubwomen was motivated by two main concerns: first, to combat negative stereotypical images of black womanhood and, second, for black women to provide vital social services for black communities while also combating the violent and exploitative injustices visited upon black communities as a result of Jim Crow racism.⁵⁹ While addressing the most pressing concerns of their communities would occupy a significant amount of clubwomen's work, the black women's club movement also became a major platform for black women to enter into

⁵⁷ See selected works including Dorothy Salem, *To Better Our World: Black Women in Organized Reform, 1890-1920* (New York: Carlson Pub., 1990); Neverdon-Morton, *African American Women of the South and the Advancement of the Race*; Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*; Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load*.

⁵⁸ Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 182-183; Anne Ruggles Gere and Sarah R. Robbins, "Gendered Literacy in Black and White: Turn of the Century African American Club Women's Printed Texts" *Signs* 21, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 643. Between the early 1890s and the early twentieth century nearly two million women of various racial and ethnic backgrounds organized and joined independent and single-sex organizations

⁵⁹ Work on the black clubwomen's movement is extensive. See the following selected works: Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Black Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981); Cheryl D. Hicks, *Talk with You Like a Woman: African American Women, Justice and Reform in New York, 1890-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Darlene Clark Hine, *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-Construction of American History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed, eds. *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: A Reader in Black Women's History"* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson, 1995); Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Women are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press, 1982); Ann D. Gordon and Bettye Collier-Thomas, eds. *African American Women and the Vote, 1837-1965* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Gerda Lerner, *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984); Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg Penn, eds. *The Afro-American Woman: Struggle and Images* (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1997); Elsa Barkley Brown, "Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of Saint Luke," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 13, no. 3 (1989): 610-33; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

national and international campaigns, such as the woman suffrage movement. Black women's clubs also offered crucial support for black women intellectuals and activists as they attempted to expand their work to larger audiences. For instance, black clubwomen were the earliest supporters and benefactors of anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells. In her autobiography, Wells declared that black women's efforts in organizing her first anti-lynching lecture and tour were "the real beginning of the club movement among the colored women" of the United States.⁶⁰

In June 1892, Cooper became one the founding members of the Colored Women's League of Washington, DC, which dedicated itself to improving the "moral, intellectual, social growth and attainments" of the race. Cooper co-founded the organization along with Terrell, Evelyn Shaw, Josephine Bruce, and Mary Jane Patterson (the latter also a graduate of Oberlin College and the first black woman in the United States to receive a bachelor's degree). The Colored Women's League of Washington, DC holds the distinction of being the first colored woman's club that explicitly stated its commitment to nationalize. In the organization's preamble, the CWL stated its desire to invite other women's clubs to join their organization. During the first years of its existence the organization played a key role in forming women's clubs in Kansas, Louisiana, and other areas throughout the South. Within a year, the CWL boasted hundreds of members and welcomed a Kansas City colored women's club with over 150 members—making the CWL one of the largest women's clubs in the region. CWL offered night school classes in literature and foreign languages, a trade school for young

⁶⁰ Wells, quoted in Alfreda M. Duster, ed., *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago: 1970), 81. Several issues of *The Woman's Era Journal* document clubwomen's early support for Wells' anti-lynching campaign, especially during the transatlantic leg of her speaking tour, "Apologists for Lynching," *The Woman's Era* 1, no. 3 (June 1894): 14; Fannie Barrier Williams, "Great Britain's Compliment to American Colored Women," *The Woman's Era Journal* 1, no. 5 (August 1894): 1; "Lady Somerset and Miss Willard Confess of Themselves Apologists for Lynching," *The Woman's Era Journal* 2, no. 5 (August 1895): 17.

women laborers, and a kindergarten program for over forty students before kindergarten classes became incorporated in the DC public school system.⁶¹ Cooper was not only a founding member but also served as the organization's corresponding secretary.⁶²

Of her time in Washington, DC, Cooper remarked that rarely any time passed without "planned, systematic and enlightening but pleasurable and progressive intercourse of a cultural and highly stimulating kind."⁶³ Her early years, and the road that brought her to Washington, were full of pivotal experiences in her life and development as an activist and scholar. Being embedded within an active and informed community of scholars and cultural leaders ensured that she would learn how to put her perspective into use in her career, reform work and scholarship.

A Voice from the South: Cooper and Early Black Feminism

A Voice from the South emerged at a time when many reform-minded African American women used their writing as a form of social activism. In the same year *A Voice* was published, 1892, Philadelphia clubwoman and novelist, Frances E. W. Harper, published a work of fiction entitled *Iola Leroy*, which focused on the travails of a biracial female protagonist who dedicated her life to working for racial uplift in the South after

⁶¹ Mary Church Terrell, "Colored Women's League," undated, 2-4. Mary Church Terrell Papers, MSRC Box 102-3, Folder 59.

⁶² Mary Church Terrell, "Colored Women's League," undated, 5. Mary Church Terrell Papers, MSRC Box 102-3, Folder 59. Even though CWL had an express desire to be national, and it formed many clubs throughout the country, the CWL remained largely regional rather than national. It is this fact that led to a disagreement during the founding of the National Federation of Afro-American Women in 1895. The CWL was also a major benefactor of the settlement movement in Washington DC extending the settlement house network for African Americans within the city. Settlement homes for African Americans remained an important issue for Cooper throughout her life and it was her work with the CWL that brought her interest in the issue to life. Also see Cooper's essay on settlement house work, "The Social Settlement: What It Is, and What It Does," in *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, ed. Lemert and Bhan, 216-223.

⁶³ Cooper, *Personal Recollections of the Grimké Family*, quoted in *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, ed. Lemert and Bhan, 311.

Reconstruction.⁶⁴ Also in 1892, Ida B. Wells released *Southern Horrors* starting a decades-long career seeking to bring an end to the crime of lynching, which had reached new levels in the 1890s.⁶⁵ Taking issues such as rape, lynching, women's education, and racial discrimination, Cooper and other African American women writers defined the central issues of black women's experiences with racism and sexism in the United States. African American cultural studies scholar Ann duCille noted that African American women novelists of the late nineteenth century such as Frances E. W. Harper and Pauline Hopkins used plot lines focused on black family life, slavery, interracial sex, and black life post-emancipation to make larger social statements about black men and women's obligations to racial uplift.⁶⁶ Similarly, Hazel Carby argues that black women's writing at the turn of the century was not a simple reflection of social conditions within black communities, but rather they were an effort to shape and inform the "political struggles of Afro-American people in a period of crisis."⁶⁷

Not long after publication, *A Voice* garnered positive reactions from across the country. Reviews of the book from papers such as the *The New York Independent*, *The Philadelphia Public Ledger*, and *The Boston Transcript* acknowledged its intellectual deftness as well as

⁶⁴ Iola disavows a life in which she could pass for white and marries a black doctor who shares a similar mission to bring temperance, moral progress and education to Southern blacks. Harper not only uses *Iola Leroy* to diagnose and prescribe "the Negro problem," but, like Cooper, also makes a case for women's education as a necessary component of race progress. Frances E. W. Harper, *Iola Leroy or Shadows Uplifted* (1892; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁶⁵ For more specific statistics on lynching in 1892 and the 1890s more broadly, see chapter 3 of this dissertation n1.

⁶⁶ Ann duCille, *The Coupling Convention: Sex, Text, and Tradition in Black Women's Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 48-65; Claudia Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroine's Text at the Turn of the Century* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 97-123; Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood*, 3-19.

⁶⁷ Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood*, 95.

the profundity of Cooper's message on the race problem in the United States. All the papers agreed that *A Voice* certified Cooper as a leading race woman.⁶⁸

Cooper engaged in an impassioned plea on behalf of black women that sought to impart the enormity of the racist and sexist challenges faced by African American women to the audience. *A Voice* effectively demonstrated that black women's concerns encompassed not only those experiences specific to black women, but also ultimately all of the new manifestations of oppression faced by blacks in the post-emancipation era. More than ten years before W. E. B. Du Bois referred to the color line as the problem of the twentieth century, Cooper had acknowledged that race comprised America's greatest conflict at the turn of the century. Yet as the "inheritance and apportionment" of the black man dominated the content of conversation of this issue, the voice of the black woman was conspicuously silent. In the opening to the book, "Our Raison d'Etre," Cooper declared that a solution to America's race problem could not be achieved without the contributions of African American women:

Delicately sensitive at every pore to social atmospheric conditions, her calorimeter may well be studied in the interest of accuracy and fairness in diagnosing what is often conceded to be a "puzzling" case. If these broken utterances can in any way help to a clearer vision and a truer pulse-beat in studying our Nation's Problem, this Voice by a Black Woman of the South will not have been raised in vain.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Hutchinson notes that although Cooper analysis of race and gender was "so tightly interwoven," most reviews regarded the work as a treatise on the race problem or the Negro problem while overlooking Cooper's rigorous treatment of gender difference. Hutchinson, *Anna Julia Cooper*, 104. Hutchinson provides the most detailed examination of reviews of Cooper's work. Jurist, author and playwright Albion Winegar Tourgee, also a friend of Ida B. Wells, wrote a lengthy review of Cooper's work for the 1893 publication entitled *Noted Negro Women—Their Triumphs and Activities*, he stated, "[i]ts perusal would be a new sensation to many a white-souled Christian woman of the superior race, who, when she had perused its bright pages from cover to cover, would be forced to admit that though she had encountered many a sharp thrust she had not received one awkward or ill-tempered blow." Albion Tourgee, "Mrs. Anna J. Cooper: Author of *A Voice From The South*" in M. A. Majors, *Noted Negro Women—Their Triumphs and Activities* (Chicago: Donohue & Henneberry, 1893), 284-287; Hutchinson, *Anna Julia Cooper*, 103. *A Voice* proved to be a definitive text for its time.

⁶⁹ Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, iii.

Cooper divided the book into two sections, the first dealing primarily with the issue of gender inequality, the nature of the feminine, and the necessity of higher education for women and, second, addressing the ways in which the nation had historically and culturally confronted the race problem in the United States. Echoing the sentiment of other African women reformers and activists before her, such as Maria Stewart, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, and Sojourner Truth, Cooper made the case that, as social categories, neither gender nor race alone could explain the position of black women in the United States. By separating the book into two sections, Cooper successfully articulated a distinctive point of view from black women on the race and gender questions while simultaneously emphasizing the interconnectedness of the two problems.

Cooper's primary objective in *A Voice from the South* was to speak on behalf of African American women to male leaders of the racial uplift movement and white women leading the movement for women's rights. Cooper believed that the movements for women's rights and racial uplift were two of the most important social movements of the nineteenth century. However, prejudices and biases among white women and black men meant that they had not fully incorporated the voices of African American women. She stated, "[T]he colored woman of to-day occupies, one may say, a unique position in this country...She is confronted by both a woman question and a race problem, and is as yet an unknown or unacknowledged factor in both."⁷⁰ Cooper's objective was to bring visibility to black women's experiences of injustice and to directly address those she held most responsible for limiting the roles of black women within American reform.

Mary Helen Washington criticized Cooper for not appealing to black women as members of her audience: "I must confess to a certain uneasiness about Cooper's tone in these essays,

⁷⁰ Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 112.

a feeling that while she speaks for ordinary black women, she rarely, if ever, speaks to them....[N]othing in her essays suggests that [black women] existed in her imagination as audience or as peer.”⁷¹ Washington is right to allude to Cooper’s failure to interrogate her relationship to the masses of black women, most of who inhabited a lower social class than Cooper. There is no question about the fact that Cooper saw herself as the member of a different social class and embraced class differentiation as a sign of progress among African Americans. However, despite Washington’s uneasiness, Cooper incorporates methods that emerge from a quintessentially black feminist position. Cooper speaks with a sense that black women already know the violations to which she is providing visibility. Cooper speaks in bold, uncompromising, sarcastic, and at times condescending language to those whom she holds most responsible for obstructing the reform efforts of black women. In speaking truth to power, Cooper evokes the difficulty black women had in controlling what Patricia Hill Collins has referred to as “the dominant modes for the transmission of knowledge and experience” in American society.⁷² In the world Cooper inhabited, reform-minded white women and black men had long afforded themselves the ability to speak in singular, authoritative voices. The tone and method of Cooper’s narration was her way to redress what she found to be one of the greatest offenses committed against black women by the movements for racial uplift and women’s rights.

Cooper criticized black male leadership for not fully supporting black women’s reform efforts and especially for minimizing the importance of higher education of black women.

⁷¹ Mary Helen Washington, “Anna Julia Cooper: A Voice from the South,” in *Black Women’s Intellectual Traditions: Speaking Their* ed. Kristin Waters and Carol B. Conaway (Burlington, VT: University of Vermont Press, 2007), 251. A version of this chapter also appeared as the introduction of the 1988 reprint of *A Voice* published by the Schomburg Library.

⁷² Patricia Hill Collins, “The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought,” in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought* ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: The New Press, 1995), 343.

While the pro-feminism of race leaders such as Frederick Douglass and W. E. B. DuBois has been well documented, African American women otherwise faced opposition from male leadership, especially black clergy, who seemed only lukewarm in their support for women's rights or for leadership roles for black women within racial uplift. Black men, who shared in the struggle for racial uplift, according to Cooper, were frequently blinded by their own sexism: "[I]t seems hardly a gracious thing to say, but it strikes me as true, that while our men seem thoroughly abreast of the times on almost every other subject, when they strike the woman question, they drop back to sixteenth century logic."⁷³

The first chapter, entitled "Women: A Vital Element in the Regeneration of the Race," encouraged black clergymen to acknowledge the power that Christianity bestowed upon all women to aid in the improvement of humanity and called upon black men to afford black women a greater role in racial uplift.⁷⁴ Too often, Cooper believed, black men defined the struggles of African Americans in terms of black manhood and took for granted their ability to speak on behalf of the entire race. Christianity, Cooper contended, had endowed women with a "vitalizing, regenerating and progressive influence" meant to be used for the betterment of humanity and, in the case of black women, for the "regenerating and retraining of the race."⁷⁵ And while men certainly carried a capacity for generosity, compassion, and nurturing, they only learned these sentiments from women. For this reason Cooper felt that it was necessary for women to take lead positions in social justice work. In Cooper's estimation societies would be judged by how unfettered women were in their ability to exercise such

⁷³ Anna J. Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 76.

⁷⁴ The first chapter of *A Voice* is a speech that Cooper gave before a gathering of black Episcopal leaders in Washington, DC in 1886.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 57-62.

influence.⁷⁶ In this sense Cooper's ideas mirror most women's adherence to nineteenth-century discourse of domesticity and true womanhood.⁷⁷

Critiquing black men's ability to speak on behalf of the race and relying heavily upon ideas of Republican Motherhood, Cooper contended that only black women understood the total condition of the race and could therefore speak on the entire race's behalf:

But our present record of eminent men, when placed beside the actual status of the race in America to-day, proves that no man can represent the race. Whatever attainments of the individual may be, unless his home has moved on *pari passu*, he can never be regarded as identical with or representative of the race....Only the BLACK WOMAN can say 'when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole *Negro race enters with me*.⁷⁸

Cooper equally questioned whether most black men supported higher education for black women: "I fear the majority of colored men do not yet think it worth while that women aspire to higher education."⁷⁹ Cooper saw this insensitivity on the issue of woman's education as particularly detrimental because of her unfailing belief in the ability of higher education to create impassioned and indomitable leaders for reform. In "The Higher Education of Women" she argued that education prepared women to exert a gentler and kinder force upon society: "I claim that it is the prevalence of the Higher Education among women, the making it a common everyday affair for women to reason and think and express their thought, the training and stimulus which enable and encourage women to administer to the world the bread it needs as well as the sugar it cries for; in short it is the transmitting the potential

⁷⁶ Ibid., 60-62.

⁷⁷ Nancy Cott, Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 Part I (Summer 1966): 151-174; Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *The Journal of Women's History* 75, no. 1 (June 1988): 9-39.

⁷⁸ Emphasis Cooper's. Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 31. Cooper is discussing/critiquing black nationalist Martin Delaney specifically, and his decision to represent the progress of the race as the progress of black manhood.

⁷⁹ Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 76.

forces of her soul into dynamic factors that has given symmetry and completeness to the world's agencies.”⁸⁰ While she acknowledged that all women faced barriers to education, she argued that the pathway was especially difficult for black women and greatly impeded their ability to contribute to the battle against racist and sexist inequality.

While *A Voice* contains a clear castigation of black male leadership, white female reformers also received significant criticism throughout the book. Cooper held white women responsible for obstacles to black women's work in the women's reform movement. Using the language of domesticity, the civilizing mission, and religious piety, Cooper usurped the role that white women reserved exclusively for themselves—that of speaking with authority on the superiority, plight and responsibility of womanhood—and furthermore denounced white women for their own complicity in American racism. Cooper spoke in a language familiar to white female reformers that in some ways validated their value system even while seeking to undermine the very system. At the time of *A Voice from South*'s publication in 1892, African American women were embroiled in a longstanding battle with the organizers of the World's Congress of Representative Women, which was scheduled to occur in conjunction with the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. White women organizing the Woman's Building virulently resisted attempts to include black women in any meaningful way in the preparation of the Woman's Building or the Quinquennial meeting marking the founding of the International Council of Women. African American women's exclusion from any substantive involvement in the fair represented ongoing challenges black women faced in their efforts to work with white women. Despite some instances of interracial cooperation, white women remained hostile to the inclusion of black women in their organizations and activities. Frequently, white women referred to black women's causes

⁸⁰ Ibid., 57.

as “race concerns” that lacked any relevance to the “woman question.” Such reactions reflected white women’s intention to establish themselves as the primary defenders and beneficiaries of women’s rights, nationally and worldwide.⁸¹ As will be discussed in greater detail later, efforts at collaboration with white women reformers became even more difficult as white Northern women acquiesced to Southern women’s demands to exclude women of color from their organizations.⁸²

Undergirding her critiques of both black men and white women was a belief in the value and production of knowledge and meaning. Cooper believed that knowledge—in its purest form, especially knowledge that would lead to liberation—originated within the deepest reaches of oppressed communities. In both instances, Cooper believed that black men and

⁸¹ See Allison Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age: U.S. Expansion and the Woman Question, 1870-1929* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Louise Michele Newman, *White Women’s Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 6. The Chicago Columbian Exposition was the latest incarnation of nineteenth-century fairs occurring throughout the Western world meant to celebrate the modern political and technological achievements of the West. The fair was more than anything else a celebration of the West’s conquest and domination of what was considered less-advanced civilizations throughout the world. World Fairs emerged in the latter part of the nineteenth-century to celebrate the advances of modernization in the West and to assuage Anglo-American anxieties about incorporation of non-whites into American and European empires. The fairs served as a stage where white Westerners could celebrate their perceived superiority but also reassure themselves of the inevitable progress of Western Civilization, thereby excusing the brutality and violence that went into the creation of empire.

Leaders of the International Council of Women, the first international federation of women, decided to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the organization’s founding at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Fannie Barrier Williams, a prominent Chicago black clubwoman, petitioned the Board of Lady Managers for a place on the organizing committee and for the fair inclusion of black women in the celebration of women’s achievements. Bertha Palmer, chair of the Board, initially informed Williams that the board contained no additional room. After several protests from black women Palmer later appointed an unknown African American woman not affiliated with any of Chicago’s many well-known black women’s clubs. Unfamiliar with this woman and uncertain of her commitment the values of black clubwomen’s movement, many black women denounced the decision as an underhanded move to appear inclusive while really excluding the more forceful voices of the black clubwomen’s movement. Six African American women, including Cooper, would eventually present on a panel spuriously titled “The Solidarity of Human Interests.” Women presenting during this session were asked to speak on the topic of solidarity, which assumes an equality or sisterhood, but in actuality the session exoticized the presence of the African American women and other non-whites. See Christopher Robert Reed, “*All the World is Here: The Black Presence at White City*” (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); Fannie Barrier Williams, *History of the Colored Women’s Club Movement* (n.p., 1902); Bertha Palmer to Fannie B. Williams, October 11, 1893. Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition, Board of Lady Manager Records, Box 16, President’s Letters, August 2, 1893–November 7, 1893, Chicago Historical Society. Information about the incident was widely reported in the black press and the *Woman’s Era Journal*. For all speeches from the Woman’s Congress, see May Wright Sewall, *The World’s Congress of Representative Women* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1894).

⁸² See pages 27-28, 35 of the current chapter for this discussion.

white women failed to develop truly effective critiques of oppression because of their neglect to fully incorporate black women into their movements. This espousal of the epistemic privilege of black womanhood is what has earned Cooper the moniker of nineteenth-century foremother of black feminism. Cooper believed that black women's unique experiences did not hinder, but rather enhanced black women's ability to address experiences with oppression more generally. Cooper's belief was not just a simple case of black women's exceptionalism, but instead a recognition of the unique ways in which race and gender oppression converged in the lives of black women. *A Voice from the South* does the difficult work of seeking out and identifying the margins within the margins. It was this sense of a compounded marginalization that powered her critique of American racist ideology as a precursor for larger, global forms of oppression.⁸³

Like many women of the era, Cooper derived her understanding of women's role and purpose from the logic of faith, more specifically the tenets and teachings of Christianity.⁸⁴

Raised in a deeply religious home and educated in a school founded by Episcopal missionaries, Cooper was heavily influenced by religion. A belief in the liberating

⁸³ Cooper re-imagined the meaning of progress for the entire race by using the bottom as the measure for liberation. As a result of their unique position, Cooper argued, black women not only possessed a special capacity to avenge racial and gender disparity, but they also represented the true depths of the experience of oppression. Cooper would later expand this argument to say that the true measure of American decency and progress would be determined by the nation's treatment of black women and its success of protecting black women from the violence and indignity. At the same time that Cooper made a case for the unique experiences of African American women, she also focused a significant part of the book on speaking to the common connections between the oppressed of other marginalized groups. In doing this she rejected any notion of the exceptionalism of the oppression of African Americans and drew connections between the marginalized groups experiences with Euro-American dominance. While simultaneously proclaiming the exceptionalist nature of black women's experience, Cooper wanted to acknowledge the connections between the experiences of all oppressed groups. This simultaneity—uniqueness of black women's voices and experiences, and the unexceptional nature of all oppression—is typical of the kind of line blurring that Cooper performed throughout the text, and represents her attempt to make room for voices of black women while also informing her audience of the common nature of black women's oppression.

⁸⁴ Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Barabara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 Part I (Summer 1966): 151-174; Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *The Journal of Women's History* 75, no. 1 (June 1988): 9-39.

possibilities of Christianity informed Cooper's philosophy on a woman's purpose and racial equality. She credited Protestant Christianity with leading to the continued amelioration of a woman's position, and she furthermore contended that society's progress would always be evaluated by how well that society allowed women to operate on a God-given nurturing principle.⁸⁵ Other cultures Cooper surveyed throughout the book, she argues did little to uplift women and contrary to the teachings of Christianity, made no room for the influence of women:

Mahomet makes no account of woman whatever in his polity...Mahomet did not know woman. There was no hereafter, no paradise for her. The heaven of the Mussalman is peopled and made gladsome not by the departed wife, or sister, or mother, but by *houris*—a figment of Mahomet's brain, partaking of the ethereal qualities of angels, yet imbued with all the vices and inanity of Oriental women.⁸⁶

For Cooper, the rest of the world untouched by Christianity would remain stagnant and the position of women severely impaired.

In the opening chapter of *A Voice*—an 1886 speech before a gathering of black clergymen in Washington, DC—Cooper laid out most clearly how religion played into her perception of women's rights, racial uplift, and American identity. Cooper professed a belief in the idea of a progressive world history, beginning on the continent of Europe, in which “modern civilization...derived its noble and ennobling ideal of woman...from Christianity and the

⁸⁵ See Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981) for a discussion of early Puritan tradition and its effect upon America. Horsman writes about American exceptionalism and how this was derived from a belief in the purity of the Anglo-Saxon religious practice. This would by the mid-nineteenth-century become an argument that understood Anglo-Saxonism as an issue of race, blood and heredity.

⁸⁶ Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 53-54. Cooper's orientalism is notable here as well. In her effort to elevate the social democratic possibilities within Christianity, she smeared Islam and its prophet Mohammed (Mahomet) as stagnate, unchanging, and intrinsically anti-woman. This is a severe limitation on her ability to put forth a truly global, democratic vision for the world's races, but is also another example of how she engaged in a Westernized, civilizing mission narrative about the East—a common component of the discourses deployed by middle-class black reformers. See my later discussion in this chapter of Kevin Gaines critique of Cooper's work, 38-45. See also, Edward Said, “Islam Through Western Eyes,” *The Nation*, April 26, 1980. Accessed July 2014 < <http://www.thenation.com/article/islam-through-western-eyes/> >

Feudal System.”⁸⁷ The chapter is notable for the way Cooper defined black women’s role in racial uplift and for the way that Cooper imparted her beliefs about the origins of Christianity. Shirley Wilson Logan notes that Cooper’s argument about Christianity and Feudalism being the origins of the idea of an ennobled womanhood would have “captured the attention of a group of late nineteenth-century Christian-church workers without offending or shocking them.”⁸⁸

Although Christianity emerged in Europe it would through its continual movement westward and its perfection in America, where the religion would reach its full potential and serve as a beacon of civilization for the rest of the world. It was Cooper’s religious piety and her belief in unilaterally progressive history that drove her conviction that “the next triumph of civilization” would be won in America. Cooper would go on to explain that it was this triumph of civilization that would cause the rest of the world to turn to America and to African Americans as a sign of what was possible.⁸⁹

Like her sense of a compounded marginalization, Cooper’s religiosity gave life to her internationalist vision. Cooper’s religious worldview and her belief in the destiny of the US revealed her self-perception as a student of European history and customs. As an educated Christian woman, Cooper saw herself as the beneficiary of an intellectual and cultural tradition that began with Europeans but was, by no means, the sole property of Europeans.⁹⁰ Like many classical black nationalists, Cooper’s worldview was steeped in Darwinian science, Victorian notion of domestic virtue, and a benevolent “Christian imperialism.” For

⁸⁷ Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 53-57.

⁸⁸ Shirley Wilson Logan “*We Are Coming:*” *The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-century Black Women* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 118.

⁸⁹ Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 57-58.

⁹⁰ See, Janice W. Fernheimer, “Arguing from Difference: Cooper, Emerson Guizot and a More Harmonious America,” in *Black Women’s Intellectual Traditions*, 287-308.

her, the rest of the world that lay mostly untouched by Christianity remained in a spiritual and evolutionary darkness.

“Woman versus the Indian:” White Female Reformers and Complicity in American Empire

Even as she declared ownership of Western traditions, Cooper espoused an exceptionalist narrative of the United States that constructed usable histories of other nations and traditions as a part of the story.⁹¹ Cooper’s work revealed a worldly basis for American exceptionalism. “Woman versus the Indian” comes in the first half of the book where Cooper laid out her case for the necessity of women’s education for the advancement of the race and American progress in general. Expanding her discussion of the merits of gender difference, Cooper turned to impose a stinging rebuke of the complicity of white women reformers in American racism and their ultimate betrayal of the universal feminine principle.⁹² In the chapter, Cooper implicated white women reformers in the imperialist attitudes used to justify American territorial and overseas expansion and exposed the imbrications of American racial politics and national and international policies. It is in this chapter that Cooper developed the theory that the Southern attitude toward the negro had ceased to be a regional attitude and had grown into a national policy. The chapter is perhaps one of the most complicated installments in the entire book, moving frequently between specific local and personal experiences and broader, more general questions about racial and national politics. Cooper

⁹¹ I am grateful to Dr. Caleb McDaniel for his insight on this point. McDaniel participated in the Mellon seminar course I took in the Spring of 2009 where he presented a paper entitled “Beyond Exceptionalism,” which argues for a greater contextualization of American exceptionalism rather than a disdainful avoidance of it. Such contextualization reveals how Americans constructed exceptionalist narratives as a result of their thoughts about the development of other nations. Cooper is an excellent example of this phenomenon.

⁹² The phrase “universal feminine” comes from bell hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman*, 157.

frequently blurred the line between discussing her own personal experiences with racism within the women's movement and speaking on behalf of the experiences of black womanhood as a whole—a major characteristic of Cooper's theorizing throughout the text.

The chapter took its title from a paper delivered by Reverend Anna Shaw at the February 1891 meeting of the National Women's Council in Washington, DC. The meeting brought together prominent members of the women's movement from all over the country.⁹³ Shaw, an outspoken member of the women's suffrage and temperance movements and future president of the National American Women's Suffrage Association frequently criticized the church, like Cooper, for limiting the leadership roles of women.⁹⁴

Shaw's speech compared the enfranchisement of Indians to that of American women and insisted upon the urgency of women's rights even at the risk of delaying or even denying the rights of American Indians. Cooper did not immediately wrestle with the conclusions of Shaw's speech in the opening of the essay but instead praised Shaw and one of Shaw's closest confidantes, fellow suffragist Susan B. Anthony, for not only their unwavering commitment to women's rights, but also for a single instance in which Shaw and Anthony defended a "colored" woman who sought to become a member of Wimodaughsis, a women's literary society of which Shaw served as president at the time.⁹⁵ The secretary of the organization, a woman from Kentucky, denied the young black woman's membership and refunded her for the classes she had intended to take with the organization. Upon hearing of

⁹³ Cooper does not explicitly identify how she became aware of Shaw's presentation; since the meeting took place in Washington, DC, she very well may have attended this meeting or at least read the proceedings in a national newspaper. For details of the conference see, Rachel Foster Avery, ed. *Transactions of the National Council of Women of the United States* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1891).

⁹⁴ Anna Howard Shaw, "God's Women," Speech by Rev. Howard Shaw to the National Council of Women of the United States, Assembled in Washington, DC, February 24, 1891 in *Transactions of the National Council of Women of the United States*, ed. Rachel Foster Avery, 242-249.

⁹⁵ Wimodaughsis was a women's literary society whose name consisted of the first letters of wives, mothers, daughters and sisters. Kenneth Warling, *Wimodausis: Wives Mothers Daughters Sisters, Seventy-five Years, 1923-1998* (Baltimore, OH: Whistling Acres Publisher, 1997).

this refusal, Shaw, as president, denounced the secretary's actions and proclaimed that she would resign from the organization if the secretary from Kentucky were allowed to stay in the organization. Cooper praised Shaw and Anthony for rebuking the racist attitude of Wimodaughsis' Southern secretary, at a time when many national women's organizations succumbed to Southern women's demands that they respect the Southern tradition of distance between the races and deny black women admission into their organizations. About this instance where Anthony and Shaw defended the "cream-colored applicant" and distinguished themselves from Southern women within the women's movement, Cooper opined:

Susan B. Anthony and Anna Shaw are evidently too noble to be held in thrall by the provincialisms of women who seem never to have breathed the atmosphere beyond the confines of their grandfathers' plantations. It is only from the broad plateau of light and love that one can see petty prejudice and narrow priggishness in their true perspective; and it is on this high ground, as I sincerely believe, these two grand women stand.⁹⁶

There is no reason to doubt Cooper's true admiration for these women; throughout her career Cooper expressed appreciation for scores of reformers black and white, male and female, but Cooper's initial compliment to these women was heavily coated in a sense of irony.⁹⁷ Despite this instance of defending the woman of color seeking admission to the women's literary society, both Shaw and Anthony had engaged in well-documented cases of excluding black women from their organizations, refusing to allow black women to speak upon issues of women's rights at public gatherings, and routinely classifying the issues facing black women as having more to do with race than issues of gender discrimination.⁹⁸ Shaw and Anthony's

⁹⁶ Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 89.

⁹⁷ African American women also had to walk a careful line in their interactions with white women. While challenging white women for their biases and prejudices, black women still relied upon interracial cooperation to secure vital resources and services for their own communities. See especially, Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 147-157, 177-202; Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 125-130.

⁹⁸ Anthony is known for turning to a strategy of expediency after black men were granted the right to vote by the 15th Amendment. Anthony began her career in the abolitionist movement, but then quickly turned her back

behavior in the case of the young black woman seeking admission to Wimodaughsis was certainly the exception and not the rule of their behavior. As the chapter progresses it becomes clear that Cooper intended to distinguish these two women only partially. Despite the demonstration of their own commitments to women's rights, Shaw and Anthony were examples of what Cooper saw as a creeping tendency that was corrupting even the movement's "best" women: namely, white women's limited commitment to liberation and ultimate complicity in larger forms of oppression.

Cooper used Shaw and Anthony to frame her discussion of women's rights and the Indian and, by extension the relationship between US expansion and the formation of national identity. As white female reformers, such as Shaw, made their own proclamations of racial and nationalist entitlement (informed by a burgeoning American imperialism), Cooper's critique revealed the ways in which American territorial and overseas expansion exposed the limits of the true womanhood ideal and the discourse of women's rights as manifested by the movement's most prominent members. Shaw and Anthony both demonstrated the potential of white women reformers to speak on behalf of the disempowered and ultimately betrayed that potential by subordinating the rights of other dispossessed groups. Although Cooper mentioned Shaw and Anthony by name, the pervasive image of the "Southern lady" and the

on the cause because its perceived willingness to subordinate women's rights to those of black men. Rosalyn Terborg Penn documents how African American women's suffrage became a low priority for white feminists over the course of the nineteenth-century. This happened first as women's organizations such as the National Woman's Party attempted to assure Southern women that suffrage would not "complicate the race problem" in the South. It also occurred as white feminists became frustrated because there seemed to be greater support for black male suffrage. As a result, black women became the target of several "anti-black woman suffrage tactics." Over the course of the late nineteenth-century, Susan B. Anthony, supported periodically by Anna Shaw became one of the biggest proponents of the "expediency" method—a method that wanted to completely eliminate race from the conversation of suffrage after the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment. Rosalyn Terborg Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920*, 108-111.

capitulation of the women's movement to Southern women's demands for racial exclusivity are just as equal targets of Cooper's criticism.⁹⁹

A Voice was written almost six years prior to the United States's war with Spain and America's acquisition of territory in the Caribbean and the South Pacific.¹⁰⁰ Most received histories of American empire refer to the Spanish American War of 1898 as the beginnings of America's overseas empire. In actuality, over the course of the nineteenth century, the United States made several forays overseas throughout the Caribbean, South America, and Asia, ostensibly in the name of securing American economic interests and suppressing political disturbances considered harmful to the Western Hemisphere.¹⁰¹ America's

⁹⁹ Several high profile women's organizations had a long history of excluding black women and referring to the race question and woman question as a matter of states' rights. At the turn of the century, when *NAWSA* lobbied Southern organizations to join their leagues out of support for women's suffrage, they assured these organizations that they would not force a change of their ideology on the race question. In 1903 when a Southern newspaper demanded that *NAWSA* clarify its position on the race question, *NAWSA* responded, "the right of the state is recognized within the national body and that each auxiliary state association arranges its own affairs in accordance with its own ideas and in harmony with the customs of its own section." Essentially, *NAWSA* endorsed the right of Southern affiliates to exclude black women and even lobby against black women's right to vote. Elna Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 10-12. For more on the issue of exclusion of black women, especially on the issue of suffrage, see, Terborg-Penn, *African American Women and the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920*; Terborg-Penn, "Discontented black feminists: prelude and postscript to the passage of the nineteenth amendment" in *The Black Studies Reader*, ed. Jacqueline Bobo, et. al. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 65-78; Aileen Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York: Norton, 1965); Ann Dexter Gordon, Bettye Collier-Thomas, eds., *African American Women and the Vote, 1837-1965* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Jean H. Baker, ed. *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), and Martha Jones, *All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁰ Mark Barnes, *The Spanish-American War and Philippines Insurgency, 1898-1902: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Paul Kramer, *Race, Empire and the United States and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Louis Perez, *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Perez, *Cuba Between Empires, 1878-1902* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007).

¹⁰¹ Most of the scholarship recognizes two major economic depressions in the 1890s as the impetus behind American business interests turning to outside markets. By the 1890s, several constituencies accepted the dual nature of American continental and overseas commercial empire. Historian Walter LaFeber played a significant role in re-envisioning this era of US history, see LaFeber's *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963) and *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1993). See also, William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959; repr., New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1988).

movement toward an increasingly imperialistic attitude was also denoted by US complicity as Western powers moved toward an idea of national development that necessarily included a right to empire. Most notably, the United States looked on approvingly, waiting for its chance to take part, as European powers met in 1884 to divide ownership of African colonies. By the 1890s, the American people were convinced of the inevitability of territorial and overseas expansion and the role that America had to play in disseminating lessons of civilization and progress throughout the world.¹⁰²

Cooper engaged in a sophisticated discussion of the politics of race and nation in the global context of imperialism. In a study of Indian policy, Walter L. Williams argued that “a pattern of colonialism toward Native Americans served as a precedent for American imperialism” in the latter part of the decade.¹⁰³ The Spanish American War was hardly a new departure or a moment of discontinuity in American policy, on the contrary, it was the culmination of many decades of expansionist maneuvering occurring within the nation.¹⁰⁴ In her criticism of the actions and rhetoric of white suffragists, Cooper anticipated this argument that domestic, expansionist attitudes toward Native people assumed a larger, global importance.

Cooper was right to target late nineteenth-century white suffragists in her criticism. The prospect of Indian citizenship greatly concerned white American suffragists because of their

¹⁰² The evangelical fervor of American missionaries also buttressed and benefited from this point of view which naturalized the American presence overseas, see Timothy Marr, *The Cultural Roots of American Islamism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Nupur Chaudhuri, *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Henry Efeso Mokosso, *American Evangelical Enterprise in Africa: The Case of the United Presbyterian Mission in Cameroun, 1879-1957* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), Gale Kenny, *Contentious Liberties: American Abolitionists in Post-Emancipation Jamaica, 1834-1866* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011).

¹⁰³ Walter L. Williams, “United States Indian Policy and the Debate over Philippine Annexation: Implications for the Origins of American Imperialism,” *The Journal of American History* 66, no.4 (March 1980): 810.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 810-831.

fear that Indian men would vote against the enfranchisement of women.¹⁰⁵ The US government believed that granting citizenship to Indian men would serve to neutralize the threat that Indians posed to American dominance of the entire continent. Citizenship would then offer Indians the right to vote, bring them under the control of state governments, and most importantly allow them to sell their land as private citizens to white settlers.¹⁰⁶ As with the enfranchisement of black men, white suffragists, such as Shaw, Frances Gage, and Susan B. Anthony, perceived the granting of citizenship rights to Indians as another roadblock to the enfranchisement of white women. These white suffragists mobilized their constituencies by touting the image of a cruel and brutal Indian patriarch who demeaned his own women and would no doubt stand in the way of enfranchising the women throughout the nation. For much of the late nineteenth century, white suffragists used the image of the enfranchised Indian male to represent the denial of women's rights and based their argument almost entirely upon their own claims to racial entitlement and privilege.¹⁰⁷ Shaw's speech was a reminder that, out of a desire for expediency, white suffragists were increasingly weighing their right to enfranchisement against that of other marginalized groups.

¹⁰⁵ Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age*, 62-66; Kathy Brown, "The Anglo-Algonquian Gender Frontier," in *Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women* ed. Nancy Shoemaker (New York: Routledge, 1995), 26-48. Brown has argued that white settler perceptions of gender differences within Native communities contributed to representations of Native people as uncivilized and barbaric. See also, Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (September 1998): 581-606.

¹⁰⁶ Blue Clark, *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock: Treaty Rights and Indian Law at the End of the Nineteenth-century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994); Sidney L. Harring, *Crow Dog's Case: American Indian Sovereignty, Tribal Law, and United States Law in the Nineteenth-century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); U. S. Department of the Interior, *Handbook of Federal Indian Law* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1941), JeDon A. Emehiser, "A Peculiar Covenant: American Indian Peoples and the U.S. Constitution," in *American Indians and U.S. Politics: A Companion Reader* ed. John M. Meyer (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 3-10.

¹⁰⁷ Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age*, 61-68; Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire Building* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980); Gail H. Landsman, "The 'Other' as Political Symbol: Images of Indians in the Woman Suffrage Movement," *Ethnohistory* 39, no. 1 (Summer 1992): 247-284; Jo Ann Woodsum, "Native American Women: An Update," in *Readings in American Indian Law: Recalling the Rhythm of Survival* ed. Jo Carrillo (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 226-234.

By exposing the limitations of white suffragists' equal rights discourse, Cooper developed her own theory about the outgrowth of imperialistic attitudes from domestic policies and national development in the United States. Cooper's work anticipated many of the anti-racist, anti-imperialist challenges made by several African American leaders in the late 1890s.

Although there were certainly many variations in the African American responses to American overseas involvement, many black leaders believed that the nation's treatment of black Americans and other non-white groups foreshadowed the fate of Cubans as their nation came under American control.¹⁰⁸

Cooper engaged in a different kind of nation-building project, one that condemned white women's complicity in expansionist and imperialist narratives as an innate part of national belonging. White women, according to Cooper, had a responsibility to reject the expediency of weighing their own rights against that of oppressed people throughout the globe and should instead embrace an identity that was not invested in brute strength and injustice as a matter of legitimacy, but rather focused on fairness, justice, and inclusion.¹⁰⁹

A central part of Cooper's argument in this chapter was the ominous rise of the South in the years following the demise of Reconstruction. Cooper carefully crafted an image of the South as a problem, and she saw a distinct connection between the rise of the South—with its disdain for the Negro and reliance upon vigilante violence—and what would be the position of America toward the rest of the world. The cruelty and brutality that emanated from this region, in Cooper's mind, was indicative of an innate quality, a pathology in Southern culture

¹⁰⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; repr. New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 17-18. See also, William B. Gatewood *Black Americans and the White Man's Burden* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975). See also Gatewood, *Smoked Yankees and the Struggle for Empire: Letters from Negro Soldiers, 1898-1902* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1987); Lawrence S. Little, "A Quest for Self-Determination: The African Methodist Episcopal Church During the Age of Imperialism, 1884-1916." (Ph.D Diss., Ohio State University, 1993); George P. Marks, III, *The Black Press View American Imperialism* (New York: Arno Press, 1971).

¹⁰⁹ Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 100-102.

which glorified patriarchal manhood, violent brutality, and bloodlines steeped in conquest and dominance. Rather than rebuking instances of violence, white Southerners had learned to embrace violence and brutality as a legitimizing ritual and as the basis for empire making. The proof of this lay within the history of the region's institutions: first slavery, then Jim Crow segregation. The patriarchal brutality that shaped the laws and customs of racial separation in the South had tragically spread to affect the character of the entire nation.¹¹⁰

Cooper unabashedly displayed her disdain for the racism of Southern white men who she felt wielded a disproportionate amount of influence on the sentiments and policy of the entire nation:

One of the most singular facts about the unwritten history of this country is the consummate ability with which Southern influence, Southern ideas and Southern ideals, have from the very beginning even up to the present day, dictated to and domineered over the brain and sinew of this nation. Without wealth, without education, without inventions, arts, sciences, or industries, without well-nigh every one of the progressive ideas and impulses which have made this country great, prosperous and happy, personally indolent and practically stupid, poor in everything but bluster and self-esteem, the Southerner has nevertheless with Italian finesse and exquisite skill, uniformly and invariably, so manipulated Northern sentiment as to succeed sooner or later in carrying his point and shaping the policy of this government to suit his purposes.¹¹¹

Cooper's rebuke was a stinging indictment that accused Southerners of contributing little to the advancement of civilization and instead corrupting the nation's progress with racial hatred, brutality, and ignorance. Cooper particularly criticized the Southern obsession with patriarchal bloodlines—bloodlines that not only proved a Southern proclivity for naked masculine aggression, but also a reverence for such violence:

So the South had neither silver nor gold, but she had blood; and she paraded it with so much gusto that the substantial little Puritan maidens of the North,

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 97-99.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 97.

who had been making bread and canning currants and not thinking of blood the least bit, began to hunt up the records of the Mayflower to see if some of the of the passengers thereon could not claim the honor of having been one of Williams the Conquerer's bringands, when he killed the last of the Saxon Kings and, red-handed, stole his crown and his lands. Thus the ideal from out of the Southland brooded over the nation and we sing less lustily of yore....¹¹²

The bigger tragedy, according to Cooper, was that the rest of the nation had legitimated this way of life and obsession with violence, and had elevated it to a kind of national policy. In Cooper's estimation, the Southern attitude had ceased to be just that and had shaped not only the attitude of the nation, but also the policy of the nation towards weaker peoples and other nations throughout the globe. From the transaction of "commerce" to the building of "empire," the South ruled supreme and bent the rest of the nation to its own desires.¹¹³

In noting that "the Negro is not worth a feud between brothers and sisters," Cooper highlighted how the reconciliation between the North and South culminated in the North's embrace of the South's disdain for racial equality and a reluctance to interfere with the South's attempts to disenfranchise the Negro through violence and intimidation. This represented not only a betrayal of the Negro by the North but also a dangerous compromise to the morality of the entire nation.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Ibid., 98-99.

¹¹³ Ibid., 97-99.

¹¹⁴ *A Voice* was published at a time when the North was increasingly abandoning its efforts to protect freedmen in the South. For the sake of national unity, expanding commerce and industry and in order to combat increasing European immigration, the North had, by this time, withdrawn efforts to punish the South and rather dealt with US Southerners on conciliatory terms. Historian Nina Sibling notes that Northern anxieties about immigration resulted in idealization of many Southern white communities not only for their freedom from the scourge of immigration but also for what they deemed to be its racial purity. In white Southern communities, particularly Appalachia, Northern reformers and politicians saw a primitive nature that revealed an American and Anglo-Saxon quality. Sibling states, "[I]n effect, because they were 'backward' and 'primitive,' the mountaineers demanded uplift; but, because their primitiveness revealed Anglo-Saxon roots, they would likely benefit more than others—and also benefited a reunified nation from whatever assistance they received." This attitude resulted in humanitarian missions, uplift efforts, and greater attempts to educate Southern whites and also further Northern efforts to expand technological innovation and industry into the region. It was this conciliatory treatment towards the South and the overt appreciation for Southern tradition that incensed Cooper and represented a tragic moral surrender on the part of the North—culminating in the North's refusal to

Cooper was keen to touch upon the role that Southern women also played in maintaining a national system of exclusion and masculine violence. Cooper pronounced: “[sh]e represents blood”—referring to the ways in which Southern women served as emblems of the institution of Southern violence, through their legitimation of the rule of the men in their lives for their own advancement. Furthermore, Southern white women’s insistence upon racial exclusion—their refusal to “associate with these people who were once her slaves”—ensured that this institution of violence and domination of black bodies would continue in perpetuity.¹¹⁵

Southern women withheld their support from women’s organizations in the absence of assurances that their desire to not interact socially with black women would be respected. This complicity led many women’s organizations to exclude black women from membership, thereby separating black women from the campaign for women’s equality. Southern women also brought the grip of Southern hatred of the Negro into the woman’s movement for equality and moreover justified their disdain for black women with appeals to Southern propriety and ideals of Southern womanhood. Cooper mockingly referred to this Southern womanhood ideal in the following passage:

Lately a great national and international movement characteristic of this age and country, a movement based on the inherent right of every soul to its own highest development, I mean the movement making for Woman’s full free, and complete emancipation, has, after much courting, obtained the gracious smile of the Southern woman—I beg her pardon—the Southern lady.¹¹⁶

defend black Southerners from the violence and brutality of whites. Nina Silber, “‘What Does America Need So Much as Americans?’ Race and Northern Reconciliation with Southern Appalachia, 1870-1900,” in *Appalachians and Race: the Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation* ed. John C. Inscoe (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2001), 250-251.

¹¹⁵ Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 100-101; in a similar fashion, anti-lynching activist, Ida B. Wells, was critical of the symbolic importance white women held in justifying brutal acts of violence against black people. For more discussion of this, see chapter three of this dissertation. See also, Dora Apel, *Imagery of Lynching: Black Men, White Women, and the Mob* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

¹¹⁶ Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 100.

It is finally in the last few pages of the chapter that Cooper explicitly articulated her objection to the speech given by Reverend Anna Shaw. Shaw represented white women's betrayal of the true power and potential of women—to speak out and defend the dispossessed, to encourage more kindness, compassion, and understanding. Cooper argued that in her manipulation of the image of the Indian, Shaw enabled the nation's pursuit of violent conquest:

Is not this hitching our wagon to something much lower than a star? Is not woman's cause broader, and deeper, and grander, than a blue stocking debate or an aristocratic pink tea? Why should woman become plaintiff in a suit versus the Indian, or the Negro or any other race or class who have been crushed under the iron heel of Anglo-Saxon power and selfishness?¹¹⁷

Instead of subordinating the rights of other groups, Cooper called on white women to take up the cause of all victimized groups, “[i]f the Indian has been wronged and cheated by the puissance of this American government, it is woman's mission to plead with her country to cease to do evil. If the Negro has been deceitfully cajoled or inhumanly cuffed according to self expediency or capricious antipathy, let it be woman's mission to plead that he be met as a man and honestly given half the road.”¹¹⁸ Cooper implored that women engaged in the battle for women's equality to not rest their case on supposed “Indian inferiority, nor on Negro depravity,” but instead “on the obligation of legislators to do for her as they would have others do for them were relations reversed.”¹¹⁹

By referencing American government and legislators, Cooper recognized that treatment of these groups was not just a matter of personal attitude and interpersonal interaction, but in fact, a matter of national policy. There was a truly political and policy-oriented lens to her

¹¹⁷ Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 108.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

point of view. Cooper argued here that women had the greatest potential to erode the smothering force of the brutality of the South and, subsequently, the outward extension of that force into the world. While she showed that white women have chosen to use patriarchal power to their benefit, she clearly believed that it was within women's power to end it.¹²⁰ It is for this reason Cooper declared that Shaw's lecture violated the obligation of supposedly enlightened and engaged women, who "woman should not, even by inference, or for the sake of argument, seem to disparage what is weak."¹²¹ Instead white women should realize how bound how they were to other groups by the experience of oppression:

Her wrongs are thus indissolubly linked with all undefended woe, all helpless suffering, and the plenitude of her "rights" will mean the final triumph of all right over might, the supremacy of all the moral forces of reason and justice and love in the government of the nation.¹²²

¹²⁰ "Woman Versus Indian" continued to build upon the ideas developed in previous chapters of *A Voice* about the importance of woman's role, importance of higher education for women, and the need for more prominent roles for women in social movements. Here Cooper extended her theory of feminist politics intimating that courtesy, an inclination toward kindness and sympathy, was and should always be the driving force behind women's reform work. In an era to which she referred as "pre-eminently an age of organizations," Cooper declared that the growth of women's clubs had done even more to spread the influence of women. In line with nineteenth-century ideals of womanhood and feminist politics, Cooper argued that this feminine principle went far beyond the circumscribed sphere of the home and women's local communities; instead, she argued that the entire nation looked to women for guidance in the realm of compassion and sympathy and for that reason women were in many ways responsible for the moral character and "manners" of the nation, "[o]ur country's manners and morals are under our tutoring. Our standards are law in our several little worlds. However, tenaciously men may guard some prerogatives, they are our willing slaves in that sphere which they have always conceded to be woman's. Here no one dares demur when her fiat has gone forth." Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 90.

Cooper spoke poignantly about her own experience as a black woman traveling throughout the country, especially the South, and argued that black women in particular were subjected to brutal and inhumane treatment. From subway cars to restaurants to sidewalks, Cooper documented the "uncivilized" treatment faced by black women, particularly Southern black women—a treatment Cooper finds especially abhorrent because of the nineteenth-century ideal of womanhood and the delicacy and propriety that is repeatedly denied to black women. Perhaps most disturbing to Cooper was the state in which she found white Southern men who inflicted black women with their cruel behavior and vile treatment. In describing one of the conductors who approached her on a train, "...a great burly six feet of masculinity with sloping shoulders and unkempt beard swaggers in, and, throwing a roll of tobacco into on corner of his jaw, growls out at me over the paper I am reading, "Here gurl," (I am nearly thirty)... "Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 95. Cooper held American women singularly responsible for the civility of the nation, especially the white women who were the mothers and sisters and daughters of these white men who found it necessary to forcibly, and at times violently, remove black women from railway trains and restaurants. As Cooper surveyed the landscape of the South, she accused white women of failing in their duty to bring civilization to the people of the South.

¹²¹ Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 105.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 108.

Given what Cooper believed about the role that America would play in the rest of the world—as a benevolent force spreading Christianity and the valorized role of woman throughout the world—the South’s dominance of US race relations was a tragedy not just for the Negro, but for the world. It was this kind of racial chauvinism—of which the South was so emblematic—that contributed to a distorted sense of American national identity and purpose.

Conclusion

Cooper crafted an important discursive space for her to speak on behalf of black women by redefining the terms of the debate. Cooper used the language of “civilizing and civilization” to exact her criticism of the South and particularly white women’s failures in this region of the country. By the late nineteenth century, aided by Social Darwinism’s theory of the evolution of cultures, Manifest Destiny, and pseudo-scientific classifications of race, the discourse of civilization provided the foundation for white, Western cultural values and practices espousing a belief in racial superiority and a hierarchy of the races. Indeed, explicit within the discourse of civilization was the notion of a racial hierarchy in which Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon-descended cultures represented the highest civilizations and those of non-white origin represented the lowest levels of civilization and evolutionary developments.¹²³

Historians Louise Newman, Tracy Bossieu, and Gail Bederman have documented how

¹²³ See David Axeen, “ ‘Heroes of the Engine Room’: American ‘Civilization’ and the War with Spain,” *American Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (Fall 1984): 481-502; Nancy Cott, “Two Beards: Coauthorship and the Concept of Civilization,” *American Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (June 1990): 274-300; Frank Ninkovich, “Theodore Roosevelt: Civilization as Ideology,” *Diplomatic History* 10, no. 3 (Summer 1986): 233-245; Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996); Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

central the discourse of civilization became to white women's efforts to gain full citizenship, declaring themselves the true purveyors of Anglo-American civilization.¹²⁴ In many ways, Cooper's beliefs about progress, race and civilization, and the nature of the feminine mirrored those of her white counterparts seeking to carve out a space for themselves within the public sphere.¹²⁵ Cooper played upon white obsession with civilization and particularly white women's necessity to define themselves as the guardians of white civilization by proclaiming black women's possession of these ideals and pointing to white women's perceived failures in these areas. As a result, Cooper found room for black women's agency within a constricting discourse. By highlighting the incivility of whites through their (mis)treatment of black women, Cooper deployed the ideology of civilization for her own purposes and called attention to white subjugation of black Americans and particularly African American women.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Louise Newman, *White Women's Rights*; Boisseau, *White Queen*; Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*. See also, Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (1992, repr., New York: Verso Books, 2015).

¹²⁵ On this issue of the public and private sphere and expanding the private sphere into the public, see Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place," *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (June 1988): 9-39; and Joan Scott, "Gender as a Category of Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December, 1986): 1053-1075.

¹²⁶ Several literatures discuss the prevalence of civilizationism among late nineteenth-century black nationalist intellectuals and reformers. Most notably Wilson Moses argues that classical black nationalist embraced the European idea of a linear path of progress that replicated, or at least resembled, the history of Western Europe in the development of literature, the arts, and the sciences." Moses, *Afropia*, 229. Francois Pierre Guillaume Guizot was particularly influential among late nineteenth-century black thinkers, and Cooper frequently quoted from one of his most famous works *General History of Civilization in Europe* throughout *A Voice from the South*. Guizot argued in favor of the idea of "providence," believing that history progressed toward a greater purpose and destiny. He also argued that European civilization, especially the British represented the most politically, socially, and cultural advanced civilization that the world had seen. Cooper and many others utilized the idea of destined progress of civilization to construct a social and political space for African Americans. See especially Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism*, 9-12, 60-62; Derrick P. Alridge, "Of Victorianism, Civilizationism and Progressivism: The Educational Ideas of Anna Julia Cooper and W. E. B. Du Bois, 1892-1940," *History of Education Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (November 2007), 416-446.; Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Francois Guizot, *General History of Civilization in Europe: From the Fall of the Roman Empire to the French Revolution* (New York: D. Appleton, 1843).

Using the discourse of civilization, Cooper questioned white American claims to advanced civilization by bringing attention to and openly criticizing the brutality of the South and, moreover, the North's complicity in that violence. Cooper did this even as she personally believed, as discussed earlier, in the exceptionalist narrative in which America served as a beacon of liberty and even as her critiques reinforced the very civilizationist discourse that she challenged.

Historian Kevin Gaines has been particularly critical of Cooper and other nineteenth century black reformers for their use of civilizationist discourse. Gaines has criticized many black leaders—male and female—in the early twentieth century for reaffirming what he refers to as a “‘scientific’ Western ethnological persona,” which reaffirmed white Victorian middle-class values and notions of racial supremacy.¹²⁷ He suggests that racial uplift, instead of offering a “coherent” strategy for black equality, advanced only a chosen few black leaders who depended upon white approval and patronage for their own success. Speaking of Cooper, Gaines argues, “much of what contemporary readers recognize as ‘feminist’ in Cooper’s writing cannot easily be disentangled from her Western ethnocentrism, her staunch religious piety, and a late Victorian bourgeois sensibility distrustful of social democracy.”¹²⁸ Cooper’s own conservative values, according to Gaines, “risked muting the critical voice she herself raised to break the silence.”¹²⁹ Their embrace of these values not only served to weaken the intended impact of blacks critiques of racial inequality, but also forged many divisions within the black community between the typically middle-class reformers and working-class African Americans without higher education. Gaines’s sense is

¹²⁷ Kevin Gaines, “Black Americans’ Uplift Ideology as “Civilizing Mission”: Pauline E. Hopkins on Race and Imperialism,” in *Cultures of United States Imperialism* ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 434.

¹²⁸ Gaines. *Uplifting the Race*, 129.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 151.

that black reformers used civilizationist rhetoric to validate the very system black reformers hoped to overturn by reaffirming white bourgeois ideas about the heathenism of Africa and other non-white cultures. The manipulation of existing discourses of civilization served, in Gaines estimation, to make the “pursuit of a more autonomous, oppositional consciousness all the more difficult.”¹³⁰

Contrary to some late nineteenth-century black intellectuals, such as George Washington Williams, Cooper (at least in *A Voice*) barely expressed an interest in the cultural specificity of Africa, Asia, or the Middle East.¹³¹ In fact, her interests, reflecting a purely evangelical impulse, never went beyond the potential for Christian conversion in these areas of the world. For this reason, Gaines is right to point out that Cooper’s thinking does not acknowledge how her own belief in Christian imperialism was implicated within the very brutality and violence she sought to eliminate. However, it is important to note that appeals to the evangelical impulse has long been a rhetorical strategy used by black women in the nineteenth century. Harriet Jacobs, Ida B. Wells, Francis E. W. Harper, and Anna Julia Cooper used the very value system touted by whites to raise questions about America’s history of violence and to challenge America’s claims to civilization. In her essay, “Civilization, The Decline of Middle Class Manliness, and Ida B. Wells’s Anti-lynching campaign, 1892-94,” Gail Bederman explores the ways in which Ida B. Wells manipulated white Americans’ obsession with the

¹³⁰ In addition to *Uplifting the Race*, see Gaines essay on Pauline Hopkins, “Black Americans’ Racial Uplift Ideology as Civilizing Mission: Pauline Hopkins on Race and Imperialism,” in Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 433-453. Historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham was one of the first to treat this Victorian sensibility among African Americans, also known as ‘the politics of respectability,’ as a category of analysis. She states, “[d]uty bound to teach the value of religion, education, and hard work, the women of the black Baptist church adhered to a politics of respectability that equated public behavior with individual self-respect and with the advancement of African Americans as a group.” Higginbotham added, “[t]hey felt certain that “respectable” behavior in public would earn their people a measure of esteem from white America, and hence they strove to win the black lower class’ psychological allegiance to temperance, industriousness, thrift, refined manners and Victorian sexual morals.” Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 14; Gaines, “Uplifting Ideology as ‘Civilizing Mission’” 443.

¹³¹ See George Washington Williams, *History of the Negro Race in America, 1619-1880*, 2 vols. (1883; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1968)

idea of “manliness” and the fear of its decline to embolden her 1890’s lynching campaign. White Southerners depicted the lynching of black men as a sign of their manliness overpowering the untamed lust of black men. Wells turned such existing nineteenth-century discourses about civilization and masculinity upside down by proving that lynching represented the uncivilized, brutish, cowardly behavior of white American males. In this process, Wells inverted existing discourses which saw black manhood as deviant and uncivilized and instead portrayed black men as the victims of declining white civilization. The solution was, therefore, if white men wanted to regain their manliness and return to civilization, they had to stop lynching black men. Through this very clever use of nineteenth-century anxieties about white manhood, Wells developed a strategy that was immensely successful during her travels overseas in Europe. Wells’ subversion of dominant discourse garnered a great deal of attention from both sides of the anti-lynching debate. British reformers began to tout the uncivilized nature of American whites because of their complicity in this horrendous crime against humanity, and white Southerners became even more vehement in their denunciation of Wells and black womanhood on the whole. Bederman makes a case for the power and usefulness of discourse analysis in black women’s efforts to effect social change.¹³² Like Ida B. Wells, Cooper possessed a keen understanding of nineteenth-century discourses on race, gender and class and she harnessed these ideas to reflect her own reform agenda.

Gaines does not recognize the ways in which Cooper was constrained by dominant discourses about civilization and progress nor does he go far enough to acknowledge the radical potential that Cooper was able to find within these limiting discourses. Gaines

¹³² Gail Bederman. “Civilization, The Decline of Middle-Class Manliness, and Ida B. Wells’s Anti-Lynching Campaign (1892-94),” in *Gender and American History Since 1890* ed. Barbara Melosh (New York: Routledge, 1993), 208-11, 224-25, 230-31. Also see Bederman *Manliness and Civilization*.

presumes that there was a pure humanist natural rights tradition that emerged from the Abolitionist movement for black leaders to rely upon.¹³³ The notion that a natural rights tradition would emerge intact from the turmoil of the Civil War and Reconstruction and survive to be used by race leaders at the turn of the century is problematic. While natural rights discourse certainly possessed a timeless quality, turn of the century American society was in no way as captivated by arguments based on natural rights as a generation earlier.¹³⁴

Ann duCille has argued that the confines in which black women had to write and produce has in various ways contributed to their marginalization within current-day scholarship:

Doubly disadvantaged and twice rejected, these writers have been marginalized within the African American literary tradition for their alleged assimilation of so-called white values and excluded from the canon of white American women novelists because of their assumed preoccupation with matters of race. In other words, not only have black women been marginalized historically by virtue of their race, gender and material condition, they continue to be peripheralized as historical subjects in contemporary revisionist inquiries.¹³⁵

¹³³ Gaines, "Black Americans' Uplift Ideology as Civilizing Mission," 444-451.

¹³⁴ Gaines's work also ignores Cooper's work on behalf of working-class Americans. After achieving her PhD, Cooper became president of Frelinghuysen University in Washington DC and ran the university from inside her home. The university, founded by Jesse Lawson, a Washington DC native and friend of Cooper's, catered specifically to the needs of working African Americans. Frelinghuysen provided flexible scheduling and lessons so that students could obtain a higher education and provide for themselves and their families. Cooper was proud of serving as a leader of the school and for running the institution from her home. Upon her passing, Cooper intended to leave the school dedicated in her mother's name for "the education of working class people." She clearly felt that education and training for African Americans in the nation's capital was of the utmost importance. Anna Julia Cooper, "Negro College Graduates Questionnaire," MSRC. Also see Cooper's work on settlement housing and labor for young Negro women, Cooper, "The Social Settlement," 216-223.

¹³⁵ Ann duCille, *The Coupling Convention: Sex, Text, and Tradition in Black Women's Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 33. The issue of "authenticity" has repeatedly been used to criticize black female authors and intellectuals for what is perceived to be their own failure to replicate the defining elements of what is considered "black text." Gaines is, in effect, is accusing women like Cooper for not speaking in an authentic black voice that rejects any semblance of dominant discourse. Instead, many scholars of African American women's literature have used the concept of "intertextuality" to explain how the writing of African American women reflects an engaged existence within many communities and contexts, du Cille states, "Intertextuality cannot be defined as movement solely from black text to black text, from one black author to another. Rather such resonances must be viewed as cutting across racial identities, cultural spaces and historical moments" duCille, *The Coupling Convention*, 9.

What duCille suggests is that we must be willing to do the work to find the radical potential within the historical work of African American women and not ahistorically penalize them for the ways in which they were constrained. Hazel Carby, who has been one of Cooper's staunchest defenders, argues that Cooper's espousal of conservative Victorian ideals is nothing more than a "metaphorical disguise" for her more radical claims. In her groundbreaking work, *Reconstructing Womanhood*, Carby struggles against what she sees as a marginalization of black women's intellectual production due to a historiography that denotes the latter part of the nineteenth century as an era of "great male genius." This disallows an examination of the complex, converging intellectual traditions present in Cooper's work.

In the 1890s, there was a overwhelming obsession with the survival of (white) civilization and the detrimental impact of immigration, urbanization, the decline of white masculinity, and what the feared erosion of white civilization meant for the future of the nation.¹³⁶ To speak in terms to civilization, and what Gaines believes to be bourgeois notions of progress and piety, meant that leaders like Cooper, Du Bois, and others could speak about American racism and racial violence in terms that were familiar to their intended audience. In this way, the appropriation of dominant language was a form of resistance in itself. Furthermore, the crux of Gaines's criticism of Cooper and other late nineteenth century leaders such as Pauline Hopkins and Du Bois is that they, as leaders and intellectuals, possessed the ability to rise above dominant discourse, but chose not to because of their own desire to garner the respect

¹³⁶ The rise of industrialization left men at the mercy of a number of economic forces beyond their own control. Rising levels of unemployment translated in to fears of less control in the home and, therefore, closed avenues to traditional sources of male power. African Americans only a generation removed from slavery and newly-arrived immigrants aggravated several anxieties about the continued existence of white civilization. Immigrant populations that continued to reproduce and blacks who competed for jobs produced several fears about white survival. Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 23-26, 166-169,

of bourgeois white society. However, what constitutes a dominant discourse is our inability to exist outside of it.¹³⁷ Cooper created a discursive space for black womanhood—where she appeared to speak in the language of the dominant but was really using that language to subvert the justifications for white supremacy. From Gaines's perspective, Cooper's use of civilizationist rhetoric reads as conservative and even assimilationist. However, historically, Cooper was an extremely complex figure whose intellectual production represented a nexus of political trajectories, including women's rights, racial uplift, support for emigrationism, and anti-imperialism. Cooper's writing cannot be pinned down as consistently conservative or reactionary as Gaines insists. Instead, by reading of world history and western civilization through the lens of gender and race and, by placing blacks and other non-whites in the center of these discourses, Cooper's work and that of other black intellectuals should be theorized on a deeper level. The fact that Cooper's work could, at one moment, appear radical, and, in the next, conservative was a function of the liminal intellectual position that she and other black leaders inhabited. Viewing her work in this way facilitates a greater contextualization of the ideological traditions informing Cooper's work and the ways that she nonetheless developed an anti-imperialist critique even as she was unable to fully free herself from the civilizationist assumptions of her era.

¹³⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 46-51, 79-85, 121-126.

Chapter 2: International Woman: Ida B. Wells and the Transatlantic Campaign Against Lynching

In 1893 and 1894, Ida B. Wells traveled to Great Britain to garner support for a campaign against lynching in the United States. In the year before her first trip, the lynching of African Americans had reached an unprecedented 241 victims and showed no indication of subsiding. What had once served as a form of frontier justice had become a kind of ritual meant to instill fear in black communities and to reaffirm white privilege and patriarchy.¹³⁸ It was clear to Wells that the violent, systematic murder of African Americans was emerging as a way to reinstate the social order that existed under slavery and to thwart African Americans' efforts to be politically and economically successful.¹³⁹ The opportunity to travel to Britain came at a time when Wells was working tirelessly in the United States to build mainstream opposition to lynching as well as to pressure white reformers to publicly condemn the atrocity.¹⁴⁰ Despondent over slow progress in building broad-based support for her anti-lynching campaign, Wells looked beyond the United States to find potential partners. In Britain, she found a small community of humanitarians who were captivated by her depictions of horrific violence committed against African Americans and dismayed by the

¹³⁸ "[Wells] points out racial and regional patterns in the numbers, highlighting, for example that 160 of the 241 lynchings reported in 1892 were of African Americans and that 180 of the 241 occurred in Southern states," Ida B. Wells *Southern Horrors* and *Red Record* quoted in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, ed. Jacqueline Jones Royster (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 1997) 27-28. For more statistics on lynching and how lynching targeted black communities over the course of the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century, see Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1998), 280-325; Phillip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York, NY: Random House, 2002), Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans: African American History and Its Meanings, 1619-Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 180-183; W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 4; Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

¹³⁹ Wells said, "This is what opened my eyes to what lynching really was. An excuse to get rid of Negroes who were acquiring wealth and property and thus keep the race terrorized and 'keep the nigger down,'" in *Crusade for Justice*, 64.

¹⁴⁰ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 79-82.

simultaneous erosion of American civil society and the rights granted to African Americans after emancipation.¹⁴¹

Historians writing about Wells's transatlantic anti-lynching campaign often focus upon the tour's ability to either sway American public opinion about lynching or to appreciably impact the number of lynchings that occurred in the United States.¹⁴² The significance of Wells's transatlantic campaign, however, goes far beyond any of the manifest results of British mobilization upon the American public. When Wells arrived in Britain, she encountered a vibrant community of reformers who, over the course of the late nineteenth-century, became pre-occupied with the status of non-white colonized people throughout the British empire. Wells's rhetorical style and compelling critiques of lynching dovetailed in significant and varied ways with this expansive, pre-existing British liberal reform agenda. Thus, her transatlantic work not only informed the way that British reformers understood mob violence in the United States, but also ushered the lynching of African Americans to the center of a powerful, transnational, anti-imperialist campaign in Britain.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ On meeting this community of British humanitarians, Wells likened it to finding "an open door in a stone wall," Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 86. For Wells's detailed account of her time in the British Isles and the support she received from Catherine Impey, Isabelle Mayo, and others, see Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 82-123.

¹⁴² Scholars have come to varying conclusions about the effectiveness of Wells's tours—some suggesting that Wells's tour abroad was a significant and notable moment in her campaign, while others argue that the mobilization of British audiences did little to actually end lynching in the United States or to cause any major shifts in American opinion, especially in the South. Speaking of the British Anti-Lynching Committee founded in London in support of Wells's work, Patricia Schechter concluded "The Society for the Recognition of the Brotherhood of Man made a small flap in the newspapers when its investigating committee eventually arrived in the United States...but British sentiment did not translate into American reaction." For a more in-depth discussion of the efficacy of Wells's campaign see Sarah Silkey, "Redirecting the Tide of White Imperialism: The Impact of Ida B. Wells's Transatlantic Anti-Lynching Campaign on British Conceptions of American Race Relations," *Women Shaping the South: Creating and Confronting Change* ed. Angela Boswell and Judith N. McArthur (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006). See also, Floyd Crawford, "Ida B. Wells: Her Anti-Lynching Crusades in Britain and Repercussions From Them in the United States," (1958) Ida B Wells Papers Box 9, Folder 2.

¹⁴³ Vron Ware has written extensively on turn of the century liberal reform politics in Britain and particularly the role of feminist activists in driving the agenda of this movement. See *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (New York: Verso, 1993). Ware has also been particularly astute in explaining not only the ways in which nineteenth-century and twentieth-century feminism was articulated with imperialism, but also how the nineteenth-century feminist reform agenda in Britain existed in a constitutive relationship with the

Wells's success with British reformers rested with her ability to harness existing discourses within Britain about "respectable citizenship"—an ideology that was comprised of the prominent components of nineteenth-century Anglo-American reform including vigorous appeals to law and order, the continuing relevance of abolitionist sentiment, the mutual obligations existent within Christian communities, the sanctity and necessity of domestic life, and calls for a powerful activist state that was partly constituted by and responsive to the needs of its disadvantaged citizens.¹⁴⁴ Respectable citizenship, as an ideology, combined mid-century arguments most often seen in the abolitionist movement, which emphasized moral and religious claims about the value and dignity of human life, with the late nineteenth century demands for a strong activist state that sought to protect all citizens from the indulgent excesses of individual self-interests. Even as Wells denounced white violence as indicative of the debased character and lack of civilization of her white fellow citizens, she argued that the virtue of America's institutions and of its civic society persisted despite white Americans' descent into racial violence. The lawlessness and barbarity of lynching, according to Wells, was not only a threat to the lives of African Americans, but it also undermined the traditions and institutions that were so central to the Republic. African Americans, she argued, had lived up to the expectations of American

social, political and economic forces of imperialism. See especially Ware's essay, "Britannia's Other Daughters: Feminism in the Age of Imperialism," in *Beyond the Pale*, 117-166. Other important works in the area include, Janet Sayers, *Biological Politics: Feminist and Anti-Feminist Perspectives* (London and New York: Tavistock Publications, 1982); Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism, 1850-1900* (London: Hutchinson, 1987); Jane Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States, 1780-1860* (London: Macmillan, 1985); Antoinette Burton, *The Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1994); Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

¹⁴⁴ My thinking here is greatly influenced by Lara Campbell's work *Respectable Citizens: Gender, Family and Unemployment in Ontario's Great Depression* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). Dealing with issues of gender, economic depression and unemployment, Campbell examines the experiences of working class Ontarians in Depression-era Canada. Outside of traditional avenues of power, Campbell argues that men and women experiencing the hardships of economic downturn and long-term unemployment found ways to make new demands as citizens entitled to certain protections from the state.

citizenship and its attendant responsibilities through piety, hard work, and adherence to law and order and were therefore entitled to the full privileges and protections of citizenship.¹⁴⁵

Most interpretations of Wells's transatlantic tour emphasize the ways in which her vivid depictions of unbridled racial violence in the United States reaffirmed a British sense of civilizational superiority and validated British fantasies about American disorder and barbarity.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, British publications teemed with accounts of American lawlessness, of which lynching was only one example.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, the British response to lynching was much more complex. Wells anti-lynching campaign should be viewed in the context of an evolving, pervasive, and self-conscious discontentment among British humanitarians that

¹⁴⁵ Wells's relationship to respectability politics was certainly complicated. The biography of her life overflows with examples of the ways she pushed against and even exceeded the boundaries of respectability, racial uplift and even traditional gender roles. Wells often chafed against broader society's expectations of her, and she often publicly criticized race leaders who she believed were committed to following the dictates of racial, class, and gender codes. However, even as Wells at times seemed to challenge the place of dominant conventions within the politics of racial uplift, she never completely renounced her own allegiance to more conventional values and even often molded contemporary values to serve her own radical agenda. For example, some of her earlier writings reflect her belief in the role of liberal education and religious faith in blacks' quest for equality. An essay she penned in 1888 for the *New York Freeman* entitled "Model Woman" is a case in point. Because African Americans were so often wrongly associated with lascivious and unchaste behavior, Wells declared that "it depends largely on the woman of to-day to refute such charges by her stainless life," quoted in McMurray, *To Keep the Waters Troubled*, 56. Similarly, in the years leading up to her tours abroad, Wells produced several essays addressing women's role in African Americans' quest for equality. And while she called for a more politicized role for women, she never neglected the necessity and utility of black women's embodiment of more conventional values. By using the concept of "respectable citizenship," I mean to highlight the way that Wells walked the line between radicalism and conventionalism throughout her anti-lynching campaign.

¹⁴⁶ One of the most widely-received interpretations of Wells's transatlantic tours is that of Gail Bederman in her seminal work *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Also see Nicole King, "A Colored Woman in Another Country Pleading for Justice in Her Own": Ida B. Wells in Great Britain," in *Black Victorian/Black Victoriana* ed. Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 88-109; Douglas Lorimer, "Reconstructing Victorian Racial Discourse: Images of Race, the Language of Race Relations, and the Context of Black Resistance," in *Black Victorian/Black Victoriana*, ed. Gretchen Gerzina, 187-207; McMurray, *To Keep the Waters Troubled*, 188-205; Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform*, 103-126.

¹⁴⁷ Sandra Gunning, *Race, Rape, and Lynching: The Red Record of American Literature, 1890-1912* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 7-12; Howard Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery, 1833-1870* (London: Longman, 1972), 258-261; Christine Bolt, *The Anti-Slavery Movement and Reconstruction, 1833-1877* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 130-142. Both Temperley and Bolt recognize that the belief that there was something hauntingly singular about American racial violence and treatment of people of African descent drove anti-slavery campaigns in Britain. William D. Carrigan and Christopher Weldrop, *Swift to Wrath: Lynching in Global Historical Perspective* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013).

was fearful of the ways in which racial violence and injustice in the far reaches of the empire jeopardized Britain's continuing national (and imperial) importance.

Reformers such as Catherine Impey, Wells's primary benefactor, repeatedly asked how Britain and its close relative, the United States, could serve as bastions of freedom and human dignity when such outrageously violent and unjust acts occurred under their purview. While British reformers were certainly critical of American race relations, brutal tales of racist violence in the United States inflamed, in truth, their own broader anxieties about national legitimacy.¹⁴⁸ For this reason, Wells's anti-lynching campaign was firmly situated in the ever-changing world of late nineteenth-century reform and resided at the nexus of transatlantic discourses about race, gender, nationalism and state activism.¹⁴⁹

In the late nineteenth-century, significant changes occurred in both Britain and the United States concerning ideas about race, national belonging, and citizenship that, in both cases, were the result of new colonial ventures, immigration, and hardened racist attitudes that emerged after emancipation.¹⁵⁰ In Britain, liberal governments had facilitated the expansion

¹⁴⁸ Catherine Impey's journal *Anti-Caste* teemed with her humanitarian politics and her objections to instances of violence of white settlers directed toward the native people of territories colonized by the British Empire. In a June 1892 issue of *Anti-Caste*, Impey railed against the "selfishness" of white settlers in Queensland and demanded that the government intervene to protect native populations from the unchecked self-interests of settler who tried to exclude natives from equal representation within their own societies, Impey, "Editorial," *Anti-Caste* June 1892. In a July 1892 edition of *Anti-Caste* Impey calls for strict government regulation of the labor traffic to that brought native workers to British territories. The private operation of the labor traffic, according to Impey, left laborers open to brutal mistreatment and injustices. If the traffic was not abolished entirely, Impey argued that at the very least the government needed to impose "the strictest regulations." Impey, "Editorial" *Anti-Caste* July 1892.

¹⁴⁹ In particular, Vron Ware has argued that more needs to be done to document the history of those reformers who worked to continue the legacy of abolition in the latter part of the nineteenth-century. See Ware's *Beyond The Pale: White Women, Racism & History* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1992), 5-8, 51-62.

¹⁵⁰ Charles Saville Roundell, "What is the Duty of the Mother Country as Regards the Protection of Inferior Race in her Colonies and Dependencies?" *Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science* (1866), 126-140. Historians Richard J. Blackett and Daniel Rodgers have taken an extensive look at changing racial attitudes in the age of post-emancipation high imperialism. See Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998) and Blackett's *Building an Antislavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830-1860* (Louisiana State University Press, 1983) and *Divided Hearts. Britain and the American Civil War* (Louisiana State University Press, 2001); Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its*

of rights at home while engaging in the simultaneous denial of rights to colonized peoples in overseas territories. In the United States, the rights granted to African Americans after emancipation were being invalidated throughout the South as national (white) reconciliation was secured on the backs of the formerly enslaved, the immigrants, and the native populations divested of their lands.¹⁵¹

In these similar imperial milieus, American and British governments sought to deny subjected and oppressed peoples the full rights of citizenship and thereby maintain the mechanisms of social, economic, and political control. Yet in the midst of this denial, oppressed peoples and the reformers who sought to represent them articulated their own interpretations of citizenship rights and the claims to national belonging. The power of the dominant was never absolute, and in Wells's anti-lynching campaign we see an instance where racial violence presented the opportunity to interrogate the meaning of the republic and what constituted a citizen.¹⁵²

For all of her unconventional ways as a woman and as an activist, Wells deployed contemporary notions of respectability, lawfulness, strict work ethic, and the primacy of domestic space in articulating the rights of African Americans. Wells was a pious woman

Legacy (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007); Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998).

¹⁵¹ James Patterson Smith, "The Liberals, Race, and Political Reform in the British West Indies, 1866-1874," *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 79, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 131-146; Bruce Hamilton, *Barbados and the Confederation Question, 1871-1885* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd., 1956); Ira Klein, "Materialism, Mutiny, and Modernization in India," *Modern Asian Studies* 34, no. 3 (July 2000); Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-2004*, 4th ed. (Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2004); James Mill, *The History of British India*, vol. 2 (London: 1820; reprint, New York: Chelsea House, 1968); Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), 48-49; Pier Brendon, "Sacred Wrath" in *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire, 1781-1997* (New York: Vintage, 2007), 119-140. Brendon gives a thorough outline of British reforms at home and examines these changes juxtaposed to Britain's harsh treatment of Irish and India.

¹⁵² My thinking here about the limits of power and the nature of resistance come from anthropologist James C. Scott. See *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) and *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

whose ideas about citizenship, justice, and propriety were deeply ingrained in Victorian notions of respectability. And while her invocation of religion reflects the influence of nineteenth-century evangelical reform, Wells also proved to be an adept legal scholar who was pre-occupied with groups singled out for special government protections. Wells presented powerful and compelling arguments about the obligations of the state to protect the lives of all its citizens and about the ways that emancipation in the United States had necessarily changed these obligations.¹⁵³ Wells is often portrayed as a militant outsider who had several challenges in connecting to her contemporaries because of her forthright and seemingly unconventional ways of speaking and acting. On the contrary, during her trip to the British Isles, Wells was extraordinarily adept at speaking to the central concerns of an expansive and varied community of reformers in a very challenging international setting.¹⁵⁴

The Beginning of Wells's Crusade Against Lynching: Jim Crow and The Colonial Context

Wells developed her identity and platform as a reformer within the context of the retrenchment of black civil rights and the increasing imposition of American and European power in overseas locales. It is not surprising that her campaign against lynching eventually led to an internationalist imperative.¹⁵⁵ Lynching became the tragic result of a society in flux

¹⁵³ See especially Wells's discussion of her 1883 lawsuit against the Chesapeake & Ohio & Southwestern Railroad Company. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 15-20. On the South's intention toward African Americans in the post-emancipation era, Wells remarked, "[i]n this as in so many other matters, the South wanted the Civil Rights Bill repealed but did not want or intend to give justice to the Negro after robbing him of all sources from which to secure it." Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 20.

¹⁵⁴ For discussions of Wells's differences with black leaders see especially Joy James *Transcending the Talented Tenth: Black Leaders and American Intellectuals* (New York, Routledge, 1997), 46-53; Patricia Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 135-138, 182-186.

¹⁵⁵ During the development of her campaign Wells began to articulate her own critique about the connections between racial violence discrimination toward blacks and the global setting. In July 1892 Wells published a position paper for *The A. M. E. Church Review* where she puts forth an argument in favor of emigration to Africa. She was careful to clarify that no other race had as great a claim to American soil than the "Afro-American," but her hope was that those African Americans who favored passage to Africa would be just as

that had once expanded to include African Americans in public life in a way never seen before—nor since—and then subsequently contracted to exclude them from the privileges of citizenship. Lynching was the ultimate sign of the resurgence of the old order in the US in which whites—denying the outcome of the Civil War and subsequent Reconstruction amendments—were attempting to reassert control over blacks in the wake of emancipation and also signaling a refusal to accept them as equal members of the citizenry. In the minds of whites who served as participants and spectators in these brutal rituals, the violent inhumanity of lynching was a collective declaration of the miniscule value placed upon black lives and black suffering. The fact that these kinds of brutal and humiliating acts could be committed against blacks *by whites* in public settings was in and of itself a reaffirmation racial difference and white supremacy.¹⁵⁶

More than operating as a distinctly American post-emancipation ritual, however, lynching deserves proper place in the history of US imperialist power and colonization—and the era high imperialism more broadly. Lynching had a significance that echoed beyond just the

respected as those who chose to stay. She stated, “[b]ut the entire race is not sanguine over our possessions in this country, and the object of this paper is to maintain that the right of those who wish to go to Africa should be as inviolate as that of those who wish to stay.” I. B. Wells, “Afro-Americans and Africa,” *The A. M. E. Church Review*, vol. 9, no. 1 (July, 1892): 40. Wells’s intention in this piece was to declare that African American could (and should) seek solutions to racial hatred and violence beyond the borders of the United States. Moreover, African American ingenuity, hard work and intelligence would contribute to their success overseas. Her suggestion that overseas locations served as an alternative for blacks foreshadows her 1893-1894 tours abroad. I. B. Wells, “Afro-Americans and Africa,” 40-44. For more on the troubling relationship between racial violence, imperialism and the civilizing mission see Douglas Lorimer, “Reconstructing Victorian Racial Discourse: Images of Race, the Language of Race Relations and the Context of Black Resistance,” in *Black Victorians/Black Victoriana*, 187-207.

¹⁵⁶ The literature on lynching in the United States, its role as a vehicle to communicate racial difference, is quite extensive. See Brundage, *Under Sentence of Death*; Norton Moses, *Lynching and Vigilantism in the United States: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1997); Ralph Ginzburg, *100 Years of Lynching* (New York: Black Classic Press, 1996); Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2011); Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Person Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: Modern Library, 2003 [reprint]); Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage, 1999); Christopher Waldrep, *Lynching in America: A History in Documents* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); James H. Madison, *A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001);

context of the United States or in small towns and communities in which racial violence took place. White American attempts to consolidate their power over black Americans in the post-emancipation era occurred simultaneously with the US expanding its dominion over non-white people in the Western United States and overseas. The late nineteenth century—and especially the 1890s—saw not only the closing of the frontier and the expansion of American hegemony to several trans-Pacific and transatlantic locales, but also the increasingly popular belief in the inevitability of Anglo-American rule over races perceived lesser, aided largely by the emergence of evolutionary social sciences that validated the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race.¹⁵⁷ Scholars such as Howard Zinn, James Bradley, and Louise Newman have demonstrated the ways in which this kind of racist pseudo-science became a prominent part of an emerging and increasingly rigid national narrative at the turn of the century. The gruesome and humiliating acts of violence inflicted upon black bodies at home were in many ways harbingers of the acts of violence used to subdue and ‘civilize’ the so-called ‘lesser’ races in nations such as Cuba, the Philippines and the Hawaiian islands at the turn of the century.¹⁵⁸ Additionally, European immigrants—who many white Americans believed were from lesser racial stock—also became the victims of hysterical lynch mobs.¹⁵⁹ In the context

¹⁵⁷ James Bradley, *Imperial Cruise: A Secret History of Empire and War* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2009), 27-33. See especially Bradley’s chapter “Civilization Follows the Sun,” 11-60.

¹⁵⁸ See James Bradley’s discussion of acts of torture, including flogging, hangings and burnings used by US soldiers overseas during American campaigns in the Caribbean and the Pacific in the 1890s. Bradley, *The Imperial Cruise*, 105-110. Paul Kramer also discusses violent acts of torture used during the US occupation of the Philippines, *Race, Empire and the United States and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 140-143.

¹⁵⁹ One of the largest mass lynchings to ever occur in the United States involved the lynching of eleven Italian immigrants in New Orleans in 1891. The Lynching of Eleven Italians in New Orleans,” *The Times London* (March 18, 1891), 9. The paper actually ran coverage of this lynching for several years. In 1893 the United States paid a \$25,000 fine to Italy and diplomatic relations were restored. For more on this incident see, John E. Coxe “The Mafia Incident,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1937), 1067-1110; John S. Kendell, “The Mafia and What Led to the Lynching,” *Harper’s Weekly* 35, no. 1778 (March 28, 1891), 602-612; John S. Kendell “Who Killa de Chief?” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (1939): 492-530; John V. Baiamonte, Jr., “‘Who Killa da Chief’ Revisited: The Hennessey Assassination and Its Aftermath, 1891-1991 *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 33, No. 2 (Spring 1992), 117-146. Also, see Nell

of perceived challenges to the racial status quo, the lynching of African Americans reflected a multitude of white American anxieties about domestic *and* geopolitical power.

Notable black intellectuals of the era—recognizing the ways in which racial violence and economic and political exploitation produced similarly situated non-white populations—drew connections between the experience of black Americans and colonized peoples throughout the world, thereby anticipating theories of Black America as an internal colony.¹⁶⁰ In the previous chapter, I highlighted Anna Julia Cooper’s analysis of the ways that European and American notions of racial and gender difference were used to similarly oppress African Americans, American Indians, African and Chinese populations. Likewise, W. E. B. Du Bois, when he made the now well-known declaration about the “problem of the color line,” argued that the color line included not only the segregated American South, but also the territories occupied by European powers throughout Africa, South America and Asia.¹⁶¹ In this vein, the history of racial violence in the form of lynching—and by extension, subsequent responses to it and efforts to end the atrocity—lends itself to a broader transnational analysis. The systematic violence against African Americans fits into a

Painter’s discussion about Eastern and Southern Europeans immigrants (Italy and Russia) and how these whites were considered to be from a lower racial stock by native whites. Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2010), 201-255 and George E. Cunningham, “The Italian, a Hindrance to White Solidarity in Louisiana, 1890-1898,” in *Racial Classification and History*, ed. E. Nathaniel Gates (New York: Routledge, 1997), 68-108; Daniel Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 93-132.

¹⁶⁰ On race and internal colonization see Ramon A. Gutierrez, “Internal Colonialism: An American Theory of Race,” *Du Bois Review* 1, no. 2 (2004): 281-295; Ira Katznelson, “Du Bois’ Century,” *Social Science History* 23, no. 4, (Winter 1999): 459-474; Amy Kaplan, “The Imperial Cartography of W. E. B. Du Bois,” in *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of US Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 171-214. In her first book published in 1892, *A Voice from the South*, Anna Julia Cooper also drew connections between the experiences of colonized people in Asia and Africa to the experiences of African Americans. This is discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, “The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper: Civilization, Progress and the American South as the Model for Empire.”

¹⁶¹ See works by Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 8; “The Color Line Belts the World,” *Collier’s Magazine* 20 (October 1906), 20; and “The Negro Mind Reaches Out,” in *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 385-414

worldwide resurgence of white supremacy and imperialism, which forcefully and violently imposed upon the rights and humanity of black and brown peoples.

Wells's life spanned this grim and tumultuous period in American and world history. She began her career as a reformer during what Rayford Logan referred to as the "nadir" of African American history—the period in which blacks saw an unprecedented amount of social and political equality stolen from them as the nation sought to reconcile in the aftermath of the Civil War and emancipation. Her early life in Memphis, Tennessee, exemplified the experiences of many Africans Americans after emancipation in their quest for political rights and education.¹⁶² Wells pursued early careers in teaching and journalism as a way to support herself, her family, and her community.¹⁶³ Her journalism focused on middle-class black community leaders and their failure to truly serve the needs of recently-emancipated African Americans. In 1891, shortly after beginning an editorial job and buying partial ownership at the *Free Speech and Headlight*, Wells was fired from her job as a teacher for criticizing the local school board's failure to address the deplorable conditions in schools for Negro children.¹⁶⁴ Able to pursue journalism full-time, Wells made a living

¹⁶² Notable biographies that span the entirety of Wells's life have been published in recent years. Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely*; Paula Giddings, *Ida, A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Harper Paperbacks, 2009); Patricia Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); McMurray, *To Keep The Waters Troubled*. See Mia Bay for an excellent discussion of Wells's absence and reemergence in historical scholarship, Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely*, 3-13. The 1970 publication of Wells's autobiography by her daughter Alfreda Duster contributed greatly to increased interest in Wells's life and activism, Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* edited by Alfreda M. Duster (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970).

¹⁶³ Wells's parents died during a yellow fever epidemic that swept the lower Mississippi valley in 1878. Fearful of splitting up the family, Wells became responsible for all of her siblings and supported them by teaching at a Freedman's school. Wells noted that it was during her days as a teacher that she realized how desperately in need of education African Americans were during this period. Her career as a teacher was just one of many points of radicalization. See Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 7-17

¹⁶⁴ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 35-38. For more context on black education in the South see especially Adam Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007) and James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

writing and publishing her articles and selling subscriptions to the *Free Speech and Headlight* throughout the Mississippi Valley. While it would be a few more years before lynching would become the focal point of Wells's journalism, it is possible to see how her early experiences as both a teacher and local journalist fostered a political activist vision and prefaced a lifelong career that would reject accommodation and gradualism.¹⁶⁵ Wells made her arguments against violence and segregation in a way that blended her moral and religious convictions with her preoccupation with the material reality of black people's social and political realities. She expressed frustration with blacks in the community who overlooked the social, political, and economic needs of their race in favor of their own personal and financial gains. She argued that it was the job of community leaders to use all resources at their disposal to demand and work toward improvements and protections for black people. Her criticisms drew the derision of some community leaders and further stoked Wells's distrust of black leaders who she believed were too accommodating by avoiding vigorous calls for social and political equality. Attacks upon her character and motives by these same community leaders only emboldened her determination to speak out more forcefully.¹⁶⁶

The now well-known and pivotal moment in Wells's career that eventually lead to her anti-lynching crusade—and subsequent campaign in the British Isles—was the lynching of three close friends in Memphis: Thomas Moss, Calvin McDowell and Henry Stewart, owners of The People's Grocery. From this tragedy, Wells not only began to turn the focus of her journalism to racial violence against African Americans, but she also developed a critical

¹⁶⁵ For further discussion of Wells's radical politics, see James, *Transcending the Talented Tenth*, 46-53.

¹⁶⁶ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 35-37. Wells's recount of how she was initially excluded from the founding committee for the organization that would eventually become the NAACP is quite telling. Although it was clear to Wells that some on the committee clearly did not want her involved because of her outspoken politics, Wells resolved to continue on with her work, as she had always done. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 322-324. For more on Wells's early life in post-emancipation Mississippi and Tennessee see Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely*, 40-81 and Giddings, *Ida, A Sword Among Lions*, 15-68.

analysis of lynching that pinpointed black economic and political success as the source of post-bellum white hatred and racial violence.¹⁶⁷

While lecturing in the northeast about the horrors of lynching, Wells learned of threats upon her life in response to her editorials about the lynching of Moss, McDowell and Stewart. Out of fear for her own life and in an effort to continue to spread the word about white violence, Wells accepted an offer from T. Thomas Fortune, to remain in New York City and write full-time for *The New York Age*, one of the leading black newspapers in the country.¹⁶⁸ Away from home, Wells adopted the identity of an exile—an identity that possessed several meanings given her fear of violent reprisals from whites and the betrayal she felt she experienced from other African Americans.¹⁶⁹

The emotionally and financially draining effect of the work that Wells performed was compounded by the fact that her campaign failed to receive the kind of attention she believed the issue warranted. Many Southern whites were incensed by her determination to speak out against lynching and, as a result, issued multiple threats upon her life and disparaged her name in national publications. While Northern whites were repulsed by the details of

¹⁶⁷ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 47-52, 54-55; McMurray, *To Keep the Waters Troubled*, 130-144; Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely*, 82-108; Schechter, *Ida B. Wells and American Reform*, 63-102; Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 85-88.

¹⁶⁸ Despite a lack of large-scale public support and depleted personal finances, Wells began to tour many northern states speaking out against the outrage of lynching. T. Thomas Fortune the editor of the newspaper for which she began writing, *The New York Age*, and founder of the Afro-American League where Wells was a charter member, had long been a prominent voice against the discrimination and mob violence that plagued African Americans. After a mob destroyed the office of the *Free Speech* while Wells was away in New York lecturing on lynching, Fortune brought Wells on board as a editor for his newspaper *The New York Age*, and his paper became one of the most militant public voices against lynching. Fortune also worked fervently to organize public meetings speaking out the atrocity and its growing frequency throughout the country, Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 69-73. For works published during the era, see Charles Chestnutt, "The Sheriff's Children," [*The Independent* (November 7, 1889)] available online <<http://faculty.berea.edu/browners/chesnutt/Works/Stories/sheriff.html>>, Frederick Douglass, "Lynch Law in the South" *North American Review* (July 1882), 19. See also, Paula Giddings discussions of the movement against lynching in *When and Where I Enter*, 28-30, 89-92, 206-210 and Giddings *Ida, Sword Among Lions*, 211-229.

¹⁶⁹ See especially Wells's chapter "The Homesick Exile," in *Crusade for Justice*, 77-82. James, *Transcending the Talented Tenth*, 46-53. See also Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely*, 108.

lynchings, many believed nonetheless that lynchings occurred in response to violent and lascivious black criminality.¹⁷⁰ Wells also frequently remarked that she was disappointed in the dearth of support the cause received among those in black communities.¹⁷¹ Many blacks, especially in small or rural communities, lived under the threat of retaliation for speaking out against white violence. Sadly, as Wells learned on several occasions, there were also many blacks who sought to increase their own standing with local whites by denigrating Wells's character and questioning her motives.¹⁷²

But many other blacks supported Wells's efforts. Black clubwomen in the Northeast were particularly helpful to Wells as she prepared to make her case against lynching to the public. While T. Thomas Fortune provided Wells a full-time job to write about the horrors of lynching and to distribute the truth of the atrocity through major newspapers, Wells credited black clubwomen with allowing her to find her voice as an orator. Prior to the anti-lynching campaign, Wells remarked that she had few opportunities to speak before audiences. She recounted the fear and trepidation with which she initially approached these public appeals. Despite her own anxieties about her inexperience, it was clubwomen Victoria Earle Matthews and Marchita Lyons who insisted that Wells speak before an audience that included black women from all over the northeastern region committed to racial uplift and

¹⁷⁰ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 53-67.

¹⁷¹ A common theme throughout her biography and personal correspondence was how alone she felt and abandoned she felt by members of her race. Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely*, 319-321; Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform*, 3-10, 23-28, 110.

¹⁷² In February of 1893, Wells wrote multiple letters to Albion Tourgee—an attorney and prominent anti-slavery activist who was also a close supporter and confidant—soliciting his advice about the feasibility of suing two black lawyers located in Memphis who were openly attacking her. Wells asserted that two men—Settle and Cassels—were publicly attacking her because when she was a newspaper editor in Memphis, she spoke out against them for what she felt were their neglect of members of their own communities. In response to her criticism and the growing attention on her because of her comments concerning lynching, she found that these men were doing everything possible to “curry favor with the white people.” Wells ultimately decided not to go forward with the lawsuit, but these kinds of attacks would plague her in one form or another for the remainder of her career. Ida B. Wells to A.W. Tourgee, *February 10, 1893* Ida B Wells papers University of Chicago Library Box 10 Folder 6; Ida B. Wells to Judge A. Tourgee, February 22, 1893, Albion Tourgee Papers, CCHS.

social reform.¹⁷³ She believed it was of the utmost importance to not allow her own emotionality before the crowd to distract from the overall mission of her address. From this experience Wells learned to speak in a straightforward fashion, allowing the facts of the crimes alone to impress upon her audiences. Wells's address at New York City's Lyric Hall—organized by black clubwomen—was one of her most celebrated public events to date and had formed the basis of materials used to promote her tour to the British Isles.¹⁷⁴

In 1892, Wells met British abolitionist and temperance activist, Catherine Impey. Wells was lecturing in Philadelphia as the guest of an abolitionist and former conductor of the Underground Railroad, William Still, while Impey was in the city visiting her Quaker relatives. Impey strongly endorsed Wells's work and encouraged her to “keep plugging away at the evils” of racial oppression and violence. It was this chance meeting that led shortly thereafter to Wells's invitation to begin her transatlantic campaign against lynching.¹⁷⁵ It was not long after the widely publicized lynching of Henry Smith—a man wrongfully accused of raping a young white child—that Wells received a letter from Impey and the Scottish poet and novelist, Isabella Mayo, inviting her to speak in the British Isles about the “lynching mania” in the United States.¹⁷⁶ After more than a year and a half of trying to reach white

¹⁷³ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 78-82, 243-245.

¹⁷⁴ On black women's intellectual and oratory tradition, see Kristin Waters and Carol B. Conaway, eds., *Black Women's Intellectual Traditions: Speaking Their Minds* (Hanover and London: University of Vermont Press, 2007); Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the African American Woman Novelist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); White, *Too Heavy a Load*; Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*. Impey references Wells's Lyric Hall address in *Anti-Caste*, see “A Lynching Scene in Alabama,” *Anti-Caste* 6, no. 1 (January 1893)

¹⁷⁵ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 82.

¹⁷⁶ The lynching of Henry Smith on February 1, 1893 in Paris, Texas was widely publicized overseas and noted for its particular brutality and festival atmosphere. This event is discussed more in-depth later in this chapter.

audiences in the United States to little avail, Wells quickly accepted the invitation and sailed to England from New York City within just five days of receiving the letter.¹⁷⁷

“The Awakening Must Come from the Inside:” Impey and the Crusade Against Caste

In traveling to Britain, Wells hoped to inspire the British public to pressure the United States to address the lynching mania. Prior to Wells’s travels abroad, reform organizations in the United States shied away from addressing the issue because of fear of alienating their Southern members.¹⁷⁸ Surely, Wells believed, the home of the world’s greatest abolitionist societies could apply the moral pressure necessary to end the tide of racial violence in the United States.

At the same time that Wells began to build a case against the violent murder of African Americans in post-Reconstruction America, an expansive reform movement had swept Britain for much of the nineteenth century. Exemplified by organizations such as the Aborigines Protection Society and the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, this movement was largely driven by abolitionists and their descendants, who in the wake of

¹⁷⁷ Wells *Crusade for Justice*, 128. Wells also kept a brief nine-entry diary of her first nine days of the trip while crossing the Atlantic. The entries can be found in Chapter 12 of *Crusade for Justice*, 87-88 and in *The Memphis Diary of Ida B. Wells: An Intimate Portrait of the Activist as a Young Woman*, ed. Miriam DeCosta-Willis (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 161-163. The entries are rather brief and deal with Wells’s seasickness. She also indicates that her travel companions included three men bound for Liberia and Dr. Georgia E. L. Patton, the first female graduate from Meharry Medical College.

¹⁷⁸ There is an immense amount of scholarship that addresses the ways that national organizations limited their activism on black civil rights because of ultimatums from Southern members. See Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*, 107-135; White, *Too Heavy a Load*, 27-55; Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely*, 185-189; see Giddings, “Casting the Die: Morality, Slavery and Resistance,” in *When and Where I Enter*, 33-56. The first chapter of this dissertation on Anna Julia Cooper includes a lengthy discussion of Cooper’s engagements with white female reformers and their utilization of racist ideology to maintain the commitment of Southern members of their organizations. See chapter 1: “The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper: Civilization, Progress and the American South as the Model for Empire.” Also, later in this current chapter, Wells’s very public disagreement with temperance activist, Frances Willard, will be addressed. Willard, who hoped to maintain strong support within the South, refused to speak out against the crime of lynching. Instead she appeared to support the Southern apologist justification for lynching by blaming the violent nature of black men and their designs upon white women; see pages 47-52 of the current chapter.

emancipation throughout the British empire and in the US, turned to defending the rights and liberties of people of color in the colonies and denouncing the violent expansion of empire.¹⁷⁹

In the latter quarter of the century, this movement found new momentum in not only addressing existing instances of slavery in Cuba and Brazil and North Africa but also in monitoring newly emerging free labor relations between white settlers and native peoples in the outward reaches of the British empire. The issues that occupied these reformers were myriad and reflected the vastness of the British Empire, from the treatment of Chinese laborers in Australia, Chile, Peru and the Western United States to the Indian Nationalist Movement to violent unrest over land and labor in the West Indies. The issues that engaged British reformers reflected their own anxieties about the stability of empire and the ultimate success of British civilizing missions throughout the world.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Standish Motte for the Aborigines Protection Society, *Outline of a system of legislation, for securing protection to the aboriginal inhabitants of all countries colonized by Great Britain* (London: J. Murray, 1840); Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 57-70; also see Levine's *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003); James Heartfield, *Aborigines' Protection Society: Humanitarian Imperialism in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Canada, South Africa, and the Congo, 1836-1909* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History*, ed. A Dirk Moses (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2004); Opolot Okia has written about the activities of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society throughout the 19th century. After the abolition of slavery within the British Empire and even the United States, members of the BFASS turned their efforts toward ending the bonded labor traffic in eastern Africa. Although Muslim countries, such as Oman, largely controlled the traffic in slaves, the traffic occurred in areas under British control. There was also evidence that slaves were used by companies serving under the guise of the Imperial British East Africa Company. See Okia's, "The Windmill of Slavery: The British and Foreign Antislavery Society and Bonded Labor in East Africa," *The Middle Ground Journal*, No. 3, (Fall 2011), 1-35, available online

<http://resources.css.edu/academics/HIS/MiddleGround/articles/Windmill.pdf>, accessed December 5, 2014.

¹⁸⁰ David Killingray, "'The Rod of Empire': The Debate Over Corporal Punishment in the British African Colonial Forces, 1888-1946," *Journal of African History* Vol. 35 (1994): 201-216; Brij Lal, "Labouring Men and Nothing More: Some Problems of Indian Indenture in Fiji," in *Indentured Labour in the British Empire, 1834-1920*, ed. Kay Saunders, (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 126-157; Jock McCulloch, "Empire and Violence, 1900-1939," in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 220-239; Maria Misra, *Business, Race and Politics in British India, c. 1850-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Siasa: Politics and Nationalism in East Africa, 1905-1939* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1981); Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (London: Abacus, 2007), 277-283.

Even as notions of liberty in Britain were changing to become more inclusive, the story of British actions within the colonies was quite different. In response to West Indian, African, and Indian efforts to secure more autonomy and control, Britain's liberal government responded with restrictive and often violent policies meant to squelch black autonomy and ensure the continuance of British imperial supremacy. Motivated by hardened racial attitudes toward non-white people and unrealistic expectations of freedom for recently emancipated peoples, as well as, flawed ideologies of economic liberalism—British authorities within the colonies repeatedly relied upon stern law enforcement and strong signs of force to maintain the colonies and enforce British rule.¹⁸¹ The Indian Rebellion in 1857 and the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865 are often seen as the turning points in British policy toward its colonies, as they called into question Britain's ability to control its colonial possessions. India, the crown jewel of the empire, as well as the valuable Jamaican colony were crucial to Britain's continued global dominance and British authorities were not willing to lose control of these possessions simply because of black and Indian peoples' refusal to play their designated role in emerging free-market economies. The mid-to-late nineteenth century revolutionized idea of citizenship in both the United States and Britain. Repeated attempts at personal independence on the part of Britain's colonial subjects resulted in a hardened racial attitude in the latter part of the nineteenth century as British authorities sought to support local planters and land owners solely interested in increased production and cheap labor in the post-emancipation era.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Martin Weiner, *An Empire on Trial: Race, Murder, and Justice Under British Rule, 1870-1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 7-19; McCulloch, "Empire and Violence, 1900-1939," 220-239; Douglas Weiner, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance: A Study of Racial Discourse in Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, 1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

¹⁸² James Patterson Smith, "The Liberals, Race and Political Reform in the British West Indies, 1866-1874," *The Journal of Negro History* Vol. 79, no. 2 (Spring 1994), 131-136; Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press,

British officials and reformers also took notice of race relations in the United States after emancipation.¹⁸³ The United States's status as a former slave society and emerging imperial force in the world fostered the interest that British reformers had in the United States as a policy experiment in integrating the formerly enslaved within the body politic. British reformers looked on anxiously as the U.S. engaged in an experiment of granting the privileges of citizenship to a formerly enslaved people. These humanitarian and missionary reformers believed strongly in the superiority of British civilization and saw it as the only way to make progress within the colonies. Rather than denouncing the fact of empire, they expressed outrage at the violent methods used to maintain the empire, which they saw as interferences to their attempts to mentor and civilize colonial subjects.¹⁸⁴

2002), 254-255, 258-264, 275. Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth-century* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers for Leicester University Press, 1978), 11-16; Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain 1832-1938* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992) xxii-xix, 33-35, 217 and 290-303.

¹⁸³ People of color undoubtedly played a role in this growing anti-colonialism within British reform communities. Indians, West Indians, and Africans lived and visited in Britain playing crucial roles in leading movements for nationalist independence. Historian Peter Fryer has referred to England as the "womb" of Pan-African activities because of the high traffic of West Indians, Africans, African Americans and Anglo Africans who passed through the country. By the end of the nineteenth-century, England had long been the destination of African American activists fighting the scourges of slavery, racist violence, and racial discrimination throughout the colonies. Prominent African Americans such as Sarah Parker Remond, Alexander Crummell, William Wells Brown, and Frederick Douglass amassed large followings among British audiences curious about race relations in the United States and eager to develop worldwide movements against racist oppression and violence. Peter Fryer *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (Boulder, CO: Pluto Press, 1984), 272. Also see literature that discusses black peoples' travels to Britain and Europe Paul Gilroy *The Black Atlantic*; Michelle Wright *Becoming Black*. Also see William Stowe for discussions of William Wells Brown and David F. Dorr, Stowe, *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-century American Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 7, 13, 50-57. There is one West Indian who came up frequently in Wells's letters and played a key role in her second tour to the British Isles: Dominican activist Celestine Edwards. However, from the sources that are available, it is not clear that Wells had much interaction with people of African descent or other people of color during her tour in Britain. In her autobiography, Wells mentioned a young African named Ogontula Sapara, a medical student in London who called upon Wells and asked to bring a group of African students to meet with her. Interested in her message, Sapara became a supporter of her campaign and mailed pamphlets and newspapers announcing her lectures, Wells *Crusade for Justice*, 214.

¹⁸⁴ Daniel Rodgers has suggested that all late nineteenth-century reform movements in the United States must be understood in the context of the transatlantic movement of ideas, policies and people. The common socioeconomic and political forces affecting both the United States and Europe and particularly Great Britain tied reformers in the two geographic locales "through a web of rivalry and exchange." This, according to Rodgers, resulted in an environment in which British reformers and American reformers looked on closely as they attempted to read each other's policy experiments. Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a*

Catherine Impey, an early supporter of Well's campaign in England, was an important leader within this movement and highly exemplary of its beliefs. Impey, a member of the Society of Friends, was the niece of the radical abolitionist and member of Gladstone's cabinet, John Bright.¹⁸⁵ Beginning in the late 1870s, Impey began traveling to the United States to observe the race situation after emancipation and in the process formed many close connections with some prominent members of the movement of black equality including T. Thomas Fortune and Frances E. W. Harper.¹⁸⁶ While in the United States, she was the frequent guest of the former slaves William Wells Brown and Frederick Douglass and white New York abolitionist and judge, Albion Tourgee. In a letter to Tourgee, Impey remarked that during her travels to the US she had "made quite a large circle of acquaintances and friends among coloured Americans" before she had any "extended knowledge of white Americans."¹⁸⁷ She believed very strongly in the common humanity of blacks and whites and railed against whites who believed black inequality was the result of an inherent black inferiority. Instead, racial inequality was the result of the ways that Western civilization had failed the formerly enslaved and even worked actively against their advancement:

Progressive Age (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 5. There are several works that influence my thinking on this matter, most notably Thomas E. Smith's PhD Dissertation "Reform and Empire: The British and American Transnational Search for Rights of Black People in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2006). See also, Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Ian Tyrrell *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective Since 1789* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007); Frederick Cooper, Thomas Holt, Rebecca Scott, *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and Ware, *Beyond the Pale*; Bender, *Nation Among Nations*; Hobsawm, *The Age of Empires*.

¹⁸⁵ For a discussion of Bright and the Quaker abolitionists see Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Sandra Stanley Holton, "Segregation, Racism and White Women Reformers: A Transnational Analysis, 1840-1912," *Women's History Review*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2001), 7-9; Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, 182-187.

¹⁸⁶ Catherine Impey to Albion Tourgee, June 16, 1890, Albion Tourgee Papers, Chautauqua County Historical Society (CCHS).

¹⁸⁷ Catherine Impey to Albion Tourgee, June 16, 1890, Albion Tourgee Papers, CCHS.

It is pitiful to see how by this system of caste, the careers of many of our fellow creatures are straitened, their cultivation and growth in civilization checked, their most honourable aspirations thwarted, their liberties in a thousand ways abridged.¹⁸⁸

Impey lamented the destructive role that colonial violence had upon colonized people.

Despite her protestations against the violent and repressive reality of colonial rule, Impey stopped short of calling for an end to imperialism. She was a committed believer in the idea of civilizing mission, and she believed that benevolent tutelage presented the best opportunity to introduce and bring people of color to what she perceived as a more advanced way of life.¹⁸⁹ Like most of her contemporaries, her commitment to civilizing mission often reinforced the justification of empire and sustained British geopolitical dominance.¹⁹⁰

Shortly after Impey renounced her membership in the Good Templars due to their acquiescence to Southern American racism, Impey began the publication of a monthly journal called *Anti-Caste*. *Anti-Caste* reflected Impey's interest in the status of colonized and formerly enslaved people throughout the world. The phrase "anti-caste" itself the product of

¹⁸⁸ Catherine Impey, "To Our Readers," *Anti-Caste*, March 1888. There are several texts that have examined the views that nineteenth-century white reformers had toward race and racial difference. Most reformers held tightly to hierarchal and pseudoscientific ideas of racial difference. The literature on this is vast but see especially, Ware, *Beyond the Pale*; Boisseu, *White Queen*; Newman, *White Women's Rights*; Antoinette Burton, *The Burdens of History*.

¹⁸⁹ From 1888-9 Impey began engaging in heated disagreements with the leadership of The Independent Order of Good Templars, an international temperance organization with branches in England and the United States, over the organization's acquiescence to American branches in the Southern United States who wanted separate auxiliaries for black members. Finally in April 1889, in a letter to the Good Templars, Impey withdrew her membership declaring, "[i]t has been my conscientious conviction for years that I must have no partnership in any Society which provides separate places for black and white—that any such partnership must be *dishonouring* to God and to the religion of Jesus Christ." (emphasis hers), quoted in G. R. Simpson, "Notes, Catherine Impey," *Journal of Negro History* 10, no. 1 (Jan., 1925): 105. As her letter to the Good Templars suggested, a strong Christian humanist ethos informed Impey's anti-racist ideology and she frequently relied upon religious arguments to articulate her dissatisfaction with treatment of colonized people,

¹⁹⁰ For a discussion of the ways that British humanitarians were influenced by pseudo-scientific theories of racial difference advocated by Charles Darwin, A. H. Keane and others, see Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, 63-66, 176-178; Burton, *Burdens of History*, 80-82; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 398-402. See also, Holton "Segregation, Racism and White Reformers," 5-25. Theories of racial difference colored much of the work of British humanitarians and placed strict limits on what they truly believed colonized people were capable of achieving on their own.

the Indian nationalist movement in Britain, reflected her desire to rid the world of what she felt were “arbitrary” differences and “baseless prejudice” among human beings. *Anti-Caste* ran from 1888 to 1895 and covered issues concerning land rights, fair labor practices, and racist violence in India, Australia, the Caribbean, Southern Africa and China.¹⁹¹ After her travels to the U. S. in the late nineteenth-century, Impey took considerable interest in the cause of blacks in America after emancipation and American race relations. Particularly, the rise of lynching comprised a significant part of Impey’s coverage in *Anti-Caste*.¹⁹² In this violence, Impey saw the US, particularly Southern whites, attempting to strip African Americans of rights granted to them under the Constitution after the Civil War. Impey believed that the end of the Civil War and the subsequent emancipation amendments established the status and citizenship rights of freed blacks. In the violence of lynching and the retrenchment of black social and political rights, Impey saw the destruction of a system that could possibly serve as an ideal model for colonized people in other locales.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ In 1893 after a falling out with fellow abolitionist and reformer Isabelle Mayo, Impey ceased publication of *Anti-Caste* and did not return to it until late 1894. Publication stopped in 1895 after the death of Impey’s mother.

¹⁹² As early as May 1892, Impey ran an essay entitled “America’s Pre-eminence in Murder,” in which she drew readers’ attention to Edward Wakefield’s extensive essay on the growth of lynching in the United States. In response to suggestions that brutal violence in America was the result of the nation’s youth and inexperience, Impey exhorted, “...Australia, two years its junior, is “no more prone to shed blood than the English themselves, while New Zealand, a still younger colony, is peculiarly free from such crimes.” Impey was truly baffled by the prevalence of lynching in the United States. *Anti-Caste* 5, no. 5, (May 1892). In the September 1892 edition, on the topic of Southern lynchings, Impey argued, “[w]ords fail us when we attempt to picture the horrors of Negro life in the South, the outrages to which these men and women are subjected, the shootings the burnings, the almost daily murders—euphemistically called “Lynchings,”—of untried unheard defenceless beings, of which the law takes no account, and which the nation allows!—all this is best told by one who has himself lived for years amongst it, and one who is still in constant communication with those who live in the South to-day.” Impey, “America Re-visited,” *Anti-Caste* 5, no. 9 (September 1892). In the January 1893 edition of *Anti-Caste*, Impey ran a full-page photo of a man lynched in Alabama accompanied by the question, “HOW LONG WILL THE CALLOUS NATION LOOK ON?” *Anti-Caste* 6, no. 1 (January 1893). Impey also frequently reprinted essays written for the Chicago *Inter-Ocean* by American Judge Albion Tourgee.

¹⁹³ In several letters to Albion Tourgee in the early 1890s, Impey expressed her admiration for the efforts and work of black leaders and the progress of African Americans since emancipation. See especially Catherine Impey to Albion Tourgee, June 16, 1890 and October 22, 1893, CCHS. Unfortunately, with the exception of a few letters of correspondence that exist in select archives throughout the U. S., there is only a scant record of Impey’s career and activism.

British reformers had yet to pay significant attention to cases of lynching in the United States; this was in part due to the widespread and unchallenged belief that lynching occurred because of threat presented by blacks, especially black men. Impey's hope was to change this. However, two instances of lynching that occurred in the early 1890s sent the British reform community into a frenzy and began to turn British attention to this peculiar and violent post-emancipation ritual. The first of these was the 1891 lynching of Italian immigrants in New Orleans, Louisiana. Eleven Italian immigrant laborers were accused of murdering New Orleans police chief David Hennessey. After the trial, three suspects received mistrials, while another six were acquitted of the murder charge. Local supporters of Hennessey decided that the men would have to pay for the crime, however, and a day after the trial a mob that eventually amassed to 6,000 spectators broke into the New Orleans parish prison executing the Italians in a hail of bullets and dragging the bodies of two of the suspects into the street and hanging them from trees for all to witness. The lynching turned into an international incident as Italy broke off diplomatic relations with the United States and other nations condemned the U. S. for a failure to act in response to such lawlessness.¹⁹⁴ *The Times London* declared that the lynching was "a grave reproach to American civilization."¹⁹⁵ Edward Wakefield noted in *The Contemporary Review*: "[U]pon that evidence they would have been acquitted by an unprejudiced jury, whether in Europe or America. There was nothing like conclusive proof against them. Yet the citizens of New

¹⁹⁴ In 1893 the United States paid a \$25,000 fine to Italy and diplomatic relations were restored. For more on this incident see, John E. Coxe "The Mafia Incident," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (October, 1937): 1067-1110; John S. Kendell, "The Mafia and What Led to the Lynching," *Harper's Weekly* 35, no. 1788 (March 28, 1891): 602-612; John S. Kendell "Who Killa de Chief?" *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 22, n. 2 (1939): 492-530; John V. Baiamonte, Jr. " 'Who Killa da Chief' Revisited: The Hennessey Assassination and Its Aftermath, 1891-1991 *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 33, No. 2 (Spring 1992): 117-146.

¹⁹⁵ "The Lynching of Eleven Italians in New Orleans," *The Times London*, March 18, 1891. The paper actually ran coverage of this lynching for several years.

Orleans broke into the gaol and slaughtered them, together with several other prisoners who had not been tried at all.”¹⁹⁶ The murder of the Italians immigrants was reflective of an intense ethnic hatred in the United States, especially in the South, that was directed toward immigrant communities and fostered an attitude in the United States that blamed immigrants for thefts, violent crimes, disease and loss of available employment. During the decade from 1890-1900, over 3.5 million immigrants entered the United States seeking employment in the nation’s many industrial centers.¹⁹⁷ These immigrants came not from England, Germany or Scandinavia, but from Southern and eastern Europe, especially Italy and Russia. White Americans who detested these new immigrants saw Italians and Russians as members of distinct races of primitive civilizations. This anti-immigrant sentiment proliferated in the late nineteenth century and resulted in the emergence of several nativist organizations, as well as, strict state and federal regulations aiming to control the entrance of undesirable populations.¹⁹⁸

The other lynching that garnered significant attention in England was the 1893 lynching of Henry Smith in Paris, Texas. Smith’s lynching was particularly shocking to many in the British reform community and was covered extensively in British newspapers.¹⁹⁹ Smith was accused of assaulting and murdering a young toddler named Myrtle Vance. A crowd estimated at 10,000, a number that actually exceeded the population of Paris, gathered to

¹⁹⁶ Edward Wakefield, “The Brand of Cain in the Great Republic,” *Contemporary Review* 60, no. 2 (July-Dec. 1891): 773.

¹⁹⁷ For more discussion of anti-immigrant sentiment see Ian Tyrrell, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective Since, 1789* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 126-130; Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History* vol. 2, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), 617-619, 633-635, 700-705; Maldwyn Jones, *American Immigration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 128-131, 149-151. Grace Hale in her work *Making Whiteness* argues that the Henry Smith lynching was the beginning of “spectacle lynching” a terms she coined to describe turn of the century lynchings that attracted thousands of viewers. See Mia Bay, *To Tell The Truth Freely*, 134. *Anti-Caste* covered the Smith lynching quite extensively and included excerpts from several U. K. publications including *The Times London* and *The Manchester Guardian* on this outrage, see *Anti-Caste*, March and April 1893.

watch the torture and murder of Smith. Smith had attempted to escape but was captured in Arkansas and returned to Paris by train. As the train rolled through each stop, word of the coming lynching spread and the audience grew exponentially. Smith's executioners paraded him through town and tortured him on a platform built specifically for the execution.

Members of Myrtle Vance's family slowly tortured Smith with hot irons beginning at his feet and moving upward to his head. After thrusting the irons into his eyes and down his throat, Smith was doused with oil and burned before the audience. Once all life had left his body and the fire died down, spectators fought through the ashes for remaining parts of Smith's body as souvenirs.²⁰⁰ British reformers including Impey and Mayo were shocked by the sheer size of the audience and the way word of the impending lynching spread so quickly. Reverend Charles Aked, leader of the First Congregational Church in England and an individual who would later become a major supporter of Wells, remarked that the lynching of Smith would "live for centuries to come in the history of ferocious crime."²⁰¹

Impey began covering instances of lynching in the United States in some of the earliest editions of *Anti-Caste*. In the months leading up to Wells's visit to the British Isles, Impey began to speak about lynching with a growing sense of urgency. In an essay entitled "Who

²⁰⁰ "Another Negro Burned" *The New York Times*, February 2, 1893; Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely*, 132-133; Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 128; Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 206-210.

²⁰¹ C. F. Aked, "The Race Problem in America," *The Contemporary Review* 65, no. 1 (Jan-Jun., 1894), 824; "Lynch Law in America," *Otago Witness* (NZ), Issue 2041, (6 April 1893), 28. *The New York Times* ran a rather lengthy article describing the lynching in great detail. The article was clearly told from the perspective of white spectators and those sympathetic to the notion that white Southerners lynched in return for brutal crimes committed against the women and children of the South and it certainly corroborated the notion of the violent black brute. In describing the details of Smith's purported crime the papers said, "he first assaulted the babe, and then, taking a little leg in either hand, he literally tore her asunder. He covered the body with leaves and brush, and lay down and slept through the night by the side of the victim." The tone of *The New York Times* article was rather typical of Northern papers reporting on incidents of lynching. *The Chicago Inter-Ocean* was one of the only mainstream newspapers that reported objectively on incidents of lynching. The *Inter-Ocean* collected national statistics on lynching and ran them in the Jan 1894 edition of the newspaper, facts from this report that became a regular part of Wells's lectures. "Another Negro Burned," *The New York Times*, February 2, 1893. All of Wells's reports to the *Chicago Inter-Ocean* appear in her autobiography and make up the largest section of her autobiography where she discusses her tours in England.

Shall Make America Listen?” Impey intimated that the task of ending the injustice of lynching could no longer be left to the United States alone. Lynching was an evil that not only reflected a problem in the South, but the nation as a whole.²⁰²

[t]he few who listen are *so* few and so scattered, often so disheartened, that the feeling grows in England—in fact in the whole world *outside America*—that SOMETHING MUST BE DONE TO HELP, that we are not excused from action by reason of geographical distance or national boundaries...we cannot feel justified in merely reading and letting alone.²⁰³

Prior to Wells’s arrival, Impey published a pamphlet entitled “Some facts Representing Lynch Law,” which outlined recent occurrences of lynchings in the United States and provided a general overview of the racist discrimination facing black Americans after emancipation.²⁰⁴

Impey was dissatisfied with the amount of attention paid to lynching in the United States and decided that bringing Wells to Britain would play a major role in launching a British offensive against racist violence in the United States. Prior to Wells’s arrival, Impey and Mayo founded the Society for the Recognition of the Brotherhood of Man (SRBM). The organization’s primary purpose was to support Wells’s tours of the British Isles and to mobilize the British humanitarian community to bring greater attention to lynching atrocities in the United States.²⁰⁵ *Fraternity* served as the official organ of this new organization.²⁰⁶

²⁰² Catherine Impey, “Who Shall Make American Listen?” *Anti-Caste*, February 1893.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ *The Peterhead Sentinel and Buchan Journal* made reference to this publication May 2, 1893, and Wells addresses it in her autobiography, Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 91-92.

²⁰⁵ In records and periodicals, the Society for the Brotherhood of Man, the Society for the Recognition of the Universal Brotherhood of Man, etc. Most often it was shortened to the Brotherhood Society. See Lindy Moore, “The Reputation of Isabelle Fyvie Mayo: Interpretations of a Life,” *Women’s History Review* 10, no.1 (February 2010), 11 n. 14. Wells first met with Impey and Isabelle Mayo at Mayo’s home in Aberdeen, Scotland. Three days after this first meeting Mayo and Impey officially launched the Society for the Recognition of Brotherhood of Man.

The newly minted journal began publication in July of 1893 under the editorship of Celestine Edwards, a reformer from the Caribbean island of Dominica who had been an active member of English temperance and religious movements since the 1870s. Edwards had developed a large following within British reform communities because of his outspoken and passionate denunciations of British colonization, racist violence, and intemperance.²⁰⁷ As the managing editor of *Fraternity* and the executive secretary of SRBM, he became a staunch advocate for the organization's mission to eradicate race prejudice and colonial violence. With her transport to the Britain Isles secured by her radical benefactor, Catherine Impey, Wells began to craft a forceful argument against lynching that brought her work to the center of a transatlantic discourse on race, rights, and citizenship.

Wells in Britain, 1893-1894: Respectable Citizenship and the Case Against Racist Violence

After a nine-day trip aboard a steamship where she met a group of black medical missionaries headed for Western Africa, Wells finally arrived in Britain in late April 1893. She arrived at the beginning of an esteemed occasion occurring in and around London, the May Meetings.²⁰⁸ The May Meetings were the official gatherings of English philanthropic and political organizations where members of reform organizations held elections and

²⁰⁶ For more on the history and content of *Fraternity*, see Douglas Lorimer, "From Emancipation to Resistance: Colour, Class and Imperialism, 1837-1918," *Empire Online*, accessed May 30, 2010, <http://www.empire.amdigital.co.uk/essays/douglaslorimer> and Fryer, *Staying Power*, 278.

²⁰⁷ Peter Fryer has a longer biography of Edwards and discusses Edwards' role as one of the forefathers of Pan-African thought. See Fryer, *Staying Power*, 277-279. Wells featured prominently in *Fraternity* and the ways in which she influenced British reformers' thinking about lynching was apparent in letters and notices published in the newly created journal.

²⁰⁸ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 91-96; Caroline Bressy, *A Strange and Bitter Crop: Ida B. Wells's Anti-Lynching Tours, Britain 1893-1894 Centre for Capital Punishment Studies: Occasional Papers One* (2003), 8. Available online < www.westminster.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/.../Occasional_1.pdf > Accessed March 6, 2010.

reviewed the most important events of the past year.²⁰⁹ The gathering of Britain's most prominent and influential reformers offered Wells an excellent opportunity to bring her case to sympathetic and socially engaged audiences who were thinking about the connections between racist violence and evolving black political rights in the late nineteenth century. Reformers gathered in London and spent time visiting their friends and fellow reformers in neighboring cities.²¹⁰ Impey played a crucial role in Wells's ability to move around the British Isles' social circles, using her stature and connections to introduce Wells to broad audiences of newspaper editors and religious leaders.²¹¹ After an initial stop in Street, Somersetshire at Impey's home to recuperate from her voyage, Wells and Impey embarked for Scotland to begin her speaking tour at the home of Isabelle Mayo. Mayo, a humanitarian and philanthropist and celebrated author who published under the pseudonym Edward Garrett, had opened her home to East Indian migrants. When Wells arrived at Mayo's home, she was introduced to Dr. George Ferdinands of Ceylon, a dentist who had recently finished school and begun practicing in Aberdeen, as well as Ferdinands's sibling, a music teacher staying with Mayo while offering music lessons to students in town. Mayo's guests worked with Impey to publicize Wells's presence and to arrange meetings with Mayo's esteemed friends and colleagues. Ferdinands would prove to be an important member in SRBM and would later feature significantly in Wells's abrupt and early departure from the British Isles

²⁰⁹ For more on the May meetings see Bressy, "A Strange and Bitter Crop," 6-7; Giddings, *Ida, A Sword Among Lions*, 262-263.

²¹⁰ Of the meeting Wells remarked, "I was in London during what they call the May meetings, when all the religious and reform societies of Great Britain hold their annual conventions, and I had a hearing before many of them." "Against Lynching," *The Daily Inter-Ocean* (Chicago) August 4, 1894, IBW Papers, Box 8, Folder 10.

²¹¹ Wells *Crusade for Justice*, 91-96;

during her first tour. After several meetings in Scotland that Wells described as “successful,” she returned to England where she toured Newcastle, Birmingham and Manchester.²¹²

Overall, Wells received a very warm reception from audiences in Scotland and Britain. During her first trip, *The Manchester Guardian* referred to her as a “negro lady of great natural ability.”²¹³ Most were impressed by her presence and demeanor, and, most importantly, they were horrified to learn the harrowing details of violence inflicted upon African Americans by Southern whites. Even though many reformers seemed personally welcoming and open to Wells, she certainly had her work cut out for her. Accounts of lynching in the United States made their way to the British press in the nineteenth century. Small, regional dailies, as well as major national publications, relayed brutal accounts of lynching that occurred in the US. Journalists often framed these occurrences within existing ideas about American lawlessness and violence, referring to the happenings as “unusual atrocities” carried out in the “nether regions” of the US.²¹⁴ However, as lynching took on a more sinister, racial character in the decades after emancipation, British publications often uncritically repeated the justifications espoused within Southern publications claiming that whites had no options but to lynch African Americans, particularly African American males, in retaliation for sexual crimes or “outrages” committed against white women. In recounting

²¹² Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 83-102. While in Scotland, Wells visited Aberdeen, Huntly, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

²¹³ *Manchester Guardian*, undated notice, Ida B Wells Papers, Box 8, Folder 10, University of Chicago. This notice contains written notes from Wells’s daughter Alfreda Duster which indicates that this notice is from 1893. The positive response that many British people had toward people of African descent, particularly African Americans, is apparent in much of Frederick Douglass’ correspondence. For example in 1846, he wrote, “[i]t is quite an advantage to be a nigger here. I find I am hardly black enough for British taste, but by keeping my hair as wooly as possible I make out to pass for at least half Negro at any rate.” Frederick Douglass to Francis Jackson, January 24, 1846, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, 1:136 quoted in Waldo Martin *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 116.

²¹⁴ “Lynching in America,” *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, August 31, 1850, 6; William W. Stowe, *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-century American Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 5-12.

the lynching of Wesley Thomas in Georgia, one publication went on to quote, at length, directly from those in the lynching party, citing the “strong” evidence against Thomas.²¹⁵

The picture Wells painted of the United States impressed heavily upon her audiences. While England possessed many black and brown subjects throughout its empire, whites that lived in large cities, like London, did not have the same experience of living side by side with those of other races. While it certainly is not possible to argue that the English lacked racial prejudice, it is true that because of the limited presence of blacks in the metropole, most English people had very different the ideas about racial separation than Americans. The lack of an indigenous black population within Britain and the large and expansive nature of its empire resulted in different types of racial anxieties that did not necessarily encompass fears of physical proximity and political and economic competition. The tendency toward public segregation that existed in America struck members of her British audiences not only as curious, but as also fundamentally unjust, especially in light of the privileges of citizenship granted to African Americans after the Civil War. Refusing to allow black Americans to worship in the same churches especially offended many of the religious sensibilities of those in her audiences.²¹⁶

As this was Wells’s first tour abroad to speak in front of entirely new audiences, the content of her speeches came primarily from her publications as well as talks she gave while traveling in the northeastern United States. For instance, when the time came to give her first speech in Mayo’s home in Scotland, she chose to base her talk on the Lyric Hall address that

²¹⁵ “Lynching in America,” *Trewman’s Exter Flying Post*, February 1889; William Stowe, *Going Abroad*, 87-89.

²¹⁶ Celestine Edwards, “Unity Our Aim,” *Fraternity*, July 1893; Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 69-76. Holton goes on in her essay to explain that with the rise of scientific racism, white reformers in Britain developed an idea about differentiation among blacks believing that some were more civilized and advanced than others. See Holton, “Segregation, Racism and White Women Reformers,” 16-18. Ware uses a similar argument to differentiate between the worldview of Willard and Impey. Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, 182-187.

had garnered her so much attention in New York.²¹⁷ Although many were outraged by the brutal scenes of violence she recounted, some in Wells's attendance were skeptical of the relevance that such facts had to the British public. On May 12, 1893 a councilor submitted a brief editorial to the *Birmingham Daily Post* expressing his skepticism toward Wells and her campaign:

...what possible practical object can be attained by such meetings? I have no wish to disparage the zeal or to question the motives of a lady who, having been I presume ill treated by a Tennessee mob, has come four thousand miles to raise a question which could be dealt with effectually only on the spot....I protest against being expected to give my attention to matters of municipal detail in a civilised country at a great distance, any interference with which by English people would be an impertinence.²¹⁸

A few days later, having read the Councilor's editorial, Wells responded by situating the act of lynching within the much larger context of the assault on black people and their rights since emancipation. Lynching was not just a series of isolated acts of violence that could be solved by local law enforcement, but was rather the result of a systematic breakdown of law and order throughout the US South—a breakdown that was meant to nullify the Constitutional amendments put in place to protect the rights of African Americans and reinstitute the social order that existed under slavery. Wells asserted that the Councilor was wrong to think that the issue could be treated as a “municipal matter,” as those white Southerners who engaged in lynching African Americans had no regard for the legal system, especially in regard to the lives and liberties of African Americans:

²¹⁷ Of her appearance in Mayo's home, Wells said, “[w]hen introduced to speak, I told the same heart-stirring episodes which first gained for me the sympathy and good will of my New York friends. The facts I related were enough of themselves to arrest and hold the attention. They needed no embellishment, no oratory from me.” Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 90.

²¹⁸ “A Wearied Councillor's Protest,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, May 12/16, 1893. Ida B Wells Papers, Box 8, Folder 10, University of Chicago.

Resentment because of the freedom and citizenship of the Negro race has been continually shown by Southern whites. In the ten years succeeding the civil war thousands of Negroes were murdered for the crime of casting the ballot, and their vote is entirely nullified throughout the entire South.²¹⁹

In many ways, Wells wrestled with how to present her case to audiences about the horrors of lynching. Even though black clubwomen had provided Wells her first opportunities to speak to large audiences, Wells was still refining her voice as a public speaker, and she expressed some trepidation about how best to address her audiences abroad.²²⁰ Wells wanted to do more than just elicit a visceral response from her audience to the gruesome spectacle of lynching. Instead, in making her case, Wells endeavored to use appeals against racial violence to espouse broader ideas about social and political reform. She understood that it was key to ground brutal acts of racist violence empirically within a larger emergent system of social, political, and economic oppression occurring in the United States.²²¹

Central to Wells's argument was an articulation of the ways that socially and politically oppressive practices in the United States impeded the potential that lay within emancipation for African Americans. The horrors and injustices of lynching came not only from grotesque rituals of the crimes themselves, but also from the total breakdown in state and federal protections for the safety and rights of African Americans—a fact that left every aspect of black life vulnerable to exploitation by whites. Wells explained:

I began by telling of conditions in the South since the Civil War, Jim Crow laws, ballot-box intimidation, and laws against intermarriage. I told how in spite of such laws to prevent the mixing of the races, the white race has so bleached the Afro-Americans that a race of mulattoes, quadroons, and octoroons had grown up within the race, and that such laws put a premium on

²¹⁹ Ida B. Wells, "Lynch Law in the United States," *Birmingham Daily Post*, May 16, 1893. Ida B. Wells Papers, Box 8, Folder 10, University of Chicago.

²²⁰ "I had been a writer, both as a correspondent and editor, for several years. I had for some little reputation as an essayist from schoolgirl days, and had recited many times in public recitation which I had committed to memory. In canvassing for my paper I had made talks asking for subscriptions. But this was the first time I had ever been called on to deliver an honest-to-goodness address." Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 79.

²²¹ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 95-102.

immorality. I also told of the cruel physical atrocities vented upon my race, and of the failure of the whites to allow a fair trial to any accused.²²²

Wells understood intimately the dire need of such guaranteed state and federal protections. In May 1884, as Wells was riding the train back to Memphis to begin a new year of teaching, she was forcibly thrown off the train by the conductor and two male passengers for sitting in the ladies car instead of the smoking car which was the de facto segregated car for African Americans. When the Civil Rights Act—a Radical Reconstruction measure that outlawed discrimination of African Americans in public accommodations—was declared unconstitutional, it opened the door for white Southerners to redraw the color line that once existed under slavery. Railroad cars were one of the first terrains that saw the expansion of Jim Crow.²²³

After initially winning her case against Chesapeake and Ohio and Southwestern Railroad, Wells's victory was overturned by the Tennessee State Supreme Court. The court believed that Wells's sole intention was to cause a spectacle that would lead to a lawsuit. It was not long after her court case that Wells understood the significance of the court nullifying her victory against the railroad company:

It was the first case in which a colored plaintiff in the South had appealed to a state court since the repeal of the Civil Rights Bill by the United States Supreme Court. The gist of that decision was that Negroes were not wards of the nation but citizens of the individual states and should therefore appeal to the state courts for justice instead of to the federal court. The success of my case would have set a precedent which others would doubtless have followed.²²⁴

²²² Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 90-91.

²²³ Ida B Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 17-20; Lawrence Goldstone, *Inherently Unequal: The Betrayal of Equal Rights by the Supreme Court, 1865-1903* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2011), 118-130; Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 23-34.

²²⁴ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 20.

Without the check of federal power, Southern states were free to roll back the progress of Radical Reconstruction—instituting racial segregation in the public sphere and denying black Southerners the rights of citizenship that had been guaranteed by the Reconstruction Amendments. Wells experienced firsthand white Southerners' attempts to deny her the guarantees of citizenship and relegate her along with other blacks to a citizenship void in which their rights were determined by the whims of the white former slaveholding class.²²⁵ For Wells, the privileges of citizenship were meaningless without a robust, national government that fought the excesses of individual self-interests and rose to respond to the violent denial of the rights of African Americans.

Wells refused to make the case against lynching by proclaiming that African Americans deserved special treatment; rather, her plea was for the respect of law and order, which had completely broken down in the South after the end of the Civil War. Wells proclaimed several times during her tour that whites would justify lynching even as they controlled all of the legal and political institutions that could have punished blacks for crimes within the bounds of the law:

This was done by white men who controlled all the forces of law and order in their communities and who could have legally punished rapists and murderers, especially black men who had neither political power nor financial strength with which to evade any justly deserved fate.²²⁶

²²⁵ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 115-119. States' ability to nullify the guarantees of Emancipation and the Reconstruction Amendments was a point that Wells wanted to make crystal clear for her audiences. Wells's experience in Britain drove home for her the importance of including the section on Jim Crow and white Southerner's attempts to nullify blacks' rights to vote in the states in a pamphlet she published along with Frederick Douglass for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. This is clear in a letter Wells wrote to fellow activist and support Albion Tourgee: "The English people do not understand how state governments can thus nullify the National Constitution regarding the right to vote. It is very necessary that this be made clear and I know no one with the date and the ability and the zeal for the pamphlet, all rolled in one who could help me." Wells to Judge A. W. Tourgee, July 1, 1893 box 10, folder 6, Ida B. Wells Papers, University of Chicago. It is almost important to note that this was also a point of view that Wells shared with one of major supporters, T. Thomas Fortune. Fortune said, "As far as the colored people are concerned the administration of justice in the South is one of the most finely spun farces ever enacted in the name of civil liberty." Fortune writing for *The New York Age* quoted in *Anti-Caste*, December 1888.

²²⁶ Wells *Crusade for Justice*, 70.

Wells realized that the masses of her British audiences had several misconceptions about post-emancipation race relations in America. Many British reformers believed that the Civil War and Emancipation had been the end of racial strife in America and that while relations between the races may not have been ideal, the Constitution and the emancipation amendments had provided the Negro with all that he or she needed to protect them from injustice.²²⁷

Part of her mission would be to expose to these reformers that race prejudice was alive and well and that whites had found ways in the wake of emancipation to thwart the efforts of African Americans. Lynching, rather than being an aberration, was part of a larger system of oppression meant not only to terrorize Negroes but also to eliminate blacks from social, political, and economic life in their communities and to continue the social order that existed under slavery. Detailing the development of Jim Crow segregation—literacy tests, segregated street cars and the refusal to allow blacks to worship in the same churches—was just as much a part of Wells’s appeal to her audiences as was the physical brutality of lynching.²²⁸

As a result of this breakdown in law and order of the Southern United States and the refusal of white leaders to address this racist violence, Wells argued that blacks had nowhere else to turn but to Great Britain:

The pulpit and press of our own country remain silent on these continued outrages; the voice of my race, thus tortured and outraged, wherever lifted in America in a demand for justice is stifled or ignored. It is to the religious and

²²⁷ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 115-119, Wells to Judge A. W. Tourgee, July 1, 1893, Wells Papers, box 10, folder 6; Wells, *The Red Record*, 129-138; Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, 168-175; Frederick Cooper, Thomas Holt and Rebecca Scott have noted the contested terrain of citizenship and inclusive rights in the late nineteenth century Atlantic World, Cooper, Holt, and Scott, *Beyond Slavery*, 13.

²²⁸ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 83-102; “Lynch Law Becoming More Common,” *Fraternity* vol. 6, no 4. October 15, 1893, 1; “High and Low Treated Alike: A Wealthy Afro-American Not Allowed to Occupy His Summer Home,” *Fraternity* vol.1, no 3, September 15, 1893, 11; “Tortured and Burnt,” *Fraternity* vol. 1, no. 2, August 1893, 4.

moral sentiment of Great Britain we turn. These can arouse the public sentiment of America so necessary for the enforcement of law....America cannot and will not ignore the voice of a nation that is her superior in civilization, which makes this demand in the name of justice and humanity.²²⁹

This was typical of the rhetorical strategy that Wells engaged in during her tour of the British Isles. Wells was the perfect compliment to a British humanitarian movement that was desperately searching for relevance in a world that had begun to question the prudence of abolition and citizenship rights for colonized peoples. In one of the earliest issues of *Anti-Caste*, Impey lamented that the once powerful abolitionist movement, which had brought the world's attention to the horrors of slavery and injustices of racial caste, had withered in the shadows of "drink, impurity, militarism" and endless other evils demanding attention and remedy from the world's humanitarians. Wells's anti-lynching campaign proved the continuing relevance of the concerns that animated the abolitionist (anti-racist, anti-imperialist) movement and its supporters.²³⁰

Wells's criticism of America's indifference to racial violence placed her within a discourse in Britain that was highly skeptical of the American government's ability to check the lawlessness of an uncivilized frontier mentality within the United States. For much of the nineteenth century, the idea of the United States as a lawless frontier overrun by self-interested ruffians dominated much of the British popular imagination about its former

²²⁹ Ida B. Wells, "Lynch Law in the United States," *Birmingham Daily Post*, May 16, 1893. Ida B. Wells Papers, Box 8, Folder 10, University of Chicago.

²³⁰ *Anti-Caste* vol. 1, no. 1 (March 1888): 1. There is also an extensive literature that deals with the issues that plagued the transnational abolitionist movement and led to a decline in popularity in subsequent decades, issues that included everything from compassion fatigue, poor Anglo-American cooperation, and the limitations of building formal, lasting institutions. See, Betty Fladeland, *Men and Brothers: Anglo-American Antislavery Cooperation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972); Christine Bolt, *The Anti-Slavery Movement and Reconstruction: A Study in Anglo-American Co-Operation, 1833-77* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); Howard Temperley, *British Antislavery, 1833-1870* (London: Longman, 1972); Clare Taylor, ed., *British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974); R. J. M. Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983).

colony. Literary depictions of the American Wild West were extremely popular throughout much of Britain and in many ways played into a national rivalry based in competing ideas of civilizational advancement and moral refinement.²³¹ The lynching of African Americans fit well within this existing idea of the United States and reaffirmed for many Britons what they already believed about the US—that it was a nation addicted to brutal, arbitrary violence. In 1891, Edward Wakefield published an article entitled “The Brand of Cain in the Great Republic,” in the *Contemporary Review*, which was England’s most widely read and respected journal during the period.²³² Wakefield, argued that the United States was overrun with lawlessness, disrespect for human life, and more murders than any country in the world. The reason for such reprehensible behavior, according to Wakefield was threefold: 1) slavery, which served to de-sensitize most of the nation to brutal violence and human suffering, 2) the Civil War, another event which served to de-sensitize the nation to violence, valorized brutality, and left an irreparable rift between the two sides of the nation: North and South and 3) a weak centralized government that was impotent when it came to policing violent acts. In making his case, Wakefield dedicated the final one-third of the essay to lynching, citing white Southerners’ complete disrespect and distrust of the law and the failure of state and federal governments to prohibit such violence. He argued that while lynching may have begun as a form of frontier violence for populations far from effective law enforcement, the act had grown into a “lawless system” and an expression of “mob anxieties,

²³¹ Ian Tyrrell, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective Since 1789* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 109. See Tyrrell’s discussion of the export of American culture in the late nineteenth-century and the appeal of depictions of the American Wild West. William Stowe also notes that “Until very late in the century the United States was widely believed to lack...traditions, glamour, polish and culture.” Stowe, *Going Abroad*, 5.

²³² Wakefield was the nephew of Edward Gibbon Wakefield the founder of New Zealand. Wakefield traveled the world interested in the development of young countries and spent several years in the United States in the 1880s. In 1889 he published the book *New Zealand After Fifty Years* (New York and London: Cassell and Company, 1889).

passions and racial hatred.” More than any other institution, lynching, he declared jeopardized America’s standing as a civilized country.²³³

Buttressed by logistical and financial support from a small community of British humanitarians, Wells both participated in and constructed a transatlantic discourse on obligations of the state, race, national belonging, and citizenship. Catherine Impey and other British reformers looked optimistically toward the freedom experiment that occurred in the United States after abolition. Acts of racial violence not only jeopardized humanitarians goal of the civilizing mission, but gruesome acts, such as lynching, also fostered severe anxieties about the possibilities of emancipation and the expansion of the privileges of citizenship and democracy. British humanitarians cared about the status of emancipated African Americans not only because of their longstanding involvement in the abolitionist movement but also because of what America’s freedom experiment portended for Britain’s own negotiation of race and citizenship in the context of colonial empire.²³⁴

Impey’s uncle, John Bright, in his own writings indicated that, in the wake of the Civil War, the United States represented a symbol of hope for those fighting for social and political reforms, especially as they pertained to race:

²³³ Edward Wakefield, “The Brand of Cain in the Great Republic,” *Contemporary Review* 60 (July/Dec. 1891) 760. Wakefield’s essay was widely reviewed throughout English speaking journals and applauded for its conclusions. Warren P. Spaulding of the *Cambridge Tribune* referred to Wakefield’s essay as “startling,” and “remarkable.” “The Brand of Cain: Mr. Warren P. Spaulding of this city, Secretary of the Massachusetts Prison Association, Writes on Crime,” *Cambridge Tribune* 15, no. 24, August 20, 1892: 5. See also “The Brand of Cain,” (Review) in *Public Opinion* (Washington, DC and New York: The Public Opinion Company, 1892). Michael Monahan noted that Wakefield’s essay dominated English press throughout much of the 1890s. See Monahan, *New Adventures* (New York: George H. Doran Company 1917), 32-34.

²³⁴ Holton, “Segregation, Racism, and White Women Reformers,” 10-11; Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 35-43. Several scholars have documented the ways in which the late nineteenth-century concern for African American Civil Rights was part of a continuation of longstanding abolitionist networks. See especially, Claire Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Douglas Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth-century* (Leicester, UK: Leicester University Press, 1978); Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

I see one vast confederacy stretching from the frozen North in unbroken line to the glowing South, and from the wild billows of the Atlantic, Westward to the calmer waters of the Pacific...and I see one people, and one law, and one language and one faith, and over all that wide continent the home of freedom, and a refuge for the oppressed of every race and clime.²³⁵

Impey frequently expressed anger with white settlers throughout the British Empire who were attempting to define separate rules of treatment for themselves and for native peoples—a system that gave whites supremacy and relegated non-whites to non-citizenship, violence reprisals, and unjust treatment before the law.²³⁶ White violence presented the primary challenge of the empire, Impey decried, “to contemplate the torrent of violence and wrong let loose by the impatience of the strong upon the weaker portions of our human family, is at times almost overwhelming. The evil is so vast, how can it be stayed?”²³⁷ Impey frequently saw the problem of race in Britain and the United States as part of a common project, in which the radical denunciations of white violence accompanied by calls for a robust state to protect the rights and safety of the oppressed, were key.

Gail Bederman has argued that Wells used the brutal and horrific acts of lynching to question the civilization of the United States, and this was certainly a component of Wells’s strategy while abroad. However, at the same time, Wells was also activating a discourse clarifying the ways in which racial violence jeopardized Great Britain and the British empire’s claims to moral superiority. The ways in which Wells’s claims dovetailed with a controversy from the antipodes illustrates this point.²³⁸

²³⁵ John Bright quoted in Blackett, *Divided Liberty*, 17.

²³⁶ “Race Prejudice in India,” *Anti-Caste*, June 1888.

²³⁷ “The Editor’s New Year’s Address, Report of Progress, &c,” *Anti-Caste*, January 1891.

²³⁸ Queensland, a British territory, regulated all of the territory’s overseas commerce including the recruitment of laborers from the neighboring South Sea Islands to work in the sugar plantation industry. Members of parliament with strong ties to the abolitionist movement had been successful in implementing tough restrictions on the recruitment of laborers in order to prevent abuse, including requiring that no families would be separated and that only married women accompanied by their husbands could be transported for labor. For more on what was referred to as the “Kanakan labor traffic,” see Martin Weiner, *Empire on Trial: Race, Murder, and Justice*

In late 1894, reports emerged that the captain and ship's crew of the *William Manson*—a transport plying the territory between Queensland and various South Sea Islands—had raped and terrorized several laborers aboard the ship. Female laborers told members of their communities about the abuse and they threatened to report the abuse they endured onboard to British missionaries. In response, the ship's crew, led by the captain, brutalized and tortured several of the laborers, ultimately killing two men on board. This incident was sensationalized in the British press and became a cause célèbre among missionaries.²³⁹

Impey's treatment of this incident in *Anti-Caste* emphasized young female laborers' vulnerability to sexual attack by white men. As Impey wrote about the incident, she questioned whether Queensland's treatment of these "Kanaka" laborers meant that the territory was unfit to exist as a British colony.²⁴⁰ At its heart, Impey argued, that the same standard applied to American race relations and slavery had to be applied to British territories, "[colonization of territories] must be judged as was American slavery, not by its behavior under stringently enforced regulations and pattern masters, but by its actual working in thinly populated colonies and exceptionally unscrupulous planters."²⁴¹

In the same way that British reformers were outraged by the destruction of families, acts of brutal violence used against South Sea Island laborers, and the sexual violation of female laborers, Wells sought to paint a similar picture of what was occurring in the United States.

Under British Rule, 1870-1935 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 39-70; E. W. Docker, *The Blackbirders: The Recruiting of South Seas Labour for Queensland, 1863-1907* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1971).

²³⁹ "The Queensland Labour Trade: The Case of the William Manson," *The Sydney Mail*, November 24, 1894; "The William Manson Case," *The Brisbane Courier*, April 10, 1895; "The William Manson Case in the House of Commons," *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, July 19, 1895; Catherine Impey, "The Editor's Annual Address," *Anti-Caste*, March 1895; Impey, "The Kanaka Traffic and Its Fruits: Is It Worthy of a British Colony," *Anti-Caste*, June-July, 1895; Impey, "Striking at the Root," *Anti-Caste*, June-July, 1895.

²⁴⁰ Catherine Impey, "The Editor's Annual Address," *Anti-Caste*, March 1895; Impey, "The Kanaka Traffic and Its Fruits: Is It Worthy of a British Colony," *Anti-Caste*, June-July, 1895; Impey, "Striking at the Root," *Anti-Caste*, June-July, 1895.

²⁴¹ Catherine Impey, "Kanaka Question," *Anti-Caste*, December 1892.

Wells understood that the power of white supremacy centered on myths perpetuated about the behavior and nature of black Americans, but in reality, it was whites themselves who most exhibited the violent, lascivious, and uncivilized behavior they purportedly feared most. White supremacy cloaked and justified the worst behavior of white Americans.

Unfortunately for Wells, her first trip to England was cut short by a major falling out between her benefactors, Impey and Mayo. Impey, in perhaps a moment of weakness or at least poor judgment, addressed a letter professing her love to Dr. Ferdinands, Mayo's beneficiary and houseguest. Sure that he felt the same way, Impey advised the much younger Ferdinands of her intention to inform her family of their impending nuptials. Unsettled and bewildered by her action, Ferdinands immediately took Impey's letter to Isabella Mayo. In Mayo's estimation, Impey's actions violated the maternalistic ethos that pervaded the British female reform community. Mayo declared that it was predatory and beneath her to act in this manner, and Mayo believed that Impey was the kind of woman who only engaged in reform work in order to have sexual relationships with men of other races. This was a devastating charge and a major embarrassment within the reform community for Impey. Mayo and Impey's relationship never recovered, and Mayo issued a warning to Wells telling her that she would not continue receiving support from her if she continued to associate with Impey. Appreciative of Impey's efforts to make her European sojourn possible in the first place, Wells refused to turn her back on the now embattled Impey. However, without Mayo's backing, the financial support for her trip lost considerable momentum, and Wells soon returned home.²⁴²

²⁴² Catherine Impey to Albion Tourgee, June 23, 1893. Albion Tourgee Papers, CCHS. See Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, 190-196, and Giddings, *Ida, A Sword Among Lions*, 262-264 for further accounts of what occurred between Impey, Mayo, and Ferdinands.

The falling out between Impey and her colleague caused significant restructuring in SRBM at the behest of Isabelle Mayo. Mayo worked diligently to blackball Impey from the organization and its work; as a result, Impey was forced to stop the publication of *Anti-Caste*.²⁴³ After some time passed following Mayo's efforts to blacklist Impey, Wells returned to Britain within the year. Wells and Celestine Edwards, the editor of *Fraternity*, along with others within SRBM, were not willing to shun Impey because of her indiscretions. Despite Mayo's attempts to ostracize and expel her, Impey worked along with Edwards to arrange for Wells to return to England. With Impey ostracized, however, Edwards took the lead in gathering the funds and support within the SRBM for Wells's second visit.²⁴⁴

Although Wells's first trip ended in calamity, she remained resolved to return and continue her work. Despite Mayo's efforts to ostracize her, Impey continued to work behind the scenes to build interest and support for Wells's return. Celestine Edwards, the editor of *Fraternity*, supported Impey's efforts to prepare for another visit from Wells. During her second transatlantic campaign, Wells managed to expand her presence, broaden the circle of reformers participating in her radical political discourse against racial violence, and ensnare one of the most visible American reformers in the world at the time, Frances Willard, in a very public debate about horrors of lynching.

²⁴³ Catherine Impey to Albion Tourgee, June 23, 1893. Albion Tourgee Papers, CCHS. In the time since her last trip to England, Wells had plenty to keep her busy, returning to the lecture circuit in the United States, as well as protesting the World's Fair refusal to include African Americans in its exhibits in any other way than just a cursory fashion. Wells certainly welcomed this second trip believing that she had been cut short in her efforts because of the falling out between Impey and Mayo. In the time since her last visit, Wells had maintained her relationship with Catherine Impey much to the consternation of Isabella Mayo. When Mayo learned that Wells again refused to cut ties with Impey, Mayo along with supporters in SRBM cut off all financial support to Wells. Wells did not learn about this, which meant that she arrived in England without financial support and disconnected from many in the reform community who would have made up her audience.

²⁴⁴ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 124, 141-142.

Wells's Second British Tour: The Maturation of Transatlantic Anti-Lynching

The following year, Wells returned to Britain once again during the May Meetings. During this nearly six month-long visit, she addressed thirty-five meetings of prominent social and religious organizations, including the Women's Protestant Union, the Pioneer Club, the Protestant Alliance, and the congregation of the Unitarian Chapel.²⁴⁵ A mark of her growing influence was the presence of the issue of lynching and racial violence in the agenda of prominent humanitarian and religious organizations. For instance, the Friends (Quaker) meeting chose to discuss the issue of lynching along with a discussion of pressuring countries where slavery still persisted.²⁴⁶ *The Daily News* reported after her address to the congregation of the Unitarian Chapel on Little Portland Street in London that those in attendance were eager to pass the following resolution after hearing Wells's remarks:

This meeting of regular and occasional worshippers in Little Portland Street Chapel desires to express its abhorrence of the barbarities perpetuated in the Southern States of America under the name of Lynch Law, and to appeal to all lovers of justice in the United States to obtain the equal protection of the law, and the recognition of common human rights for all their fellow citizens.²⁴⁷

Wells continued to build a strong case for enhanced protection for African Americans and she further expanded her circle of radical allies. An important addition to her second trip—and an indication of her growing influence in Britain—was her introduction to the Rev. Charles F. Aked, head of the First Congregational Church in England, and one of Britain's most popular and respected young preachers and lecturers.²⁴⁸ Aked had long been an active member of Britain's reform community, working on behalf of several moral and cultural

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 125-136.

²⁴⁶ *The Christian World*, May 19, 1894.

²⁴⁷ *The Daily News*, May 28, 1894.

²⁴⁸ Wells referred to Aked as "the most influential and popular preacher in Liverpool," Wells *Crusade for Justice*, 126. Aked would eventually move to the United States and become the pastor of Fifth Avenue Baptist Church in New York, NY. "Dr. Charles F. Aked," Civil Forum Lecture Bureau, accessed online <src.lib.uiowa.edu/traveling-culture/.../aked/1/brochure.pdf> Accessed January 21, 2012.

issues, such as temperance reform. It was after a trip to the World's Fair in Chicago that Aked became engaged in the battle against lynching in the United States.²⁴⁹ In June 1894, Rev. Aked who hosted Wells during her second trip published an article in the *Contemporary Review* entitled "The Race Problem in America." Focusing on more than just the lynching of African Americans, the article sought to impart to its readers knowledge of how the scourge of slavery and racist injustice had degraded the entire South and left the region with a complete disregard for the law, morality, and fairness:

Slavery degraded the negro, cramped his mind and brutalised his spirit; but slavery degraded the white man more....the Southern white man has yet to be emancipated from his bondage to a narrow caste-spirit, and insolent pride of color, a callous indifference to mortal suffering, and even a ferocious delight in it infliction.²⁵⁰

Aked went on to explain how Southern whites had stripped blacks of the vote in the years after emancipation and also conspired to degrade blacks through public segregation, anti-miscegenation laws, and a corrupt convict lease system. Aked's article received widespread attention, even spurring the publication of articles about lynching in the prominent English journals, *Economist*, and the *Spectator*.²⁵¹ It was an important endorsement of Wells's campaign even though he did not mention Wells by name. Aked's article effectively moved Wells's cause and most importantly the arguments she made against the atrocity of lynching, to the center of the mainstream press in Britain.²⁵² Aked also supported one of Wells's most controversial claims about the complicity of white women in this form of brutal violence. Aked noted that white women willingly engaged in romantic relationships with black men, and had done so since slavery. In most cases, Aked argued, black men were being tortured

²⁴⁹ Wells *Crusade for Justice*, 126-130.

²⁵⁰ C. F. Aked, "The Race Problem in America," *Contemporary Review* 65 (January-June 1894), 818.

²⁵¹ Silkey, "Redirecting the Tide of White Imperialism," 104-108.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

and brutalized for sexual relationships that white women willfully engaged in yet wished to save their names once being discovered.²⁵³ As a white man, Aked possessed the discursive space in which he could challenge dominant understandings of white womanhood and white female purity with authority. It was an important endorsement of Wells's argument; the fact that he made it without her name served to make it even more mainstream.

Even though Aked was now a close supporter of Wells and her campaign, he at first expressed some hesitancy about the good sense of engaging with Wells and supporting her cause in Britain. In an early edition of *Fraternity*, Aked recalled a trip to the United States and a conversation with a black waiter at a hotel in Rochester, N.Y. Aked was impressed by the opinionated and passionate young waiter's views about the race problem and lynching in America:

I talked to him about Miss Ida B Wells...and when I told him that the desire was expressed that she should speak on the Sunday night to my congregation, but that I was sure neither of her facts nor of the wisdom of British interference, he argued fervently and earnestly in favour of a demonstration of British sympathy with the coloured man.²⁵⁴

As a result Aked was keen to receive a letter of introduction to Wells from Frederick Douglass. He felt this was necessary to validate her presence before his congregation and also made him feel more comfortable endorsing her position throughout England. Aked waited until the last moment to request this letter, and the inconvenience placed much strain on Wells's relationship with Douglass.²⁵⁵ Douglass's tone with Wells concerning the letter was cold and patronizing; he was clearly annoyed with the last-minute request and thought it reflected badly upon Wells's timing and preparedness. In her autobiography, Wells heaped a

²⁵³ Aked, "The Race Problem in America," 822, 826.

²⁵⁴ Editorial, *Fraternity*, August 1893.

²⁵⁵ Ida B. Wells to Frederick Douglass, March 18, 1894, Ida B. Wells Papers, University of Chicago

tremendous amount of praise upon Douglass and she credited him for his support early in her career. Never once did she mention this disagreement with Douglass, but it was clear in her letters that she was devastated by Douglass's rebuke.²⁵⁶ Douglass eventually wrote a letter for Wells endorsing her personally as well as her campaign, and her relationship with the larger reform community in Britain moved along successfully as a result.²⁵⁷ Despite Aked's early hesitation to work with Wells they developed an extremely close working and personal relationship.²⁵⁸

Wells remarked of her tour of England that she experienced very few—if any—instances of racial animosity, which in turn made her think very highly of the country and led her to contrast it with her experiences in the US. Wells's experience of acceptance in England was not a true depiction of Britain's relationship with racial difference and rather served to obscure Britain's relationship to racial difference and racial animosity. Waldo E. Martin Jr., has argued that African Americans' proclamations of the absence of racial prejudice in Britain were often "shortsighted and wrongheaded" and failed to offer the same kind of critical analysis that of racial prejudice in Britain that African Americans displayed in the US.²⁵⁹ Despite their acceptance of Wells, these anti-imperialist reformers still believed in

²⁵⁶ The following in a letter from Wells to Douglass is telling, "[y]our letter which I received this morning has hurt me cruelly. With the discouragements I have received and the time and money I have sacrificed to the work, I have never felt so like giving up as since I received your very cool and cautious letter this morning, with its tone of distrust and its inference that I have not dealt truthfully with you." Ida Wells to Frederick Douglass, April 6, 1894, Ida B. Wells Papers, University of Chicago.

²⁵⁷ Frederick Douglass to Charles Aked, March 27, 1894. Ida B Wells Papers, University of Chicago; Ida B Wells to Frederick Douglass, April 6, 1894. Ida B Wells Papers, University of Chicago.

²⁵⁸ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, xxiii. Wells named her first son after Charles Aked and also mentioned in her autobiography and Aked and his wife's treatment of her during her second trip in 1894 greatly changed her views about white people's capacity for generosity and kindness.

²⁵⁹ "Like Douglass, they too evidently experienced Europe in a way that obscured its anti-black prejudice. Due to the unusual nature of his European reception and travels as a favorite of some of Europe's liberal and enlightened best, Douglass developed a skewed vision of Europeans and their racial attitudes and actions." Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass*, 115. Wells's estimation of racial prejudice in Britain reflected a similar kind of ignorance and shortsighted vision. In her prolific writing on Britain, Wells never mentioned any of Britain's violent imperial campaigns in the Sudan, India, or South Africa. She seemed to be solely interested

racial hierarchy and the burden of whites to uplift and civilize non-whites throughout the world. Wells failed to develop a critique of this attitude perhaps because of her own prejudice toward blacks in the diaspora, but most like because this benevolent attitude of British audiences worked in her favor for the campaign.

As a world leader in the moral force for the abolition of slavery, Wells believed England possessed the power and moral authority to condemn the United States for its treatment of African Americans. Asked why she chose to come to England for her campaign, Wells rejoined that the press and religious communities of the United States refused to give her a hearing:

The question has been asked by Americans why I come abroad to tell the race's grievances, and if more good might not be done in America? Unquestionably, if the same opportunity were afforded us to be heard, but we, as a race, cannot get a hearing in the United States...The press and pulpit of the country are practically silent with a silence which means encouragement.²⁶⁰

Wells's praise for England and its role in the abolitionist movement was not just simple admiration but also a conscious effort to tie her anti-lynching cause to the rhetoric of the expansive abolitionist movement throughout Britain. A major foundation of the argument against the continuation of slavery comprised moral outrage at the physical brutality of the institution, its destruction of black family life, the sexual vulnerability of black women to their white masters and the merciless denial of the spiritual enrichment of enslaved people. In making her case to British reformers, Wells used similar arguments about the impact of

in Britain for the moral authority it could potentially wield over the United States. In a sense this was a blind spot in Wells's own anti-racist, anti-imperialist critique. It also shows how Wells benefited from an existing relationship between American and British reform networks.

²⁶⁰ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 131.

lynching on African Americans and so it behooved her to call upon the rhetoric of the abolitionist movement.

Wells began to develop her argument linking her anti-lynching crusade to abolition in the United States, but it really was not until she reached England in the presence of such longstanding abolitionist legacies that this argument was fully developed.²⁶¹ In truth, abolitionist sentiment remained powerfully relevant in Britain in a way that it was not true of the United States in the latter part of the century. The overwhelming power of reconciliation between the North and the South and of nation-building efforts stunted some of the forces of abolition in the US.²⁶² In the United Kingdom, however, the torch of abolition shone brightly as British humanitarians worried about the continuance of slave trading in Northern Africa and the re-emergence of highly exploitative conditions in British colonies where planters and landowners relied heavily upon imported labor of non-white indigenous people.

Wells and Frances Willard: Wells's Anti-lynching Campaign Gains Further Import

Abroad

One of the most notable affairs to arise as a result of Wells's anti-lynching campaign abroad was a very protracted and very public disagreement between Wells and temperance campaign leader, Frances Willard. The event highlighted the unique way that national

²⁶¹ Giddings, *A Sword Among Lions*, 253-258.

²⁶² Nina Silber examines the proliferation of discourses in the post-Civil War era that praised Southern whites for their Anglo-Saxon racial purity. Silber argues that such discourses simultaneously questioned the prudence of going to war with the South and were part of a prominent anti-black, anti-abolitionist sentiment growing in the country in the aftermath of the War. See Silber, "'What Does America Need So Much as Americans?'" 245-251. For more on the continuing relevance of abolitionist pioneers in Britain, particularly the Priestman-Bright-Clark circle, see Holton, "Segregation, Racism and White Women Reformers," 5-9. Seymour Drescher has argued that the British abolitionist movement's ability to mass mobilize public sentiment afforded the movement power to shift its attention and efforts to other humanitarian issues in the later part of the century, see Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Leslie Bethel, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade: Britain, Brazil and the Slave Trade Question, 1807-1869* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

politics in the United States between white and black women reformers took an audience while both Wells and Willard were abroad. Suddenly, long extant tensions between prominent reformers—one white, one black— exploded before an international audience. Wells had long criticized the Christian and moral forces of the United States for not speaking out against lynching, and this played a key part of her appeal to British reformers. At the time that Wells visited England, Willard had spent nearly two years in the nation as a guest of Lady Henry Somerset of the British Women’s Temperance Movement, and Willard experienced great admiration and influence abroad, especially in England as a result of her work within the temperance movement.

An 1890 edition of the *New York Voice*, the official organ of the temperance movement, ran an interview of Willard. In the interview, Willard seemed to overlook the brutality and injustice of the act of lynching and instead perpetuated the myth of the physical and sexual threat black men posed to the women and young children of the South. Despite having two parents who were abolitionists, Willard was content to court new members by using racist language, while also excusing the lie that lynching was justified because of the crimes committed against women and children: “‘Better whiskey and more of it’ is the rallying cry of great, dark-faced mobs....The safety of [white] women, of childhood, of the home, is menaced in a thousand localities.”²⁶³

Wells recounted in her autobiography that many British reformers were often interested to know what Christian reformers in the United States had done to respond to the outrage of lynching. Many in Wells’s audiences were most interested to know what Willard, as well as the Rev. Dwight L. Moody, a popular American evangelist minister and founder of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, had done to protest and stop the outrages against black

²⁶³ “Miss Willard on the Political Puzzle of the South,” *The Voice* (New York), October 23, 1890.

Americans. Each time, Wells recounted in her memoir, she would inform her audiences that “the Christian and moral sentiment of my own country remained silent in the face of these mob outrages.” She continued:

My answer to these queries was that neither of those great exponents of Christianity in our country had ever spoken out in condemnation of lynching, but seemed on the contrary disposed to overlook that fashionable pastime of the South.²⁶⁴

After first making her charges against Moody and Willard during her initial trip to England, Wells learned that in the time since she was gone, her comments had created quite the controversy because of her audacity to speak ill against two highly revered leaders within the American and English reform communities. During her second trip in 1894, Wells came equipped with evidence against Moody and Willard and requested that *Fraternity* run the full text from Willard’s 1890 interview and also attach an editorial from Wells denouncing Moody and Willard for their failure to condemn lynching outrages in the United States.

In the article entitled “Mr. Moody and Miss Willard,” *Fraternity* highlighted some of the worst parts of Willard’s 1890 interview—sections in which Willard spoke apologetically for the South, absolving white Southerners for any blame for the state of race relations in the region, and further perpetuated the myth of the threat posed by black men by quoting what supposedly “the best people of the South” had told her.²⁶⁵ Wells also referenced the October 1890 meeting of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union meeting in Atlanta, which was the first time the organization met in the South. In *The Voice*, Willard declared how honored she was to hold the national meeting in Georgia and touted the prospects of spreading the work of the WCTU throughout the southern United States. Wells also pointed to Reverend

²⁶⁴ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 111-112.

²⁶⁵ “Mr. Moody and Miss Willard,” *Fraternity*, May 1894.

Moody's acquiescence to the segregation of his revival sermons in the Southern states, which served to validate Southern hatred toward African Americans.²⁶⁶ Wells concluded that both the public actions and statements of Willard and Moody represented a betrayal of everything they purported to represent.²⁶⁷

Prior to running the interview in *Fraternity*, Wells's friend and supporter, Florence Balgarnie, insisted that Wells inform Lady Henry Somerset of her intention to run the interview. Running such an interview about Willard—someone who held such a high reputation among European reform circles—while she was the guest of Ms. Somerset would have served a major blow to not only Willard's reputation, but Somerset's as well. Wells refused to speak to Somerset because she insisted that informing her of the article was Balgarnie's idea and not her own. As was suspected, Somerset did not warm to Wells's charges and vowed to ensure that Wells would not have another audience within Britain ever again.²⁶⁸ To a great extent this shows the esteem that Wells garnered not only within the British press, but also within British reform community. Wells's testimonies had greatly touched the hearts and minds of Great Britain's reform community and to run such an article was a great threat not only to Willard, but also to her host and benefactor, Somerset.

Wells's article required a substantial response. Two weeks later, the *Westminster Gazette*, a leading London daily newspaper, ran an interview with Willard—by none other than her host and benefactor, Lady Somerset. The interview sought to remind the public of Willard's long line of abolitionist pedigree and also sought to bring Wells's reputation and credibility into question. As Wells pointed out later in her autobiography, the interview in no way sought to challenge the fact of lynching or the statistics Wells presented to the British

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 201-203

public; instead, it sought to accuse Wells of race hatred. The interview referred to a May 10th interview in the *Westminster Gazette* where Wells began her comments by stating, “Taint, indeed! I tell you, if I have any taint to be ashamed of in myself, it is the taint of *white* blood!”²⁶⁹ Amazingly, while proclaiming that she never condoned the act of lynching but only heeded the word of “the best people...in the South” that the safety of women and children was at stake, Willard tried meekly to proclaim her support for Wells work abroad:

I think Miss Wells must be perfectly aware of my position...as from the first hour that I knew of her presence in this country I tried to help her, for I believe in the fraternity of nations and that we ought to help each other to a higher plane by mutual influence.²⁷⁰

Wells later rejected Willard’s attempt to portray herself as a friend to black Americans by citing Willard’s compliance to the racism of Southern whites as proof;

There is not a single colored woman admitted to the Southern W. C. T. U., but still Miss Willard blames the Negro for the defeat of prohibition in the South!²⁷¹

Wells imposed a critique of the violent actions of white Southerners that was political and economic, as well as gendered. One strategy that Wells used often to expose the contradictions and outright lies used by whites to justify lynching was to highlight the acts of violence committed against black women and children. An instance Wells used repeatedly in her writings and also while abroad involved the lynching of a young thirteen-year-old girl living in San Antonio, Texas. Accused of poisoning her employer, a furious mob forced the girl into a barrel in which nails were hammered into place. For more than half a mile they

²⁶⁹ “A Bitter Cry of Black America, A New ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin,’” *Westminster Gazette*, May 10, 1894, in Teresa Zackodnik, “Ida B. Wells and ‘American Atrocities’ in Britain” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 28, no.4 (July-August 2005), 268.

²⁷⁰ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 207. In the following lines of the interview, Somerset goes on to proclaim that it was Willard who convinced her to grant the podium to Wells during her first trip to Prince Hall and before the executive committee of the Women’s Liberal Federation. *Ibid.*, 207-208.

²⁷¹ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 209.

rolled the barrel, shrieking, hooting, and howling behind it. Once she was removed the barrel, what was left of her torn and ragged flesh was hanged from a tree.²⁷²

Further emphasizing the threat lynch mobs posed to black domestic space, Wells recounted the attempted lynching of Roseluis Julius in 1893. Julian shot and killed a white judge in New Orleans, Louisiana, due to a perceived insult to his wife. Julian escaped to the swamps before the white mob could ascertain his whereabouts. Unable to track down Julian, the mob “turned its attention to his unfortunate relatives.” A mob of twenty-five men arrested the six members of Julian’s family, including his mother and two sisters—and took them to jail. The following day three members of his family were hanged and the mob again returned to Julian’s community to terrorize his neighbors over his whereabouts.²⁷³

Wells also realized that British failures to understand post-emancipation life in America also extended to a misunderstanding of the purported justifications for lynching, namely the rape and brutalization of white women by black men. While most British reformers were outraged by the crime of lynching, some believed that it in fact occurred in response to real crimes committed by African Americans and African American men specifically. Wells had to explain that the violation of the chastity of white women was a myth used to justify violence against blacks. In her publications, as well as during her travels abroad, Wells deployed several strategies to change public opinion about the justifications for lynching; one way in particular was to highlight the lynching of black women. This is an important part of the way that Wells spoke in a black feminist voice, deploying a broader, more nuanced

²⁷² *Westminster Gazette*, May 10, 1894; *Inter-Ocean*, April 28 and May 19, 1894. Charles Aked subsequently used the same incident and others from Wells in his 1894 *Contemporary Review* essay, “*The Race Problem in America*,” 823-824.

²⁷³ Wells, *A Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States, 1892-1893-1894* printed in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900* ed. Jacqueline Jones Royster (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1997), 98-99.

critique that considered the impact of lynching on black women, black domesticity, and the black family as a whole. Perhaps better than any of her contemporaries at the time—who framed lynching in terms of its impact on men—Wells understood that within attacks on black men and justifications of lynching that venerated white womanhood, circulated many assumptions about black women.

Another important aspect of Wells's analysis was to turn the idea of innocent white womanhood on its head. In a vein similar to Cooper's in *A Voice from the South*, Wells had subverted dominant understandings of white womanhood and highlighted the complicity of white American women in much larger systems of oppression. Rather than depicting white women as innocent victims and bastions of pure, pious womanhood, Wells called attention to instances in which white women were facilitators of the crime—especially women who falsely accused black men in order to cover up their consensual, interracial relationships.²⁷⁴

By including vivid portrayals of violence committed against men, women, and children, Wells demonstrated lynching's impact not just upon black men, but also upon black families, and the sanctity of black domestic space as a whole. Depicting lynching in this way not only contradicted conventional wisdom about lynching, namely that it was inflicted upon black men as retribution for outrages of white women, but also showed lynching to be a barbaric and unjust act that disturbed the sanctity of black domestic life. This was a powerful rhetorical choice for Wells to make in the midst of her transatlantic campaign. Nineteenth century abolitionist discourses often declared that one of slavery's greatest and reprehensible evils comprised the disruption of black families and homes. The denial of safe domestic space for the nurturing of strong family bonds, particularly through the sexual violation of female slaves, was one of the most forceful and persuasive arguments made by abolitionists

²⁷⁴ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 127-142.

in both America and the United States.²⁷⁵ Given Wells's previous statements made connecting both the act of lynching and her transatlantic tour to the broader significance of the Emancipation and its aftermath, she must have undoubtedly understood the importance of making this argument to humanitarians of such well-established pedigrees.

Moreover, Wells accomplished two things with this argument that were directly relevant to her disagreement with Willard. By highlighting the ways that black families were the targets of lynching, Wells undermined the argument that Southerners' intentions with lynching were to serve retribution for the sexual violation of white women. This, in essence, also made it possible to hold white women responsible for their complicity within the crime of lynching itself—something that was only highlighted by Willard's unfortunate words in the British press.

Wells's construction of a racial and gendered critique of lynching reflected her consciousness as a black female reformer. Wells herself had proclaimed her anti-lynching campaign as the true beginning of the black clubwomen's movement in America. Wells has long been recognized for the attention she brought to black women and their experiences of lynching. Through her critique, Wells utilized a strong black feminist consciousness to repeatedly venerate the respectability of the black communities while calling into question the respectability of world renown reformers who refused to take a strong stance against racial violence.

The Woman's Era Journal, founded in 1894 by Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin and the official organ of the national black club women's movement, not only followed Wells's tour abroad closely, but also spoke forcefully in support of Wells during her public dispute with

²⁷⁵ Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 99-106.

Willard. An open letter, written most likely by the editor of *The Woman's Era*, Florida Ridley, denounced Willard as “an apologist for lynching” and called on the reformer to speak adamantly against the crime. Even as the editors of *The Woman's Era* praised Willard for her work on behalf of temperance, the journal unequivocally expressed its support for Wells.²⁷⁶

The endorsement of Willard reflected the oftentimes precarious and dependent relationship that leaders with black reform communities had with white reformers. Many African Americans supported the temperance cause and did not want to risk losing the endorsement and support of their well-funded white colleagues. More than a year later, the dispute between Wells and Willard still plagued many black clubwomen, simply because a number of black clubwomen were actively involved in the W.C.T.U. When the Woman's Era Club of Boston called black women together to form the first truly national organization of black clubwomen, they included in their resolutions a statement of their unequivocal support for Wells and a clarification on their position toward the W.C.T.U:

Let it be understood that the editors of this paper stand by Mrs. Wells-Barnett squarely in her position on this matter and fully endorses her work....That this club believing the attitude taken by the W. C. T. U. is calculated to mislead foreigners as to the true state of affairs in the United States, calls upon representative colored women of the W. C. T. U. to be careful not to allow themselves to be included in the company of “apologists for lynch law,” but in the prosecution of their good work, let their loyalty to their race be *known*, not taken for granted.²⁷⁷

Wells's criticism of white womanhood was most apparent during her second tour in which she publicly indicted Frances Willard for condoning the act of lynching by reaffirming the rights of white Southerners to protect their women and children. Wells's public criticism of Willard was a major blow for white reformers in the United States, but her castigation of

²⁷⁶ “Apologists for Lynching,” *The Woman's Era*, June 1894; Fannie Barrier Williams, “Great Britain's Compliment to American Colored Women,” *The Woman's Era*, August 1894.

²⁷⁷ Editorial, “To the Women of the Country,” *The Woman's Era Journal*, August 1895.

Willard also played into her attempts to revamp British attitudes toward white womanhood. Willard's success and the credibility of the women's temperance movement partly extended from her ability to trade on discourses of womanhood, social purity, and other discourses which white women used as a justification for their entrance to the public sphere. While Willard portrayed herself as an example of (white) American womanhood to the world, her unwillingness to openly condemn the act of the lynching reinforced Wells's efforts to depict white women as facilitators of the crime of lynching.

Conclusion

Because Wells's anti-lynching campaign is one of the most detailed instances—through newspaper accounts, correspondence and personal diary entries—we have of an African American woman engaging with the late nineteenth-century anti-racist and anti-imperialist movement in Britain, Wells's experiences help us to uncover the nexus of the transatlantic cross-cultural movements against racism and violence in both Britain and the United States. As the objective of transnational history is to reveal and interpret the complex and multifaceted origins of social movements, which typically have only been credited to national developments, the importance of Wells's work with Impey, her argument with Willard, and the broader significance of her campaign cannot be overlooked.²⁷⁸ Wells brought attention to an issue of great importance by revealing lynching's embedment within turn-of-the-century, transatlantic developments. She also elucidated the ways both British and American reformers were in similar fashion struggling to find the meaning of citizenship within post-emancipation, imperial milieus.

²⁷⁸ Of national history, Thomas Bender argues, "Thinking of the global dimensions of a national history, historians must step outside of the national box—and return with new and richer explanations for national development....The nation cannot be its own context," *A Nation Among Nations*, 7.

Wells's strategy was to speak plainly, yet uncompromisingly, about the horror and the tragedy of lynching. She made no attempt to censor the lurid details of lynchings throughout the South, but rather she wanted the graphic details of lynchings to move her audience to moral outrage, followed by social and political action. Apparent in her writings was her intention to tell the story unemotionally, relying instead upon her audiences respect for the rule of law. Wells sought to make a case for African Americans as supporters rather than saboteurs of respectability and law and order. And while Wells's motivation for traveling to Britain, in part, had to do with her own willingness to acquiesce to notions of British superiority, there was also a sense in which Wells was participating in a global reconsideration of citizenship and the responsibilities of national governments. Part of the focus of this anti-imperialist movement of which Catherine Impey was a champion was to obtain laws and provisions to protect colonized people from exploitation and acts of cruelty. Within the United States, in the wake of emancipation, African Americans had been granted such rights, but still suffered from brutal acts of violence, disenfranchisement, and discrimination. This was terribly unsettling to these humanitarian reformers who pushed so ardently for civil rights as a way to improve the quality of life for colonial subjects. Therefore the situation in America drew their attention, but it also allowed Wells as an African American woman to define the contours of transnational discourses on race, citizenship and national belonging.

Chapter 3:
The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper II: The Radical Margins in Cooper's PhD Thesis at the Sorbonne

So it was that the price France paid for her attitude toward slavery was a disaster.
 —Anna Julia Cooper, *The Attitude of France Toward Slavery During the Revolution*

From this we may conclude that it behooves nations as well as men to do things at the very
 moment when they ought to be done.
 —W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade*

When Anna Julia Cooper reflected on the experience of obtaining her PhD during a special ceremony to celebrate this accomplishment at Howard University, she wanted her audience to understand the driving force that motivated her to complete her dissertation during very challenging time in her life:

I may say honestly and truthfully that my one aim is and has always been, so far as I may, to hold a torch for the children of a group too long exploited and too frequently disparaged in its struggling for the light.²⁷⁹

Cooper's dissertation, *The Attitude of France on the Question of Slavery Between 1789 and 1848* (1925), was part of the larger social and political project to which she had devoted nearly all of her life—the progress, uplift and enlightenment of her race. As a scholar and activist, Cooper theorized how racial exclusion limited the opportunities of oppressed and marginalized groups and hindered the just operation of political democracies. Cooper's

²⁷⁹ Anna Julia Cooper, *The Third Step (Autobiographical)*, 38. Undated. MSRC Box 23-4, Folder 37. This particular quote comes from the speech Cooper gave to Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority to celebrate the award of her doctoral degree. The event was held December 29, 1925. Dr. Alain Locke, the keynote speaker for the event to celebrate Cooper's achievement, likewise agreed that the social and political import of Cooper's intellectual/educational pursuits "would have beneficial effect upon the youth of the race." Louise Daniel Hutchinson, *Anna Julia Cooper: A Voice from the South* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 142.

solution to the nation's racial dilemma was cultural and racial pluralism—the idea that all people should be recognized for their contributions to the modern world. Cooper's accomplishment held great significance for black women, and African Americans more generally, and the place of her scholarship within her wide-ranging activism on race and racism deserves closer inspection. Through her graduate work, Cooper carved out a space for political engagement, as well as the articulation of a radical agenda that treated the agency and humanity of people of African descent as an empirical truth. The import of Cooper's graduate work went beyond her historiographical contribution on the French and Haitian Revolutions and included her own critique of the contemporary reality for people of African descent. Reflecting her lifelong commitment to social justice, Cooper's research became part of a canon of black intellectualism that utilized historical scholarship to address the modern-day dilemmas of race relations in not only the nation, but also the world.

Cooper was of course an accomplished writer long before completing her PhD in 1925. In her first publication, *A Voice from the South* (1892), she examined the global reach of southern American racism; she interrogated the imbrications of regional behaviors and identities with America's international and imperial agendas; she theorized that through American imperialism the racist attitudes of southern whites had expanded beyond their regional position and had become a deeply ingrained part of America's emergent national, international, *and* imperial identities.²⁸⁰ But perhaps most importantly, Cooper posited that America would also find the answers to its racial woes in the racial diversity of the South. Her dissertation (which I will refer to as *Slavery*) showed important growth and evolution of

²⁸⁰ For more on the idea of the global south and the global nature of southern racism see Harilaos Stecopoulos, *Reconstructing the World: Southern Fictions and U.S. Imperialism, 1898-1976* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008), 1-18 and Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn, eds. *Look Away! The U.S. South in New World Studies* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004).

these ideas. In *Slavery*, she used one of the world's most iconic revolutions to critique the West's unwillingness to abandon racial antipathy and its failure to live up to its own professions of freedom and equality. Although she had changed the subject of her analysis to France and its Caribbean possession of Saint Domingue, the American South remained ever-present in Cooper's dissertation as she drew connections between France's inaction on the issue of slavery—and the eventual loss of its colony through tumultuous revolution—to America's violent break with its tradition of slavery through the Civil War. Taken together, *Slavery* and *A Voice from the South* demonstrate a body of work committed to viewing race relations in a global context while simultaneously highlighting the importance of various international locations—regional, national, colonial—in understanding the role of race in emergent nationalism.

As a woman of the South and as an African American who came of age in the nadir of race relations in the US, Cooper was haunted by America's failure to actualize the potentialities of emancipation and Reconstruction. She saw these failures not as the result of national particularity but rather as a reflection of the eternal predicament that race presented to modern societies. By shifting the temporal and spatial scale of her analysis in her dissertation, Cooper globally reconfigured the long shadow of the failures of emancipation and Reconstruction, while also elaborating on the regional and national themes (southern racism and national apathy) that preoccupied her work and activism. In Cooper's final analysis, the French Revolution ceased to be a triumphant narrative about the birth of a modern democratic republic and became instead a lamentable tale about the ways that

domestic attitudes toward race and citizenship were fomented within transnational networks of imperial power.²⁸¹

The geographies and intellectual context of Cooper's dissertation is also critically important. Cooper wrote and defended *Slavery* at the Sorbonne in Paris among a cadre of black scholars, artists, and activists who were equally emboldened by a post WWI imperial moment in which the self-determination of colonized peoples was eschewed in favor of a globalized unity among white Euro-American equals.²⁸² Cooper's cosmopolitanism—in terms of her studies and her travels—gave her a heightened sense of awareness about the interconnectedness of the histories of Europe, the Caribbean, America and Africa. France's professed ideals of democratic equality ignited her ruminations about race and democratic republics. Any consideration of her work must examine this heightened awareness.

Although Cooper was active at a time that was so crucial to black intellectual thought about resistance and the connection between histories of slavery and histories of national development, scholars have largely excluded her from the canon of black radical thinkers who reconceptualized the role of Haiti and black resistance in the Age of Revolution.²⁸³ In

²⁸¹ The first chapter of this dissertation covered Cooper's negotiation of Southern racism and national identity. See also, Cooper, *A Voice from the South*; Cooper, "The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Women in the United States Since the Emancipation Proclamation: A Response to Fannie Barrier Williams," in *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, ed. Lemert and Bhan, 201-205; Cooper, "The Ethics of the Negro Question," in *Ibid.*, 206-215.

²⁸² Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003) esp. chapter 3; Michel Fabre *From Harlem to Paris: Black Americans Writers in France, 1840-1980* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 142, 150-151; T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting *Negritude Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 17-38; Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Mark Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance: African Americans and the United States Government during World War I* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001); Marc Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japan and China: Black Internationalism in Asia, 1895-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

²⁸³ Works important to this canon include, C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (1938; repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1989) and James, *A History of Pan-African Revolt* (1938; repr., Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012); W.E.B. Du Bois *The Suppression of the Slave Trade* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1904); George Washington Williams, *History of the Negro Race in America, 1619-1880: Negroes as Slaves, as Soldiers, and*

her graduate work, Cooper articulated concepts—in broad brush strokes—that eventually would be central to this revolutionary historiography: the inevitability of violent revolt as a result of the denial of black rights, the tragic failure of the West to fulfill its ideals of democratic revolution, and the key role of the African diaspora in the making of the modern world. Cooper belongs to the canon of black intellectuals who thought seriously about the intersections of race, nation, and imperialism in the early twentieth century, when both the First World War and European and American imperialism forced black people to re-envision their place and contribution to modern societies.²⁸⁴

This chapter integrates Cooper into an existing canon, but also explores the ways that her subjective experience as a black American southern woman living at the margins of American society laid the foundation for her to reframe the radical potential of the margins for both resistance and revolution on a global scale. Cooper provides a new trajectory for historians who are interested in African American responses to the histories of slavery, nationalism, and imperialism—a trajectory that is conscious not only of the lived experiences and intellectual contributions of African American women, but also takes seriously the

as *Citizens* (1883; 2 vols., New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1968). For a synthesis of early treatment of Haiti, see Bruce Dain, "Haiti and Egypt in Early Black Radical Discourse in the United States," *Slavery and Abolition* 14, no. 3 (December 1993), 139-161. W. E. B. Du Bois begins to make the connection between American slavery and global capitalism in his early work *The Negro* (1915; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). For a synthesis of early historical works that examine the connection between slavery and capitalism see, William A. Darity, "The Williams Thesis Before Williams," *Slavery and Abolition* 9, no. 1 (May 1988), 29-41. For works that consider this canon Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000). For a brief, yet effective synthesis of black historians challenges to consensus narratives on slavery see, John David Smith, "A Different View of Slavery: Black Historians Attack the Pro-Slavery Argument, 1890-1920," *The Journal of Negro History* 65, no. 4 (Autumn 1980); 298-311; Robin D. G. Kelly, "'But a Local Phase of a World Problem': Black History's Global Vision, 1883-1950," *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (December 1999), 1045-1077.

²⁸⁴ Brenda Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Manela, *Wilsonian Moment*; Chad L. Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War I Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-century America* (New York: Verso Books, 1998).

imperative of black feminist scholarship of delineating the individuals who inhabit marginalized spaces as among the truest conduits for radical resistance.²⁸⁵

“The Dignity of All Races:” France and Black Transnationalism

In 1927, Jane Nardal—the Martiniquean student, publisher and co-progenitor of the Négritude movement, who lived in Paris along with her sister Paulette—wrote to Alain Locke asking his permission to translate into French his recently published and highly-acclaimed work, *The New Negro*.²⁸⁶ Nardal’s desire to translate the book was part of her own growing racial awareness and budding mission to foster among black people of the Diaspora a sense of the constructive power they held as agents of history. In writing to Locke, Nardal opened her letter by explaining the personal and intellectual journey that gave rise to her present intellectual desire, and in so doing, she offered an interesting and revealing story about Anna Julia Cooper. On March 23, 1925, Nardal was present in the examination room at the Sorbonne where Cooper defended her dissertation. At the end of the examination, Nardal approached Cooper to congratulate her on a successful defense. During a few brief moments of exchange, another attendee asked if Nardal was performing work for her race, alluding to the significance that Cooper’s completion of her doctoral work carried for black people.

²⁸⁵ bell hooks, “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness,” in *Yearnings: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (New York: South End Press, 1990). My thinking here is influenced by a body of literature focused on black transnationalism that questions why women’s contributions are not fully recognized among black scholarship and writing that emerged in the post WWI era. See Brent Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Sharpley-Whiting, *Négritude*; Ula Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Patricia Schechter, *Exploring the Decolonial Imaginary: Four Transnational Lives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Samantha Pinto, *Difficult Diasporas: The Transnational Feminist Aesthetic of the Black Atlantic* (New York: NYU Press, 2013); Cheryl Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left 1945-1995* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

²⁸⁶ For more on the Nardal sisters see Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, esp. chapter 3; Michel Fabre *From Harlem to Paris: Black Americans Writers in France, 1840-1980* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 142, 150-151; Sharpley-Whiting *Négritude Women*, 17-38.

Nardal explained to Locke that she felt at once overwhelmed by such an earnest question and moved by the racial and cultural significance of Cooper's achievement. As a Martiniquean, Nardal was educated within the French colonial tradition that deemphasized racial and cultural particularity in the name of assimilation.²⁸⁷ Although she was groomed to see herself as French, her interactions in Paris with other members of the Diaspora and white Parisians' challenges to her idea of French identity ultimately engendered a search for a connection to her ancestral origins. Watching a black woman take the reigns of history moved Nardal. She expressed this in her letter to Locke and marked her presence at Cooper's defense as a pivotal moment in her cultural and intellectual development. On her presence that day, she wrote, "my curiosity, my interest, already captured by other things *negre*, began to awaken."²⁸⁸ Nardal's story is compelling because of its coming-of-age quality. It reveals the moment when Nardal firmly recognized herself as an agent of change and as an agent of history. But her recounting also elucidates, however briefly, a transnational community of interaction and interest among black people in 1920s Paris, a community in which both Anna Julia Cooper and Nardal existed.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ The rejection of assimilation was a central organizing theme of the Negritude movement, see Christian Filostrate, *Negritude Agonistes* (Cherry Hill, NJ: Africana Homestead Legacy Publishers, 2008); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude & Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). Franz Fanon wrote extensively on the harmful effects of assimilation imposed upon colonized populations. He stated: "[i]n the colonial context the settler only ends his work of breaking in the native when the latter admits loudly and intelligibly the supremacy of the white man's values. In the period of decolonization, the colonised masses mock at these very values, insult them and vomit them up." Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 35, 165-200; Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (1952; repr., New York: Grove Press 1967); B. Marie Perinbam, *Holy Violence: The Revolutionary Thought of Frantz Fanon, An Intellectual Biography* (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1982), 7; Fela Amiri Uhuru, "Franz Fanon, Alienation and the Psychology of the Oppressed," *Academia.edu*, n. d., http://www.academia.edu/1315095/Frantz_Fanon_Alienation_and_the_Psychology_of_the_Oppressed

²⁸⁸ Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 128; Sharpley-Whiting, *Negritude Women*, 17-22.

²⁸⁹ Cooper makes no reference to Nardal in her own recollections, and beyond Nardal's letter to Locke, it is difficult to know if the extent of their interaction went beyond the contact they had that day during Cooper's defense.

Similar to the catalytic role that metropolitan cities in England played during the abolitionist movement, France and especially its capital, Paris, became fertile ground for the cultural and intellectual expression of African-descended people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After emancipation, several wealthy and noted African American artists, scholars, and activists frequently began visiting the French capital.²⁹⁰ They admired the cultural openness of the city and the ability to live free from the stinging racial prejudice of the United States. Going abroad afforded these travellers the opportunity to think and reflect on the multiple cultures and experiences that comprised their identities. In Paris, they cast off their common identities as maligned and humiliated second-class citizens and instead embraced a fully realized and empowered sense of individuality. A number of Cooper's contemporaries, including Alexander Crummell, Frederick Douglass, and Mary Church Terrell, made frequent trips to Paris around the turn of the century. These luminaries counted their time there as part of a cultural awakening in their own lives as reformers and activists. Cooper's friend and close colleague, Crummell, along with world-renown abolitionist William Wells Brown, attended the 1849 Paris Peace Congress—part of a series of Congresses organized by the international Peace Congress Committee, a pacifist organization devoted to decreasing armament worldwide and halting national funding for wars.²⁹¹ Frederick Douglass visited France for the first time in 1886 and was particularly taken by major sites of the French Revolution. He believed that the French people were the very

²⁹⁰ Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris*, 2, 22. See also, Trica Keaton, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting and Tyler Stovall, eds., *Black France/France Noire: The History and Politics of Blackness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

²⁹¹ The complete proceedings of the Second General Peace Conference held in Paris, August 22nd-24th can be found here: <http://davidmhart.com/Peace/Congress/index.html>. The Peace Congress Committee adopted the following resolution as the “foundation” for the proceedings: “That an appeal to arms for the purpose of effecting the settlement of differences between nations, is a custom condemned alike by religion, reason, justice, humanity, and the interest of peoples; and that it is therefore the duty of the civilized world to adopt measures calculated to bring about the entire abolition of war.” <http://davidmhart.com/Peace/Congress/index.html>, accessed March 14, 2014.

embodiment of the iconic principles of the Revolution and that the French notion of liberty served as a distinctive marker of French culture. In a letter he wrote to his son Lewis, Douglass said: “ I find the people here singularly conscious of their liberty, independence and their power. They show it in their whole carriage and in the very lines on their faces, and no wonder, for they, more than any other people in Europe, have asserted all three in the face of organized oppression and power. But in no act have they done this more than in taking the Bastille.”²⁹² Despite American attempts to influence European attitudes toward black Americans through several means, including literature and official policy, Douglass found that racial prejudice was largely absent in Paris.²⁹³ Douglass’s reaction was prototypical of how most black Americans embraced France and its capital city. The President of the National Association for Colored Women, Mary Church Terrell, for instance, also wrote positively about both her personal travels with family in Paris as well as her travels associated with her reform work. She explained in her autobiography, “The country in which I was born and reared and have lived is my fatherland, of course, and I love it genuinely, but my motherland is dear broadminded France in which people with dark complexions are not discriminated against on account of their color.”²⁹⁴ After attending the International Peace Conference in Berlin, Terrell stopped in Paris for five weeks where she spent part of her time in the company of her dear friend and colleague, Jean Finot—an anti-racist French sociologist who devoted much of his scholarship to refuting the prevailing pseudo-scientific theories about racial intelligence.²⁹⁵ Of this trip, Terrell remarked, “Nobody who has a drop

²⁹² Frederick Douglass to Lewis Douglass, November 7, 1886, quoted in Philip Foner, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Citadel Press, 1969) 324.

²⁹³ Tyler Stovall, “Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light,” <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/books/chap1/parisnoir.htm> accessed November 1, 2013.

²⁹⁴ Mary Church Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2005), 249.

²⁹⁵ See Finot’s translated work *Race Prejudice*, trans. Florence Wade-Evans (New York, NY: E.P. Dutton and Co: 1907). In a 1907 review of the translated book, the New York Times referred to Finot’s work as “a plea for

of African blood in his veins can fail to honor and love France on account of the way she treats her black subjects, when they live on her own soil and mingle with other citizens of the great Republic.”²⁹⁶ Terrell’s view was representative of both the historical and contemporary blind spot that many African Americans exhibited concerning France’s treatment of its black colonial subjects in the Caribbean and Africa.²⁹⁷

As the mass migration of black Americans from the American South to the industrialized North gave birth to a New Negro Renaissance, black writers, poets, and intellectuals traveled to many locations throughout the globe.²⁹⁸ Thousands of American, Antillean and African students and artists made their way to the French capital to not only study at the nation’s prominent universities, such as the Sorbonne, but also to partake in the city’s budding cultural communities where these sojourners found outlets to express common experiences of racial oppression and isolation.²⁹⁹ France in particular served as an important destination not

the essential equality of the races.” “A French Iconoclast on Race Prejudice,” *New York Times*, March 9, 1907. For more of a discussion on nineteenth-century anthropology, scientific theories of race and Finot’s retort see, Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of An Idea in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 82-84, 410-415.

²⁹⁶ Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 379.

²⁹⁷ The disconnect between France’s treatment of black colonial subjects and African American’s view of the French notion of liberty. See Tyler Stovall, “The Color Line behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France during the Great War,” *American Historical Review* 103, no. 3 (June 1998) 737-769. See also, Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi “Black France: Myth or Reality?: Problems of Identity and Identification,” in *Black France* 16-31. While Paris offered African Americans an opportunity to live without the burden of social segregation and ostracism, and to work and produce as artists and intellectuals in ways that celebrated their racial identities, many of those African Americans who traveled to the capital city at times failed to comment on the injurious effects of the French empire upon its colonial subjects.

²⁹⁸ The Renaissance emerged as an artistic and intellectual movement among black Americans who sought to reclaim the beauty and importance of the cultural productions of black people. Nathan Huggins argued that one of the main objectives of the Harlem Renaissance was to “thrust Negro social thought into an international arena.”

Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 41. For further discussion of the Renaissance and the contributions of black artists and writers during period, see Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 251-271. See also, Alain Locke, ed. *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Atheneum, 1992 [1925]) and Victor Kramer and Robert Buss, eds., *Harlem Renaissance Re-Examined* (Troy, NY: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1997).

²⁹⁹ For more on the Nardal sisters see, Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 119-186; Emily Misul Church, “In Search of Seven Sisters: A Biography of the Nardal Sisters of Martinique,” *Callaloo* 36, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 375-390; Carole Sweeney, “Resisting the Primitive: The Nardal Sisters, *La Revue du Monde Noir* and *La*

only for black scholars, but also for the exchange of ideas among a young, urban, elite of African-descended people.³⁰⁰ Once in Paris, these black cosmopolitans were afforded social and intellectual exchanges that fomented a new cultural awareness and stoked their desire to write new histories of people of African descent. These new histories often valorized the contributions of African-descended people and touted the singularity of the black cultural aesthetic.³⁰¹

Robin D. G. Kelley has argued that the Pan-African and transnational evolution of black scholarship during this period was the direct result of not only black war participation and the

Dépêche Africaine" *Nottingham French Studies* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 45-55; Sharpley-Whiting *Negritude*, 17-38.

³⁰⁰ Stephanie Evans, "Gender and Research in the African American Academy: 'Moving Against the Grain' in the Global Ivory Tower," *Black Women, Gender and Families* 2, No. 2 (Fall 2008): 31-52. Evans has also examined Cooper's studies at the Sorbonne as part of a long existing trend of black scholar choosing international locations in order to broaden and further their scholarly identities, see Evans, "African American Women Scholars and International Research: Dr. Anna Julia Cooper's Legacy of Study Abroad," *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 18, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 77-100.

³⁰¹ Many Harlem Renaissance writers produced works in which France and/or Paris served as a central theme in the narrative. For more discussion of this see Fabre, *Black American Writers in France, 1840-1980*. See also, Claude McKay, *Banjo: A Novel* (New York: Mariner Books, 1970 [1929]) and McKay, *A Long Way From Home* (1939; repr., New York: Mariner Books, 1970). In addition to new scholarship, Paris, in concert with other global metropolitan centers such as New York City and Chicago, became a key site for black performance as both community artistic expression and voyeuristic spectacle. Black art produced overwhelmingly by and for black people was also consumed by a white spectatorship. Much of the appreciation that Parisians and other French people had developed for black art and music was often defined by a fetishization of primitivized representations of blackness. In the early part of the twentieth century, traditional African sculpture became a major influence among avant-garde modernist painters, such as Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse. As the result of colonial conquest throughout Africa, several thousand African sculptures and other pieces arrived in Europe with the elite classes garnering massive collections of these plundered pieces. The embrace of this artwork translated into broader romanticization of black aesthetics throughout French society. The presence of African Americans in France contributed to an atmosphere that not only fed these changes in French culture but also created a climate from which African descended people benefited from in the French capital. See, Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," *The Nation*, June 28, 1926, cited in David Levering Lewis *Harlem in Vogue*, 191. Tyler Stovall argues that the dual features of black performance—performance as both a liberating ritual and a representation of black oppression in service of largely nonblack audiences—are inseparable, mutually constitutive elements. See Stovall's "Black Community, Black Spectacle: Performance and Race in Transatlantic Perspective," in *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture* eds. Harry J. Elam, Jr., and Kennell Jackson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 221-224. Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 3-5; Fabre *From Harlem to Paris*, 3, 63-66. Interest in African artwork in the early twentieth century was referred to as "primitivism," see Murrell, Denise. "African Influences in Modern Art". In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000, <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/aima/hd_aima.htm> (accessed November 2012). Stovall, Black Community, Black Spectacle: Performance and Race in Transatlantic Perspective," in *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture* eds. Harry J. Elam, Jr., and Kennell Jackson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 226-231.

aftermath, but also black migration, particularly across the Atlantic.³⁰² Jane Nardal, who was present the day of Cooper's dissertation defense, is a case in point. Nardal and her sister Paulette were part of a wave of French-speaking writers and students who arrived in Paris to study at France's prestigious universities, such as the Sorbonne, École Normale Supérieure and Collège de France.³⁰³ While there, the new militancy of African American writers in the United States, as well as the emboldened racialism of Marcus Garvey's burgeoning Pan-African movement, strongly influenced this migrant population.³⁰⁴ A Pan-African awakening among this student population prompted a rejection of the cultural assimilation imposed upon them by the process of colonization and hastened the desire to explore their own identities and black particularity.³⁰⁵ The Nardal sisters, following in the footsteps of prominent black Francophone writers, such as René Maran, began to host salons that brought together an eclectic mix of African American and Francophone colonial travelers passing through the French capital. Years after their arrival, the Nardal sisters began publication of the bilingual, *La Revue du Monde Noir*. *La Revue's* primary objective was to highlight the achievements of black people and to intensify sentiments of racial solidarity among black people by highlighting the accomplishments of African-descended artists, writers and intellectuals. *La Revue* ran essays where the left column was written in French and the right column was

³⁰² Kelley, "Local Phase of a Global Problem," 1048-1051.

³⁰³ Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 28-29, 126-128, 250; Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Thiam, "A Philosophy at the Crossroads: The Shifting Concept of Negritude in Leopold Sedar Senghor's Oeuvre" (PhD Dissertation, Binghamton University, 2007), 17-30.

³⁰⁴ On Garvey's influence see, Michelle Ann Stephens, *The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 76-77, 86-87, 91-99; Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925*, 197-198, 262-268; Claudia Fergus, "From Prophecy to Policy: Marcus Garvey and the Evolution of Pan-African Citizenship" in "The Caribbean and Globalization," special issue, *The Global South* 4, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 29-48; Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 288-291.

³⁰⁵ For a discussion of Negritude's rejection of assimilation see, Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora Since 1787* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 169-171; Shireen Lewis, *Race, Culture, and Identity: Francophone West African and Caribbean Literature and Theory from Negritude to Créolité* (Landham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), 30-46.

written in English—an indication of the broad-based community they intended to serve. One of the first editorials to run in the journal spoke to their aim of creating a nationalist solidarity that united black people globally regardless of territorial origin, language, or even ideology:

The triple aim which *La Revue du Monde Noir* will pursue will be: to create among the Negroes of the entire world, regardless of nationality, an intellectual and moral tie which will permit them to better know each other, to love one another, to defend more effectively their collective interests and to glorify their race.

By this means, the Negro race will contribute, along with thinking minds of other races and with those who have received the light of truth, beauty and goodness, to the material, the moral and the intellectual improvement of humanity.³⁰⁶

When recounting the journey that brought her to graduate study at the Sorbonne, Cooper indicated that she was an avid reader of these new radical journals and that this empowered Pan-African print culture played an important role in her desire to examine the history of race in France's national development more in depth.³⁰⁷ Cooper's interest in race and the French Revolution as well as the final product of her dissertation reflects the long, complicated history of black peoples' tense and at times bewildering relationship with national belonging and empire. African-descendant peoples encounter with Paris as a result both of the First World War and the colonial migrations prompted both cultural and political reconsideration of the meaning of black identity. The long and complicated history of the West's policies toward the Caribbean nations, Haiti in particular, spurred endless scholarship and its reconsideration of the history of the relationship between the West and the rest of the world. Cooper's interest in race and nation reflected the motivations of this scholarship and

³⁰⁶ Paulette and Jeanne Nardal, "Our Aim," *La Revue du Monde Noir* 1 (n.d.), 4 quoted in Sharpley-Whiting, *Negritude*, 56 and Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris*, 151.

³⁰⁷ In her memoirs Cooper indicated that she was an avid reader of the *Le Monde Noir*. There is no record of a Negritude journal by this name. I presume that Cooper was referring to *Le Revue du Monde Noir*, the journal published by the Nardal sisters. Given that she wrote her memoirs about her dissertation several decades after the fact, she may have just misremembered the title of the journal.

reconsideration of black identity. Cooper was greatly influenced by the post-war anti-imperial moment brought on by the war and black migration. The mobility of black people throughout the diaspora and their own quests for full citizenship greatly influenced her thinking and her desire to reframe the history of France's relationship with its periphery.³⁰⁸

The cosmopolitan setting of Paris not only allowed a vibrant community of artists, musicians, intellectuals and writers from all over the black Diaspora to find spaces in which to congregate and exchange ideas, but it also allowed such visitors to immerse themselves in a growing Pan-Africanism. In both 1919 and 1921, Paris was the chosen location for the Pan-African Congresses organized by W. E. B. Du Bois, black clubwoman Ida Hunt, and Senegalese activist Blaise Diagne. Both Congresses were heavily informed by the events occurring in the wake of the First World War, as well as the New Negro militancy that was the offshoot of black migration and black war participation.³⁰⁹ Pan-Africanism reflected a desire to declare and reclaim Africa as a marker of culture and civilization while also chastising European powers for denying self-government to colonized nations. However, Pan-Africanism was never exclusively about building movements committed to African independence; it also encompassed a desire to engender pride in a collective, transnational concept of blackness—a pride that especially rejected racializing distinctions that were imposed upon black people in colonial settings. Paris served as an excellent setting for Pan-African meetings not only because of the large number of members of the black Diaspora

³⁰⁸ For more on the importance of mobility in the creation of black political spaces, see Michelle Ann Stephens, "Reimagining the Shape and Borders of Black Political Space," in "Transnational Black Studies," ed. Lisa Brock, Robin D. G. Kelley, and Karen Sotiropoulos, special issue, *Radical History Review* 2003, no. 87 (Fall 2003): 169-182.

³⁰⁹ For more a discussion on the 1919 and 1921 Congresses see Adele Logan Alexander, *Parallel Worlds: The Remarkable Gibbs-Hunts and the Enduring (in)Significance of Melanin* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 176-183; Gary Wilder, "Panaficanism and the Republican Political Sphere," in *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, eds. Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 240-245; Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 181-182, 269-70; Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race*, 248-251, 561-562.

who passed through the capital but also because of the ways that this critical mass of black people allow for a redefinition of blackness not just as a symbol of deprivation but as radical empowerment.³¹⁰

Just as many black Americans called upon the ideals of democracy ingrained in the US Constitution to make claims for equal citizenship, many African Americans also began to incorporate the egalitarian principles of the French Revolution— *Liberté* and *Egalité* and *Fraternité*—into their own articulations of justice and equality in the United States. Infatuation with the principles of the French enlightenment along with what they perceived to be more equitable treatment while visiting France contributed to a budding Francophile culture among African Americans.³¹¹ France became a symbol of what was possible for African Americans and a counterpoint to the white supremacist ideology in the United States that insisted upon the natural separation of the races. French revolutionary principles of Freedom, Equality, and Brotherhood resonated with black peoples' sense of the wrong done to them by the oppressive processes of white supremacy and colonization and simultaneously emboldened their aspirations for full access to the privileges of citizenship. A May 1917 issue of the black American newspaper, *The Baltimore Afro-American*, represented this infatuation thusly:

The blessings of 'Liberty, equality and fraternity' which the French citizenry won in the memorable revolution of 1789 have been actually enjoyed by every Frenchman whether he is European or African. Every man in France is a Frenchman first and then afterwards white or black."³¹²

³¹⁰ Gary Wilder, "Panaficanism and the Republican Political Sphere," 240-245.

³¹¹ Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris*, 31-45; Maurice Bruce, "The New Negro in Paris: Booker T. Washington, the New Negro and the Paris Exposition of 1900," in *Black France/France Noire: The History and Politics of Blackness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 207-220; Tyler Stovall, "Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light," <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/books/chap1/parisnoir.htm> accessed November 1, 2013.

³¹² "In America and in France," *Baltimore Afro-American*, May 5, 1917 quoted in Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 149-150.

During Cooper's celebratory speech at Howard University, a portion of which opened this chapter, she elaborated on the French republican ideals that not only inspired her appreciation for France, but also influenced her decision to choose France as the topic of her dissertation:

Of all the nations that have been torchbearers in the vanguard of human enlightenment, none, it seems to me, can claim a more liberal spirit, a more cosmopolitan good-will in the realness of fraternity, equality and true liberty, than the one to whom we offer a tribute of gratitude tonight, splendid, great-hearted, suffering, glorious France! In no land or country whether of the past or present time, is the marvelous culture of the nature, so fully and so freely broadcast for the enlightenment and the enjoyment of all people and tribes and kindreds than on earth do dwell.³¹³

Cooper's appreciation for French republicanism went beyond philosophical abstractions of freedom and justice and instead was grounded in the social and political moment of the 1920s—a time in which many people of African descent were forced to rethink their place in the post-war world order—an order where American values ostensibly ruled supreme. President's Woodrow Wilson's calls for national self-determination and the dissemination of democracy worldwide was a source of inspiration and motivation to many African Americans. Likewise, Japan's proposal to add a "racial equality" clause to the League of Nations covenant that would ensure the equal treatment of all nations and their citizens regardless further served to rally many nonwhites in protest.³¹⁴

A number of African American race leaders and Cooper's contemporaries, including William Monroe Trotter and W. E. B. Du Bois, chose to seek attendance at the 1919 Versailles Peace conference as a way to bring attention to both American racial discrimination and the plight of colonized peoples throughout the world. Trotter, the Bostonian co-founder of the Niagara Movement and of the *Guardian*, relied heavily upon the language of self-determination in articulating his own vision for a more racially equitable

³¹³ Anna Julia Cooper, "Souvenir" reprinted in *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, eds. Lemert and Bhan, 340.

³¹⁴ Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 181-182.

post-war social order. The peace conference, Trotter believed, would be a platform blacks could use to make the world aware of racial injustices. He wrote, “with its talk of democracy and self-determination,” [the peace conference could] “provide a stage from which to tell the world about the plight of blacks in the United States.” Although he was banned by the State Department from traveling to the conference, Trotter arrived in Paris in April of 1919 by obtaining passage illicitly as a stowaway.³¹⁵ While there, he was able to garner a significant amount of attention from conference delegates and the French press concerning his campaign for self-determination for black Americans. Unfortunately, despite these efforts, the conference never officially addressed the rights of African Americans and made only cursory reference to race.³¹⁶

Cooper did not leave a written record specifically articulating her views on the war, the 1919 Peace Conference, or the eventual occupation of Haiti by the United States, but she

³¹⁵ Wilson’s notions of self-determination and the dissemination of democracy were, at best, circumspect. As a son of the south, raised in Virginia and Georgia, Wilson held closely to nineteenth-century pseudo-scientific ideas about an evolutionary hierarchy of the races and believed that with time and appropriate benevolent “tutelage” that nonwhite peoples may eventually function on a level comparable with the rest of civilization. When challenged on his views about applying the rights of self-determination to non-white people, Wilson refused to believe that nonwhites were capable of either self-discipline or self-government and he continued to be dismissive of claims for inclusion from black leaders. This was most infamously on display during a rather contentious encounter between Wilson and Trotter at the White House in 1914. Trotter, on behalf of his organization, the National Equal Rights League, requested an audience with the president on behalf of black voters who supported Wilson in the 1912 election. Trotter hoped to persuade the president to be accountable to black voters by reversing the policy of racial segregation within the federal government. When Trotter expressed his disappointment in this federal segregation policy, Wilson responded with his conviction that racial segregation would in actuality help blacks to progress within the confines of their limited abilities without unfair competition with seemingly more capable white workers. Trotter’s refusal to see eye to eye with president eventually led to the ejection of Trotter, and those in attendance with him, from the White House. The notion of benevolent tutelage continued to be the controlling idea behind Wilson’s foreign policy and eventually culminated in the military occupation of the Haitian republic in 1915. While President Wilson never intended to apply the principle of self-determination to people and nations of color, this exclusion did not stop race leaders, such as Trotter, from seeing the revolutionary potential in Wilson’s language or the promise of justice, however fleeting, in the post-war era, Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 26-27, 77; Painter, *The History of White People*, 249-250. Further evidence of Wilson’s racial views also include his decision to screen D. W. Griffith’s film *Birth of a Nation* at the White House—the iconic white supremacist film that was based on Thomas Dixon’s novel and play *The Clansman*. Lawrence J. Oliver, Terri L. Walker, James Weldon Johnson’s “New York Age” Essays on “The Birth of a Nation” and the “Southern Oligarchy” *South Central Review* 10, no. 4 (Winter, 1993): 1-17; Eric Steven Yellin, *Racism in the Nation’s Service: Government Workers and the Color Line in Woodrow Wilson’s America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 1-8.

³¹⁶ Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 26-27

certainly was well aware of these events. The events inspired and shaped the activism and scholarship of many African Americans leaders and clearly Cooper's work was both a product and a reflection of this historical moment. The process Cooper underwent in selecting a dissertation topic reflected her varied consciousness about the changing global political economy; and it makes sense to consider Cooper's dissertation as the result of her awareness of broader political movements that she observed. Cooper indicated in her memoir that part of the motivation for her dissertation topic emerged from the social promise that she perceived in the post-war moment for members of the black diaspora. She was particularly inspired by France's decision to erect a statue in honor of the service of Senegalese soldiers during the First World War. In 1924, France erected the well-known sculpture depicting both a French and Senegalese soldier entitled, "Demba and Dupont," commending the heroism of Senegalese riflemen (les tirailleurs Sénégalais) during the First World War.³¹⁷ France erected several of these statues in the nations that comprised its colonial possessions after the war. The installation of these monuments, despite Cooper's eagerness to see them as a sign of racial equality, was fraught with many of the tensions that characterized the troubled colonizer-and-colonized relationship.³¹⁸ After decolonization many of these statues were removed from the former colonies and returned to France as an expression of newfound independence. Nonetheless, Cooper, like many African Americans, saw war service as an expression of national loyalty and belonging and she believed that the erection of these statues portended greater inclusion and equality for non-white peoples.

³¹⁷ The sculpture read: "À la Gloire de l'Armée Noire —le patriotisme ardent de tirailleurs tombés sur tous le Champs de bataille de France." ("To the glory of the black army—the ardent patriotism of the fallen fighters on all the battlefields of France."), Cooper, "The Third Step," in *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, ed. Lemert and Bhan, 324. See also, Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960* (Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 1990).

³¹⁸ Joe Lunn, "Remembering the Tirailleurs Sénégalais and the Great War: Oral History as a Methodology of Inclusion in French Colonial Studies," *French Colonial History* 10, no. 2 (2009), 125-149.

Over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a result of fears of depopulation and a significantly-reduced labor force, the French government liberalized both its trade and naturalization policies, which indicated a more open attitude toward the world, especially toward those groups once deemed undesirable or incapable of inclusion within the larger body politic.³¹⁹ These liberalizing tendencies—if only cursory or fleeting—inspired Cooper, as she perceived these changes to be in line with the Pan-African political project of greater inclusion, respect for diversity, and cooperation between nations. Regardless of whether she was correct in her reading of these historical developments, Cooper, like many other non-white individuals of her time, chose to interpret this post-war moment in ways that were sanguine and aspirational.³²⁰

In addition to several artists, writers, and intellectuals, many African American service members decided to remain in Paris after World War I primarily because of their experiences with France's more liberal attitudes toward race. Over 400,000 African Americans served in World War I and nearly 200,000 saw duty in France as part of segregated units. The status of black soldiers in the US armed forces mirrored their experiences back home in the United

³¹⁹ In her memoirs, Cooper refers specifically to the Franco-Japanese Treaty of 1896—a treaty that opened Japan to increased trade with France and made a agreement to protect the interests of French investors. Cooper also referred to changes in the naturalization laws toward Japanese, Hindus and Negroes—changes which made naturalization an easier process for these groups. Historian Elisa Camiscioli has examined in-depth how fears of depopulation among the French, especially after World War II, led to new imaginings of French body politics. At first the French were only an interested in white, Eastern European immigrants who would not drastically alter the racial make-up of the nation, however, as low population rates and a significantly reduced labor force continued to be a problem, even Asian populations such as the Japanese, Chinese and Hindu were given greater consideration. For a lengthy examination of changes in French attitudes toward immigration, see Elisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race: Immigration, Intimacy and Embodiment in the Early Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 32-58, 63-86, 129-141. See also, Karen Offen, “Depopulation, Nationalism, and Feminism in Fin-de-siècle France,” *American Historical Review* 89, no. 3 (June 1984), 648-676; Susan Pederson, *Family, Dependence, and the Origins of the Welfare State, Britain and France, 1914-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Joseph J. Spengler, *France Faces Depopulation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1979).

³²⁰ Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 1-34. See also, R. J. Vincent, “Racial Equality,” in *The Expansion of International Society*, ed. Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 239-254; see Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism*, 251-271.

States, where they most often served as workers, laborers performing the menial labor that whites did not want to do; the US army was intent upon refusing to see their service as an entitlement to better treatment and better station in American society.³²¹ Fearful that black soldiers would become accustomed to the French liberal attitudes toward race, American military officials sought to impose in late 1918 a series of strict social regulations that would restrict interactions between the French (especially French women) and African American soldiers. At the behest of American military officials, Colonel Linard, who served as the liaison between the French military and the American Expeditionary Forces, released a memo that was intended for French officers but mentioned explicitly that all French people would benefit from the information contained therein. The memo, entitled “Some Information Concerning Black American Troops,” explained that it was important for French soldiers and all French people who may have come into contact with black soldiers “to have an exact idea of the position occupied by Negroes in the United States.” Predictably, the information in the memo reflected the white American preoccupation with race-mixing and warned that while the dangers of miscegenation may have been a matter of debate in France, in the United States it was a settled matter entirely:

The American attitude upon the Negro question may seem a matter for discussion to many French minds. But we French are not in our province if we undertake to discuss what some call “prejudice.” *[recognize that] American opinion is unanimous on the “color question,” and does not admit of any discussion.*³²² (emphasis theirs)

The memo drew upon fears among French people, especially within the military, of offending or upsetting Americans, their vital allies in the war effort. The American fear was that French interaction with black soldiers would cause the latter to aspire to just and equal

³²¹ Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 149-150, 161-167.

³²² “A French Directive,” *The Crisis*, May 1919.

treatment within the United States, something American military officials deemed impossible:

This indulgence and this familiarity [these] are matters of grievous concern to the Americans. They consider them an affront to their national policy. They are afraid that contact with the French will inspire in black Americans aspirations which to them (the whites) appear intolerable. *It is of the utmost importance that every effort be made to avoid profoundly estranging American opinion.*³²³

A year later, W. E. B. Du Bois published the memo without comment in *The Crisis* magazine, and responded at the same time to charges that black servicemembers were sexually assaulting white women.³²⁴ When Du Bois had investigated the charges by American officials, he found that the accusations were baseless. In fact, several French mayors indicated in surveys returned to Du Bois as part of his investigation that French citizens rather enjoyed the presence of black soldiers. As a result, Du Bois concluded, “[w]hat was the real animus back of this wholesale accusation? It was the fact that many Americans would rather have lost the war than to see a black soldier talking to a white woman.”³²⁵ The French, for their part, wholly rejected efforts to institutionalize American racism abroad and instead enjoyed the opportunities to interact with African American soldiers who were in many respects the first to introduce the French to the music and art of African American culture.

The hatred Americans attempted to manifest abroad during the First World War eventually came to a head in the United States, both violently and catastrophically, in several race riots during the summer of 1919. This devastating turn of events suggested for many

³²³ Adriane Danette Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 102-104; Arthur E Barbeau and Florette Henri, *The UnKnown Soldiers: African American Troops in World War I* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996) 113-116.

³²⁴ “A French Directive,” *The Crisis*, May 1919.

³²⁵ Du Bois, “Rape,” *The Crisis*, May 1919.

African Americans that their strivings for justice in the United States were possibly beyond hope and that they needed a reoriented vision that focused those strivings abroad instead. This is the moment that brought Cooper to Paris and the Sorbonne.³²⁶

Path to the Sorbonne

The first part of the twentieth century marked a period of both great accomplishment and great difficulty for Cooper.³²⁷ In 1900, she traveled to London as a participant in the first Pan-African Congress organized by Henry Sylvester Williams. This gathering of prominent black American, African, and Caribbean reformers and intellectuals not only sought to bring greater attention to the condition of colonized people of African descent but also argued for a more expanded role for colonized people in their own governments. Although there is no existing record of Cooper's speech, entitled "The Negro Problem in America," her presence at this gathering indicated her contemporary prominence among some of the nation's most influential race leaders and represented her contribution to early Pan-African thought.³²⁸

³²⁶ Cameron McWhirter, *Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black America* (New York: Macmillan, 2011); Robert Whitaker, *On the Laps of Gods: The Red Summer of 1919 and the Struggle for Justice That Remade a Nation* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009).

³²⁷ Like many of the events of Cooper's life—what we know about her time in Paris, how she came to pursue her studies at the Sorbonne and even the happenings during the day of her dissertation defense—come almost exclusively from her autobiographical writings. Cooper, *The Third Step, The Third Step (Autobiographical)* MSRC Box 23-4, Folder 37. Later in the twentieth century (the date is uncertain, most likely after 1945) Cooper produced an autobiographical text entitled, *The Third Step*. The text is a very detailed account of her path to achieving the PhD at the Sorbonne.

³²⁸ Unfortunately, no records of Cooper's comments have survived. Even newspaper accounts of the gathering mention her presence but do not indicate of the substance of her comments. As mentioned in the previous chapter, while living in Washington, DC, Cooper welcomed several renowned Pan-Africanist intellectuals into her home and social circle and this undoubtedly played a part in her involvement on this august occasion. After her attendance at the Conference, Cooper remained in Europe in order to attend the Paris Exhibition. Notable attendees included W. E. B. Du Bois, Benito Sylvain, H. R. Fox Bourne of the Aborigines Protection Society—both of whom were also attending the French Anti-Slavery Conference held in Paris to occur in conjunction with the Paris Exposition, and Bishop James T. Holly (Episcopal bishop appointed to Haiti). *Report on the Pan-African Congress of 1900 in London*, The Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois, microfilm, reel 2, frames 1136-1148.

Her London triumph was soon followed by misfortune. In 1906, only a few short years after her European sojourn, Cooper was dismissed from her position at M Street High School because of her efforts to direct students to further their educations at Ivy League liberal arts institutions such as Harvard and Brown Universities. Early in the century, most black institutions were heavily influenced by the work and philosophy of Booker T. Washington. Washington believed that black students in the South needed to be directed toward vocational training that would prepare students for lives of industry and financial independence. For Washington, this would be the route to African American self-reliance and respect from white communities.³²⁹ While Cooper never outrightly rejected or denounced Washington's theory of uplift, she had on several occasions, most notably in her 1892 work *A Voice from the South*, proclaimed her belief that classical, liberal arts education was a vital aspect of African Americans' attempts to improve themselves and their way of life. Education was most important for young black girls who Cooper believed were the true arbiters of uplift for African Americans.

At M Street, she crafted a curriculum that trained students in classical languages, mathematics, literature, and culture. Through her own connections she managed to direct many students from M Street to study at the nation's leading universities.³³⁰ During the 1904-1905 academic school year, a controversy emerged that focused squarely on M Street and Cooper as its principal. Percy M. Hughes, the white director of public schools for

³²⁹ For more on Washington and Du Bois' respective philosophies see, August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988); August Meier, *Black Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971); Robert Johnson Norrell, *Up From History: The Life of Booker T. Washington* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Raymond W. Smock, ed. *Booker T. Washington in Perspective: Essays of Louis R. Harlan* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2012); Jacqueline M. Moore, *Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, and the Struggle for Racial Uplift* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003); Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois, 1868-1919: Biography of a Race* (New York: Macmillan, 1994); Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 2009).

³³⁰ Cooper's feelings of indignation over being expelled from M Street High School appear prominently in her publications.

Washington DC, brought formal charges against Cooper claiming poor “methods of discipline” and inefficiency among the teaching force. These accusations not only questioned Cooper’s professionalism but also turned devastatingly personal as rumors of sexual impropriety began to circulate. The charges were beyond crippling, but Cooper answered defiantly, contesting the accusations and counter-suing the school board. Several former students and close friends and colleagues also came out to defend her. Notably, however, Cooper’s former classmate at Oberlin and the previous M Street Principal, Mary Church Terrell, remained silent during the controversy—a decision that was undoubtedly injurious to Cooper considering the prestige that both Terrell and her husband Judge Robert Terrell held within the DC community and the school board more specifically.³³¹

As cataclysmic as this dismissal was for Cooper, she may not have pursued the PhD without it. Rather than allowing the dismissal to defeat her, Cooper used this disruption to refocus her interest and further her education. Many of the actions she took in the next four years foreshadowed her studies in Paris at the Sorbonne. Immediately after the dismissal, Cooper served as chair of the languages of department at Lincoln Institute in Jefferson City, Missouri. She also spent her summers studying at Oberlin, and it was during this time that she decided to pursue the PhD.³³² During this time, Cooper continued to fight her dismissal from M Street, protesting before the DC school board for reinstatement and back pay. In 1910, after those involved in her dismissal had moved on to other endeavors, Cooper returned to M Street High School where she held an appointment as a Latin instructor. Becoming more serious about doctoral-level research, Cooper began taking classes in the

³³¹ Hutchinson, *Anna Julia Cooper: A Voice from the South*, 67-84; Gabel, *From Slavery to the Sorbonne and Beyond*, 25-32.

³³² Cooper, *The Third Step (Autobiographical)* MSRC Box 23-4, Folder 37; Hutchinson, *Anna Julia Cooper*, 67-68, 131-132.

summer of 1911 in French literature, History, and Phonetics at La Guilde International in Paris receiving certificates in each of these areas. She would return the following summers of 1912 and 1913 while she had sabbaticals from her teaching responsibilities.³³³ The following summer, on July 3, 1914, Cooper matriculated at Columbia University in New York City for what she referred to as “the long dreamed of” PhD. After certifying Cooper’s proficiency in Latin, French and Greek, Columbia approved Cooper’s intention to translate a college edition of *Pelerinage de Charlemagne* for her doctoral dissertation.³³⁴

Cooper’s dreams of completing a Ph.D. at Columbia were soon dashed when it was made clear that she would have to fulfill a one-year residential requirement in New York City before she could continue her studies. Abrupt personal changes in her life made it nearly impossible for her to fulfill the residency requirement. In addition to her full-time teaching responsibilities in Washington, DC, Cooper had become the legal guardian of five of her grand-nieces and great-nephews, selflessly taking responsibility for these children after the death of Maggie Hinton Haywood, the wife of Cooper’s adopted nephew.³³⁵ In 1914, at fifty-five years old, Cooper moved the five children all ranging in age from six months to twelve years, from Raleigh to Washington, DC, buying a five-bedroom home to accommodate her new family.³³⁶ As a result of both her personal and professional commitments in Washington, DC, Cooper was only able to spend time away in brief periods of a few months at a time, usually during the summer. As a result, Cooper had to delay her schooling until she could find a way to balance her considerable commitments with continuing her education.

³³³ Anna Julia Cooper, *The Third Step (Autobiographical)*, 4. MSRC Box 23-4, Folder 37

³³⁴ Hutchinson, *Anna Julia Cooper*, 67-68, 131-132.

³³⁵ Ibid., 131-133; Leona C. Gabel, *From Slavery to the Sorbonne and Beyond: The Life and Writings of Anna J. Cooper* (Northampton, MA: Department of History of Smith College, 1982), 60-63; Anna Julia Cooper, “The Third Step,” quoted in *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, ed. Lemert and Bhan, 322.

³³⁶ Anna Julia Cooper, *The Third Step (Autobiographical)*, 4. MSRC Box 23-4, Folder 37; “Negro College Graduates: Individual Occupation History,” box 23-1, folder 1, Anna Julia Cooper Paper, MSRC; Hutchinson, *Anna Julia Cooper*, 131-134; Gabel, *From Slavery to the Sorbonne and Beyond*, 60-63.

The precise order of events that eventually landed Cooper at the Sorbonne in 1924 are somewhat difficult to trace based on the records she left behind. In the ten-year interval after her attempt at a PhD from Columbia, it appeared that her domestic situation had become more manageable and even flexible because of the advanced age of the children in her care. Additionally, in early 1924, after a prolonged process of administrative formalities, Dunbar School (formerly M Street) finally approved a brief leave of absence for Cooper to travel to Paris for her studies.³³⁷

How Cooper came to choose the Sorbonne as her ultimate place of study was in large part the result of a meeting and friendship she developed with Abbé Felix Klein in several years before her dismissal from M Street. Klein, a French priest and educator, developed a public presence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries primarily because of his advocacy of a new and controversial church doctrine often referred to derisively as “Americanism,” which supported turning the church into a more public and democratic institution that embraced the individual initiative of lay members—a point of view that was antithetical to the “obedience to authority” doctrine of the Catholic Church.³³⁸ Klein caused quite the controversy in 1897 with the introduction he wrote to a widely-read biography about Irish priest Issac Thomas Hecker. Church leaders saw Klein’s introduction as a radical interpretation of the priest’s life that undermined the authority of the church. While this

³³⁷ Cooper, *The Third Step (Autobiographical)*, 4. MSRC Box 23-4, Folder 37; Gabel, *From Slavery to the Sorbonne and Beyond*, 60-63; Hutchinson, *Anna Julia Cooper*, 131-138; “Negro College Graduates: Individual Occupation History,” box 23-1, folder 1, Anna Julia Cooper Papers, MSRC.

³³⁸ Victor Charbonnel, “Americanism versus Roman Catholicism: A Review of the Hecker Controversy,” *The Outlook* 61, no. 10 (March 11, 1899): 584-590; Richard Henry Clarke, *The Life of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII* (Philadelphia: P.W. Ziegler and Company, 1903): 583-597; Thomas T. McAvoy, “Abbé Klein and Americanism,” *The Review of Politics* 11, no. 3 (July 1949): 379-381; McAvoy, “The Catholic Minority after the Americanist Controversy, 1899-1917: A Survey,” *Review of Politics* 21, no. 1 (Jan 1959), 53-82; John Courtney Murray, *Religious liberty: Catholic Struggles With Pluralism* (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993); Elwyn A. Smith, “The Fundamental Church-State Tradition of the Catholic Church in the United States,” *Church History* 38, no. 4 (December 1969): 486-505.

publication put him at odds with church leadership, it won him widespread admiration on both sides of the Atlantic.

Klein built a career as a public figure dedicated to issues of fairness, democracy and public intellectualism. In both the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Klein made several trips to United States and became known for his extensive familiarity with both America's history and social conditions. His writings also showed serious contemplation on the race question in the United States, as well as advocacy and appreciation for African Americans. Klein saw America as a land of promise and even though he was keenly aware of the racial dilemma present in the United States; the social and political advances made by African Americans since emancipation inspired him greatly.³³⁹ In 1903, as a guest of the American government, Klein traveled to the United States in order to examine American educational and religious institutions. After a visit to Tuskegee Institute—a visit President Theodore Roosevelt strongly encouraged—Klein visited the prestigious M Street High School while Cooper served as principal. Klein was immediately impressed by Cooper's intellect as well as the great foresight and discipline she exhibited as the head of this institution. Klein included a rather extensive account of his visit to M Street in his 1905 publication, *In the Land of the Strenuous Life*. His remarks are notable not just for what they reveal about the day-to-day operations at M Street, but also for how they document the budding close professional and personal relationship between Klein and Cooper.³⁴⁰ After

³³⁹ "To see these 530 Negroes and Negresses, well dressed and well bred, under teachers of their own race, pursuing the same studies as our average college students, who would dream of the existence of a terrible race-question in the United States?" Abbé Felix Klein, *In the Land of the Strenuous Life* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1905), 296. Chapter 14 of Klein's book entitled, "The Education of Blacks and Whites," contains a lengthy examination of the American race problem.

³⁴⁰ Klein's account of the time he spent in Cooper's Latin class especially reveals his respect and admiration for her intellect: "The Latin class contained sixteen pupils, of whom three were young girls. As soon as I had been introduced, she began to explain the first part of the Aeneid. Those called upon to recite acquitted themselves so creditably that I suspected a recent previous acquaintance with the passage; at any rate, the explanation must

spending the day with Cooper during his visit, he left convinced that Cooper was capable of and destined for great things; as he said his goodbyes to Cooper, he encouraged her to come to Paris at some point in the near future to further her studies.³⁴¹ Cooper and Klein remained close friends in the ensuing decades and Klein was one of Cooper's most impassioned supporters during the pursuit of her doctorate. When it was clear that M Street High School—which hired her back as a Latin instructor—intended to fire Cooper if she did not return from Paris immediately to her position in Washington, DC, it was Klein who help her find a “colaboratrice” who made copies at the National Archives in France and forwarded to her in Washington, DC.³⁴² What is most evident from Cooper's writings about Klein is that he served as a sort of unconditional supporter who offered her encouragement and inspiration in pursing her endeavors—both professional and academic. Klein and Cooper were also kindred spirits in the sense that they both embodied and articulated a strong social agenda committed to equality, democracy and fairness. Klein was undoubtedly a significant influencing factor in her decision to study abroad in Paris and to obtain her graduate degree from the Sorbonne.³⁴³

have been followed with the closest attention and well remembered. But there was one thing certain, and that was the excellence of the explanations which the Professor gave, in my presence, of the subject of the poem in general, of Virgil's aim, of the historical and mythological allusions, of the metre, of the grammatical rules, and the matter of the text. For my own part, I should have been incapable of such accurate knowledge and such pedagogical ability. We went the entire hour on the first eleven lines of the poem; and without being aware of it I stayed to the end, deeply interested.” Klein, *In the Land of the Strenuous Life*, 294-295.

³⁴¹ Klein, *In the Land of the Strenuous Life*, 296. After spending the day with Cooper, Klein remarked, “[w]e parted very good friends.”

³⁴² Cooper, *The Third Step (Autobiographical)*, 4. MSRC Box 23-4, Folder 37;

³⁴³ Klein's comments also reveal much about Cooper's educational philosophy; her belief that blacks needed both vocational and classical education. Klein, *In the Land of the Strenuous Life*, 295. When Cooper had only 10 days remaining to return to Dunbar High School (originally M Street) from Paris, she traveled to Meudon, a community in the southwestern section of Paris, to visit with Klein. It was then that he offered to find a “colaboratrice,” or research assistant who would transcribe primary sources for Cooper from the National Archives in Paris and send these to her in Washington, DC.

France and Slavery: The Radical Margins in Cooper's Dissertation

“So it was that the price France paid for her attitude toward slavery was disaster.”³⁴⁴ This line from the conclusion of Cooper’s dissertation reflected her vacillation between hopeful anticipation of and disappointment in the Revolution. The “disaster” she referred to was France’s loss of the colony of Saint Domingue—the inevitable result of the National Assembly’s decision to not heed the warnings of the island’s slaves. Cooper could have told a story of triumph, of injustice undone by the victory of the Haitian people; instead, what she presented was a lament of a preventable tragedy—the failure once again of the West to include people of African descent. In her writing, the Haitian Revolution was a misfortune—the result of tentativeness, carelessness and missed opportunities. *Slavery* as a text lacks the poeticism that characterized later works by black scholars writing about the Age of Revolution.³⁴⁵ Her dissertation, for the most part, is a documentary history—a sober reading of historical records—but its most profound contributions come from the ethical and political considerations propelling the text.

The dissertation that Cooper produced was a nuanced, cautionary tale about the relationship between slavery and revolution in the French empire. While Cooper viewed the principles of the Revolution as a noble and inherently good, she found that the tragedy of the revolution was the failure of the French to reconcile their commitment to these ideals—their neglect to address and ultimately to eradicate slavery within the empire.³⁴⁶

Cooper’s dissertation was not exclusively about the French or Haitian Revolution but rather charted the mutually constitutive role each revolution played in the other’s

³⁴⁴ Anna Julia Cooper, *Slavery and the French Revolutionist (1788-1805)* translated by Frances Richardson Keller (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 157.

³⁴⁵ Here I am thinking specifically of James, *The Black Jacobins*.

³⁴⁶ Cooper, *Slavery*, 74-76, 1157-1161.

development. Part of the significance of her graduate work was her treatment of Haiti at a time when the island had tremendous contemporary importance for black communities.³⁴⁷ When Cooper produced her dissertation at the Sorbonne, the United States was nearly ten years into an aggressive occupation of the island driven by ideas of strategic necessity and benevolent guidance of the Haitian people on the part of the US. While many black Americans at first saw the occupation as the result of Haiti's own failures, the attitude of African Americans transformed in the late 1910s and early 20s largely due to a rising militant nationalism among African Americans caused by the experiences of blacks abroad during WWI, the virulent racism blacks experienced upon return to the US, and the changing political climate globally that openly denied the idea of national self-determination to black nations such as Haiti in the wake of the end of the war and the emergence of the League of Nations.³⁴⁸ Interest in Haiti went beyond the details of the contemporary moment of the occupation and also included efforts to draw inspiration from Haiti's history, specifically the 1804 Revolution that resulted in Haiti becoming the first black republic in the Western hemisphere. The historic triumph of Haiti revolutionaries became a symbol of hope for African Americans—both enslaved and free—in the United States.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ U.S. military forces served on the island under the guise of what historian Mary Renda *Taking Haiti* referred to as benevolent "paternalism." In addition to lauding the island as a sign of black emancipation, African Americans also identified Haiti as a focal point of their missionary work in the nineteenth century—frequently traveling to the Caribbean nation to engage in reforming Haitian life through training programs in domestic science, charity and philanthropic endeavors aimed at Haitian women and children. The International Council of Women of the Darker Races discussed in chapter 4 of this dissertation is an example of this. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 15-17, 122-129, 312-315.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ U.S. military forces served on the island under the guise of what historian Mary Renda *Taking Haiti* referred to as benevolent "paternalism." In addition to lauding the island as a sign of black emancipation, African Americans also identified Haiti as a focal point of their missionary work in the nineteenth century—frequently traveling to the Caribbean nation to engage in reforming Haitian life through training programs in domestic science, charity and philanthropic endeavors aimed at Haitian women and children. The International Council of Women of the Darker Races discussed in chapter 4 of this dissertation is an example of this. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North

The French Revolution, by contrast, served as more of a backdrop. Her dissertation for the most part ignored the iconic events of the French Revolution, such as the taking of the Bastille and the Reign of Terror, and instead Cooper gave significant attention to the French anti-slavery organization The Friends of the Blacks, and the National Assembly's discussions concerning the fate of slavery in the colony of Santo Domingo. This is largely because although she named the Revolution as the subject of her work, her focus instead was on how the black slaves on the island truly drove the actions of the Revolution in their strivings to be free and to have their freedom recognized by the metropole. She de-centered white French perspective in the formation of the new state and centers on black slaves as the agents of change within the new republic.³⁵⁰

She viewed the Friends of the Blacks as the more enlightened and humane of the players involved and part of a broader worldwide movement that was finally awakening to the horrors of slavery.³⁵¹ Throughout her dissertation Cooper was quick to point out that even the Friends of the Blacks did not support the complete abolition of slavery but proffered rather a gradual system of abolition and the total cessation of the slave trade. Despite that difference, Cooper found that in a society so consumed and dependent upon the existence of slavery, the position of the Friends of the Blacks still represented a more enlightened position. Still, for Cooper, the Friends' hesitance to embrace the immediate abolition of slavery was part and parcel of what would be the eventual downfall the French empire.³⁵²

Carolina Press, 2004), 15-17, 122-129, 312-315; Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo, *Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness and Transnational Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Americas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 140-155. Nwankwo works focuses almost exclusively on African Americans relationship to Haiti.

³⁵⁰ Cooper, *Slavery*, 72-74.

³⁵¹ Cooper, *Slavery*, 33-43.

³⁵² Cooper, *Slavery*, 103-107.

All of the major players involved—the National Assembly, the Colonial Assembly, the Friends of the Blacks, the Mulattoes, the Massiac Club and white colonists—punted when it came to the issue of slavery, and all were unwilling to sacrifice the existence and the coherence of the French empire for the abolition of slavery. This, in Cooper’s analysis, was the greatest of tragedies, which ultimately led to the slave rebellion, the rise of the charismatic figure of Louverture, and France’s eventual loss of the colony completely. Cooper drew an explicit connection between France’s refusal to act on the issue of slavery and the similar refusal in the United States, which ultimately led to a bloody civil war:

...slavery also constituted a grievous evil for the United States, the cradle of political independence. The founders recognized this; they suffered from it, but met the problem with no greater audacity than the National Assembly of France could summon at this time. Neither Washington nor Jefferson, those two great consciences, had dared to raise the question of slavery at the drafting of a noble constitution because they too realized that it was necessary to wait for time itself to correct a wrong, even when the evil was recognized.³⁵³

Cooper’s comparison contained a profound implication. As a result of France’s failure to deal with slavery, the island suffered a violent, tumultuous upheaval that resulted in losing the possession France wanted so desperately to maintain. In a similar manner, Cooper suggested that the founding fathers of the U. S. refused to reconcile the birth of a free nation with the continued existence of slavery, meaning that this “grievous evil” continued to fester in the spirit of the nation, eventually erupting into a violent and bloody national conflict. This was part of a larger point made by Cooper throughout her dissertation and alluded to in *A Voice from the South*—that systems of oppression inherently carry within them the seeds of their own destruction. In many ways, this is a nascent theory about the relationship between the development of free societies and their least fortunate members, or rather the contradictions

³⁵³ Cooper, *Slavery*, 86-87.

between the professed ideals of a free society, the role of slavery, and the existence of slavery. Rather than viewing slavery as a kind of tangential issue that burgeoning nation-states are called upon to address, Cooper moved slavery to the center of how we understand developing Western societies. The failure to deal with the issue of slavery was a pernicious defect in the building of the nation that ultimately threatened the very existence of the republic.³⁵⁴

In both the American and French cases, according to Cooper, people of African descent had been central players in the development of these nations. In the first chapter of the dissertation, Cooper laid out the economic importance of slavery to the entire empire. In a section entitled, “Black Slavery: The Wheels of Power,” Cooper argued that the geopolitical hierarchy of European nations all depended upon the success and efficacy of their slave empires—the number of slaves transported to colonies each year, the amount of output produced by slaves in the colonies, and the rate at which European nations could pillage the African continent—all of this determined the strength of nations in this burgeoning global commerce.³⁵⁵

While the remainder of her dissertation built upon the idea that the economic output of slaves was a vitally important factor to white colonists and lawmakers, Cooper also suggested that the importance of slavery went beyond economic vitality of the empire. Slavery, according to Cooper, held an important social and psychological importance for white colonists and an imperial sense of self that gave meaning to the entire nation.³⁵⁶ Without slavery, argued Cooper, the social relations of the vast populations that fell under the imperial umbrella would cease to make sense. Cooper illuminated the ways in which the

³⁵⁴ Cooper, *Slavery*, 157.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 31-35.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 69-73.

white colonists of Saint Domingue and those in control of the National Assembly had opposing interests when it came to sovereignty, control of empire, social and economic interests, but they were both overly reliant upon slavery to assert and legitimate their power and control, even if for different reasons. White colonists fighting for the continuance of slavery were not only fighting for their economic self interests but also for their sense of self as a coherent group with interests and needs that were contrary the other social groups on the island, but also to the needs and desire of the metropole.³⁵⁷ The social status of white colonists on the island and their superiority to petit blancs, mulattos, free blacks and of course slaves, was delicately held in place by the institution of slavery. By extension, the kind of chaos that would result on the island as a result of ending slavery similarly threatened the coherence of the French empire. Although opposed to each other in several ways, both white colonists of Saint Domingue and the National Assembly saw in slavery an institution that was key to maintain their power and control.³⁵⁸

Cooper sought to demonstrate the fragility of the institution of slavery by highlighting the institution's inability to tolerate the agency of black slaves, that the rebellion of black slaves presented a serious threat to continuance of the empire. Cooper finds that profit and fear of damaging the imperial power of the nation led to the National Assembly's inaction on the part of freeing the slaves of Saint Domingue, which then left black slaves with no choice but to rise up in violence to bring their own freedom into fruition. In a sense, Cooper believed that the crass exploitation intrinsic within the institution of slavery meant that the seeds of destruction were planted long before the slaves uprising:

The exploitation of man by man, be it that of the weak by the strong, or the poor by the rich is always egotistical and thoughtless of others. Slavery is

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 90-93

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

therefore a supreme crime against humanity; it is logical and just that it should carry its punishment in itself.³⁵⁹

The third and final chapter of Cooper's dissertation focused almost entirely upon the actions of the black rebels turned revolutionaries, led by the clever and powerful figure of Toussaint Louverture. Although Cooper is undoubtedly one of the foremothers of a black feminist epistemology, her characterization of Louverture was rooted in a veneration of his black masculinity.³⁶⁰ Cooper portrayed Louverture as a strong, independent, self-made man with prophetic abilities to determine the outcome of the Revolution before it occurred. In the section of her dissertation entitled "Louverture Sees and Forsees," Cooper documents Louverture's rise to power on the island by strategically positioning himself to be the last man standing, eventually expelling Sonthonax from the island.³⁶¹ Cooper treated Louverture's rise as natural and inevitable given the political conditions of the island and the French discussion of black rights in the National Assembly. The stalling and backtracking on the part of the French and their failure to deal with the rights and blacks on the island provided the perfect opportunity for the rise of powerful, charismatic figure.³⁶²

Cooper's doctoral work at the Sorbonne has serious implications for our understanding of early 20th century black transnationalism. It offered a new international history of race relations, slavery, and empire by moving the agency and resistance of diasporic blacks to the center of the master narrative. Cooper envisioned her dissertation as an extension of her involvement in a broader political movement for justice and equality. Her words, like many

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 37.

³⁶⁰ See especially Renda's discussion of James Weldon Johnson's depiction of Henri Christophe, Renda *Taking Haiti*, 193-194.

³⁶¹ Cooper, *Slavery*, 139-144.

³⁶² Ibid., 139-155.

black activists of the era, were a vehicle for political action and participation in the campaign for social justice.

Cooper's dissertation is significant in part because she remapped the French Revolution not only as a racial conflict, but also as a conflict that was impossible to understand without linking domestic and foreign spaces within a transnational network of imperial power. By engaging slavery and race as analytical tools, Cooper necessarily changed the interpretative terrain of the history of the revolution and thereby, paved the way for centralizing questions about the nature of black resistance, as well as, the role of race in the development of the republic. Perhaps what is most striking is that Cooper did this at a time when historians were only interested in "internalist" accounts of the revolution that not only elided the significance of slavery to the revolution, but also wholly discounted the role of imperial territories in the development of national history.³⁶³ Suggesting, as Cooper did, that slavery and the resistance of black slaves in Saint Domingue altered the outcome of the Revolution, she theorized the relationship between the colony and metropole in ways that were unthinkable within existing internalist accounts of the Revolution at the time that Cooper pursued her studies.³⁶⁴ The chief examiner on Cooper's committee, philosopher Celestin Bouglé, had established a career of scholarship on an evolutionary conception of equality and democracy. He argued that the ideal of equality was the creation of modern nation-states and that people of European descent were better suited to exercise and promote equality. Cooper later admitted to being "frankly afraid of Bouglé," but this fear did not prevent her from speaking truth to

³⁶³ Lynn Hunt, "The French Revolution in Global Context," in *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760-1840* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 24-26. See also, Suzanne Desan, Lynn Hunt, and William Max Nelson, eds., *The French Revolution in Global Perspective* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013).

³⁶⁴ Cooper, *The Third Step (Autobiographical)*, 38. Undated. MSRC Box 23-4, Folder 37. For more on the historiography of the French Revolution, see Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

power in the realest sense. When Bouglé provided a copy of his seminal work *Les Idées égalitaires: étude sociologique* (*Egalitarian Ideas: A Sociological Study*), in preparation for her dissertation, Cooper refused to acquiesce to Bouglé's racist view of civilization and progress. Instead, Cooper insisted that the seed of democratic principles was present within all beings—for Cooper, Saint Domingue slaves' relentless pursuit of freedom was only one example.³⁶⁵

Women's Studies scholar and literary critic, Vivian May, has written incisively about Cooper's life and scholarship, and she argues that Cooper's overall objective was to challenge the idea of intrinsic hierarchies within human history. May contends that Cooper's rhetorical strategies allowed for a "more dimensional and inclusive understanding of history and humanity."³⁶⁶ Cooper's analysis in her dissertation was also greatly informed by the black feminist politics that defined her earlier work as well. Cooper professed her interest in marginalized communities and their resistance as the sites for true revolutionary change in the battle against oppression. Cooper identified African American women—and their experiences of being doubly oppressed as both black and female—as unique and vital perspectives that could not be discounted or ignored.³⁶⁷ Cooper utilized a similar logic in her approach to the enslaved people of Saint Domingue when she identified the marginalized

³⁶⁵ Cooper, "Equality of Races and the Democratic Movement," MSRC box 23-5, folder 67; Baker-Fletcher, *A Singing Something*, 86-100; Cooper, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, ed. Lemert and Bhan, 270; Celestin Bouglé, *Les Idées Égalitaires: Étude Sociologique* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1899). See also, Vivian May, "Anna Julia Cooper: Black Feminist Scholar, Educator and Activist," in *North Carolina Women: Their Lives and Times*, ed. Michele Gillespie and Sally G. McMillen (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2014), 192-212.

³⁶⁶ Vivian May, *Anna Julia Cooper, Visionary Black Feminist: A Critical Introduction* (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), 109-110.

³⁶⁷ See the first chapter of this dissertation for a more in depth discussion of Cooper's feminist politics.

space inhabited by slaves as a place of radical resistance—the space where true change and the fulfillment of French republican ideals was *possible*.³⁶⁸

Despite her contributions during this important moment, Cooper's dissertation has received little attention from scholars for the substance of her work. There are several reasons for this. For one, Cooper's dissertation, originally written in French, was not translated or published until the late 1980s, and it lay mostly untouched in the decades since she completed it.³⁶⁹ While the publication of her postdoctoral work stands out, the contributions of her graduate work and the overall place of her dissertation in the trajectory of her intellectual production are less understood. Many scholars have begun to consider how this kind of oversight is a consequence of the way black women intellectuals were often overlooked and neglected for their contributions.³⁷⁰ Historian Robin D. G. Kelley has asserted that the marginalization of black women's contributions to histories of the African Diaspora, especially from the early to mid-twentieth century, has to do with elisions within the field itself. In recent decades however, a robust field of literature has emerged seeking to recover the voices and contributions of black women were often marginalized within a self-referential male intellectual culture.³⁷¹

Even though we know little about her everyday life during her time in Paris, the fact that her studies occurred in the context of tremendous black international and transnational

³⁶⁸ See hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness," in *Yearnings: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (New York: South End Press, 1990).

³⁶⁹ Keller's introduction is especially insightful as to why Cooper's work went unnoticed for so long. Cooper, *Slavery and the French Revolutionists (1788-1805)*, trans. Frances Richardson Keller, 31-44.

³⁷⁰ Kelley, "But a Local Phase of a Global Problem," 1055-1058.

³⁷¹ Kelley argues, "[women] who did write—either from inside or outside of the academy—were often marginalized and dismissed by leading black male scholars, including [Carter G.] Woodson himself. The fact that so few black women wrote on broad international or transnational themes probably says more about their treatment in the profession than about their particular scholarly interests." Kelly, "'But a Local Phase of a World Problem,' 159 n. 29. Earlier sections of this dissertation have discussed the field of scholarship about African American women, see especially the Introduction n14 and n24.

intellectual production is important. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, noted black intellectuals sought to rewrite the history of slavery by telling a transnational story that treated blacks as central actors rather than passive recipients of injustice and degradation.³⁷² This new scholarship illuminated the tremendous value in the thoughts and actions of people of African descent, treating them as historical actors on the world stage. Their critiques not only focused on cultural productions within black communities, but also examined the importance of African descended people within the political and economic vitality of Western nations.³⁷³ This work was also distinctive in its focus on the intricacies of the exploitation of black labor in the global economy or what Manning Marable referred to as “the brutal transnational processes of capitalist political economy.”³⁷⁴

When thinking about black scholars resituating black history, Cooper most fittingly emerges from the tradition of W. E. B. Du Bois’ early work on Haiti and slavery within the Diaspora. When the United States began encroaching upon Haitian independence during the First World War, Du Bois was one of the first African Americans to openly criticize American foreign policy and advocate for the total independence of the Haitian people. As many American Africans initially attributed America’s occupation to the failures of Haitian people, Du Bois never ceased to see America’s involvement within the context of a long history of American and European nations’ denial of self-determination of the Haitian people and, more broadly, to all people of African descent. In a special issue of *Crisis* magazine, Du

³⁷² Kelley provides one of the best analyses of scholarship from African American historians during this time period.

Kelley, ““But a Local Phase of a Global Problem,”” 1051-1056. Other works to consider include Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944). W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1904), Du Bois, *The Negro* (1915; repr., New York: Cosmico, Inc., 2010); James, *The Black Jacobins*; James, *A History of Negro Revolt* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1938).

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Manning Marable, ed. *Black Transnationalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3.

Bois warned that African Americans must not buy into America's need to paint Haiti as a nation in need of paternalism:

[African Americans] must cease to think of Liberia and Haiti as failures in government....[T]hese are the pictures of each other which white people have painted for us and which with engaging naiveté we accept, and then proceed to laugh at each other and criticize each other before we make an attempt to learn the truth.³⁷⁵

Du Bois' position as a prominent thinker on Haiti and its role in world history started in the late nineteenth century when he produced his Harvard PhD dissertation, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade*. Completed in 1895 and later published as the inaugural edition in the Harvard Historical Series, the text made sweeping use of primary sources to recount the history of the slave trade in America by highlighting financial motivations driving the trade, as well as the moral failings of America founders who spent more than fifty years of the nation's first years of existence cowering to the interests of Southern slaveholders.³⁷⁶ Beginning with Great Britain's efforts to secure a trade monopoly with Spain to bring African slaves to the New World and ending with the bloody outbreak of the Civil War—which Du Bois argued was the only occurrence that truly brought the trade in African slaves to a halt—Du Bois recounted an unrelenting succession of missed opportunities and delayed actions regarding America's trade in human cargo. In writing about Du Bois' conclusion within the text, scholar Henry Louis Gates referred to the suppression of the slave trade as a “non-event.” While executive and congressional officials acted under the guise of ending the

³⁷⁵ Du Bois, “Pan-Africa and New Racial Philosophy,” *The Crisis* 40 (November 1933). See also, Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 180-185; Léon Dénus Pamphile, *Haitians and African Americans: A Heritage of Tragedy and Hope* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2001).

³⁷⁶ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1904), 7-52. Du Bois' pioneering 1915 work *The Negro* also included an extensive treatment of the history of Haiti and the Revolution. *The Negro* takes a wide range, sociological view of African American history that began in sub-Saharan Africa and ended with the modern African American experience and the emergence of Pan-Africanism. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Negro* (1915; repr., New York: Cosmico, Inc., 2010).

slave trade, their actions in reality served to ensure the trade's perpetuation, as well as the nation's continued capitulation to the South.³⁷⁷

The truly groundbreaking revelation that came from *Suppression* concerned Du Bois' re-centering of Haiti in the history of the slave trade in America. Du Bois was alone in documenting the widespread panic the Haitian Revolution caused throughout the United States, which led directly to many states taking drastic measures to end any trade between the US and the island.³⁷⁸ While the text does not deal directly with the French Revolution, he took seriously the real impact of Haitian people on policy in the US. He outlined the delicate balance between America's own imperial ambitions and the need to continue slavery with the real threat imposed by black resistance.³⁷⁹ Du Bois lamented the corrupt bargain made by the founders to allow slavery to continue unabated for twenty years because they ultimately tethered the nation's future to slavery—a pairing that would only be broken by the violence of the Civil War.³⁸⁰ The text was focused just as intently on America's failure to deliver freedom to the slaves—even as American's secured their own freedom—as it is a documentary history of the slave trade. As we will see later in Cooper's writing, Du Bois historical analysis is equally motivated by broader implications for morality and social justice as it is by a search of objective truth:

It behooves the United States...in the interest both of scientific truth and of future social reform, carefully to study such chapters of her history as that of the suppression of the slave-trade. The most obvious question which this study

³⁷⁷ Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade*, xxvii. Du Bois argued that government officials were “criminally negligent” in providing funding and resources for the capturing of illegal slavers as they traveled to the United States as well as prosecuting those that were captured. See especially chapter 8, “The Attempted Suppression, 1807-1825,” in Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade*, 94-130.

³⁷⁸ Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade*, 70-74.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 80-85.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 1-2, 70-72, 92-93.

suggests is: How far in a State can a recognized moral wrong be compromised?³⁸¹

In Du Bois' estimation, Haiti and the resistance of black slaves became the defining feature in U.S. domestic and foreign policy. This was a time when most historical accounts that refused to acknowledge the role and agency of blacks in world history.³⁸²

Cooper had long been a great admirer of Du Bois, she was undoubtedly influenced by his masterful re-centering of the history of African-descended people in world events. The work of these two scholars intersected in others ways as well. In 1929, Claude Bowers, former journalist and politician, published a redemption narrative entitled *The Tragic Era: The Revolution After Lincoln*.³⁸³ The book, which strongly rebuked the Republican Party, came from a long consensus tradition in which racist premises were the foundation of interpretations of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Bowers concluded that the Republican Party was a corrupt entity that humiliated the South during Reconstruction and forced social and political equality for blacks—something for which they were and never would be equipped to handle. Appalled not only by Bowers' conclusions but also by the popularity of the book, Cooper wrote to Du Bois, the foremost scholar of the era, and asked him to produce a response. While historian and founder of the *Journal of Negro History*, Carter G. Woodson, had written a scathing critique of the book in his publication, Cooper felt his response was hardly sufficient to debunk *Tragic Era*'s central claim and that Bowers' venomous screed required a more sustained and "detailed" critique:

My dear Doctor Du Bois: It seems to me that the Tragic Era should be answered—adequately, fully, ably, finally...and it seems Thou art the Man!

³⁸¹ Ibid., 199.

³⁸² Ibid., 85-93

³⁸³ Claude Bowers, *The Tragic Era: The Revolution After Lincoln* (New York: Read Books, 2008).

Take it up seriously in the *Crisis* and let us buy up 10,000 copies to broadcast thro the land.³⁸⁴

Cooper hoped that Du Bois would commit an entire issue of *The Crisis* to his response, and when Du Bois replied to her letter he expressed concern about finding adequate sponsorship for such a publication.³⁸⁵ It appears that Du Bois never published a direct response to Bower's publication in *The Crisis*, but the premise that black Americans were vital to the period of Reconstruction would serve as the central argument of his canonical *Black Reconstruction* published in 1935.³⁸⁶ *Black Reconstruction* is one of the most important works to theorize black resistance and liberation, and while Du Bois' publication never mentioned Bowers by name, the work was clearly a response to such consensus narratives that overlooked the agency of black people. Given the sweeping range of the book and its inestimable impact upon historical scholarship, Cooper was correct in her assessment that Du Bois was indeed the man to make the case.³⁸⁷

Her appeal to Du Bois, instead of writing a response herself, was most likely the result of many challenges. She faced the same difficulties that black women faced in the era—namely the struggle to bring attention to their work and to have their words serve as representative of their race and their gender. Her appeal to Du Bois was, in many ways, a recognition of the limits of her own popularity and the belief that Du Bois's renown coupled with the wide-

³⁸⁴ Anna Julia Cooper to W. E. B. Du Bois, December 31, 1929, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers. In a February 1930 letter to Du Bois, Cooper wrote to express her dissatisfaction with a response written by Carter G. Woodson to *The Tragic Era*. Woodson used his platform, *The Journal of Negro History*, but Cooper believed his response was too emotional and anecdotal; It lacked the empirical rigor for which Du Bois was known: "Doctor Woodson has reviewed "Tragic Era" in the "Journal of Negro History, but I think something more detailed as to facts and figures is demanded to meet the situation adequately." Anna Julia Cooper to W. E. B. Du Bois, February 2, 1930, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers.

³⁸⁵ W. E. B. Du Bois to Anna Julia Cooper, January 9, 1930, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers.

³⁸⁶ W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1935).

³⁸⁷ Du Bois' biography David Levering Lewis gives a detailed account of the history leading up to Du Bois' publication of *Black Reconstruction in America*. The overriding theme being the "minority view that Reconstruction had not been an unqualified mistake..." David Levering Lewis introduction to *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Free Press, 1998), vii.

ranging appeal of *The Crisis* could reach a wider audience. Despite her own achievements both inside and outside of the academy, Cooper had good reason to be concerned about the optics and the risks of a black American woman openly engaging in a confrontational dialogue with an established white male scholar. Du Bois's stature as an educator, his very prominent role within the NAACP as well as his worldwide acclaim for sociological research, meant that he simply possessed a much more powerful clout to take on Bowers.

In memoirs she later published about her experiences at the Sorbonne, Cooper noted that she had set out to write the dissertation to “compliment” France for its legacy of “liberte, egalitie, and fraternité”—ideals that she hoped to see spread throughout the world.³⁸⁸ She admired France's historical commitment to equality and she believed that French civilization was one of the most advanced societies in the world:

“[o]f all the nations that have been torchbearers in the vanguard of human enlightenment, none, it seems to me, can claim a more liberal spirit, a more cosmopolitan good-will in the realness of its fraternity, equality and true liberty, than the one to whom we offer a tribute of gratitude tonight, splendid great-hearted, suffering, glorious France!”³⁸⁹

The desire to compliment France was reflective of Cooper's appreciation for European cultural and intellectual forms, an appreciation that grew out of her class status, education, and role as a community leader.³⁹⁰ The narrative that she subsequently offered in her dissertation, however, was a cautionary tale about the fatal flaw imbedded in Western democracies and their construction of national citizenship. The final conclusion of her work may seem contrary to her initial objective of “complimenting” French republican principles,

³⁸⁸ Cooper, *The Third Step*, Anna Julia Cooper Papers, MSRC.

³⁸⁹ Cooper, “Souvenir, Xi Omega Chapter, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority,” December 29, 1925, Anna Julia Cooper Papers, MSRC. This pamphlet contains the speech that Cooper gave during the celebration of his doctoral achievement at Howard University.

³⁹⁰ See the discussion of Kevin Gaines in the first chapter of this dissertation.

but it actually reflects the double-voiced discourse that often defined Cooper's methods of using a critical eye to bring attention to issues she believed were important.

Her interest in French social and political history, as well as her embrace of French republican principles was in some ways a reflection of her high-minded morals and her adherence to the respectability politics of educated black elites of her time period. However, this does not necessarily make her analysis contradictory nor does it divest her argument of rhetorical power. On this matter, the conclusions of other scholars on Cooper's feminist politics are particularly insightful. Kevin Gaines has argued that Cooper's writings demonstrate the ideals of respectability politics—ideals that were useful and even attainable for members of the black elite class and were used to demean and even control lower-class black Americans.³⁹¹ Similarly, Mary Helen Washington, one of the first scholars to write extensively about Cooper, argued that working-class black women were certainly not the intended targets of her feminist politics, and that she wrote in order to represent a refined, educated, and privileged sensibility.³⁹² On the contrary, while taking into account Cooper's adherence to respectability politics, literary critic Claudia Tate has argued that Cooper's arguments were always of two minds. Cooper, according to Tate, always took seriously the principles she wrote about, whether it was domesticity, religious piety, the office of black womanhood, or French republicanism, but she often used those principles as a double-edged sword.³⁹³ Cooper often used high-minded and conservative principles to create a common ground with her readers and that common ground then became the terrain where she “isolated

³⁹¹ Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 129-151. See the discussion of Gaines in chapter 1 of this dissertation.

³⁹² Mary Helen Washington, introduction to Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), xlv.

³⁹³ Claudia Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 156-157.

and defined” very challenging political positions.³⁹⁴ For instance, comparing Cooper’s use of black womanhood in her first publication in 1892 *A Voice from the South* with the writings of one of Cooper’s contemporaries, African American author and educator, Gertrude Mossell, Tate found their use of black womanhood to be more strategic with the end goal of creating a more nuanced political position for their subjects:

In these chapters as well as throughout their works, we find the construction of black womanhood in an enlarged intraracial domesticity as the signifier for enlightened, politicized black self-authority, self-interest, and self-development.³⁹⁵

Cooper engaged in a rhetorical strategy that slowly brought the reader into the author’s point of view. Cooper’s dissertation continued a double-voiced discourse as a strategy that she used throughout her career as a writer, educator, and activist. She could at once admire the ideals of French Revolution while simultaneously pointing out their failed implementation, and thereby bring into focus the contradictions within the black people’s experience of this era. In this light, the actions of Saint Domingue slaves to secure the freedoms that had for so long been denied to them become so much more critical and necessary in telling the history of the Revolution.

Conclusion

When we consider Cooper’s wide-ranging critique of power, the appeal of the French Revolution within her graduate work becomes less surprising. Cooper’s graduate work shows that she maintained a commitment through the entirety of her career to rethink race and nation on a global scale. Her dissertation was a major achievement for the way in which she redefined the margins as a space of radical resistance. At the time that Cooper wrote her

³⁹⁴ Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire*, 132, 152.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

dissertation, consensus histories of the French Revolution failed to acknowledge any role played by the Haitian people.³⁹⁶ Cooper openly challenged the consensus history by depicting the French Revolution as an incomplete and flawed historical event. With repeated failures to recognize the rights and the humanity of the slaves of Saint Domingue, violent revolution became the only solution. While her dissertation was essentially grounded in the field European history, Cooper inserted her own perspective as a black American woman from the South to examine universal principles of race, nation, democracy, and empire. The contemporary challenges that Cooper and other people of African descent encountered colored the narrative. Her ability to shed light on the contemporary moment in her historical analyses was also a defining feature of her body of work; her ability to deal with complicated, pressing historical questions in highly mediated ways was a reflection of her intellectual dexterity.

Cooper was not only a pioneering black feminist scholar, but she also developed an early Pan-Africanist identity that sought to articulate, expose, and critique the structural differences of black people's placement within race, nation, and empire. The study of the Haitian Revolution and France's treatment of slavery was suited to Cooper's politics of location as an African American feminist historian.³⁹⁷ In the marginality that was presented to her as a woman and an African American, Cooper managed to find a way to construct her own history as a liberating practice. As a scholar and activist, Cooper carved out a space in

³⁹⁶ Hunt, "The French Revolution in Global Context," 24-26; Malick W. Ghachem, *The Old Regime and The Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Jeremy D. Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

³⁹⁷ Adrienne Rich, "Notes Toward a Politics of Location," in *Women, Feminist Identity, and Society in the 1980s: Critical Theory* ed. Myriam Díaz-Diocaretz and Iris M. Zavala (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1985), 1:7-22. In making the case for "politics of location," Rich argued for claiming personal, embodied experience as a body knowledge.

which her experience of marginalization as an African American woman became the basis for understanding marginalization and injustice on a larger scale—the national and global. Although Cooper has not traditionally been recognized for this contribution, her continued commitment to creating social, political, and intellectual spaces conducive to liberating articulations of not only black womanhood, but also black agency, has resonated in the generations of scholars and activists that followed her.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁸ See earlier discussions in this dissertation of Cooper's role as a foremother black feminist critique and uses of intersectionality. See also, Vivian May, "Historicizing Intersectionality as a Critical Lens," in *Interconnections: Gender and Race in American History*, ed. Carol Faulkner, Alison M. Parker (Rochester NY: Boydell and Brewer, 2014).

Chapter 4:
The International Council of Women of the Darker Races and Fostering Race Pride in
“People of Color the World Over”

In September 1920, Mary Talbert, honorary president of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), sat as the only African American delegate at the fifth quinquennial meeting of the International Council of Women (ICW) in Christiania, Norway.³⁹⁹ The ICW, a predominantly white Euro-American women’s organization, was the oldest and largest international women’s group that sought a broad program to unite women across national boundaries in the furtherance of women’s rights. Although, the NACW had been a member of the ICW since the turn of the century, no member of the organization had been elected to serve as a delegate within the American national section at an ICW convention.⁴⁰⁰ Black clubwomen lauded Talbert’s achievement as a “miracle” for black women, and since this was the first ICW meeting following the end of World War I, they celebrated the opportunity for a black woman to speak at the conference during such a “crucial and momentous period.”⁴⁰¹ This historic opportunity allowed Talbert to speak before Norway’s House of Parliament, where she presented a resolution before the deliberative body

³⁹⁹ By 1920, Talbert was also a renowned anti-lynching activist. For more on the history of her work within the anti-lynching movement, see Teresa Zackodnik, *Press, Platform, Pulpit: Black Feminist Publics in the Era of Reform* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2011), 163-165. For a history of the anti-lynching organization founded by Talbert, see Tiffany A. Player, “The Anti-Lynching Crusaders: A Study of Black Women’s Activism (master’s thesis, University of Georgia, 2008).

⁴⁰⁰ Hallie Q. Brown addressed the convention in 1897 in London, England, before the NACW became an affiliate of the ICW. Mary Church Terrell also addressed the international body during their convention in Berlin in 1904. Neither Brown nor Terrell attended these gatherings as elected delegates of the American section. This was an honor reserved for only ten women elected by other clubwomen from their nation and approved by the executive council of the ICW. Black clubwomen saw this as a major accomplishment for their movement and long-awaited recognition of the NACW as a truly national women’s organization.

⁴⁰¹ “Hon. Mrs. Talbert Returns from Abroad,” *National Notes* 23, Nos. 1-3 (Oct-Dec 1920): 11; Louise C. A. Eeghen, “Highlights of the History of the I.C.W.,” no date, box 1, folder 3, International Council of Women Papers (hereafter ICW Papers) Smith College.

of the ICW.⁴⁰² Subsequently, editors throughout Europe, including Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland, published Talbert's address in some of the continent's most popular newspapers.⁴⁰³

Black clubwomen had long sought involvement in the international women's movement in order to bring greater attention to the causes most important to them. Talbert's address and her presence at the gathering of the world's premier international organization of women had the intended effect. After her address, Talbert, already a prominent reformer and educator, began to receive invitations from all over the United States and Europe to speak on behalf of the colored women of America.⁴⁰⁴ Her address at Christiana raised her own stature, as well as that of the black clubwomen's movement.

Her speech focused on the issues that preoccupied the activism of black clubwomen, namely, the failure of American democracy to fully extend the privileges of citizenship to blacks in the half century since emancipation, the insurgence of government-sanctioned violence and mob law, and the importance of protecting and fostering the black home as a crucial space for racial uplift. Talbert struck a cautious but optimistic tone about the nation's ability to overcome racial antipathy, while also recognizing the magnitude of what was at stake in the democratic experiment in America: "[w]e are, in measure, working out the

⁴⁰² Talbert's resolution focused on child welfare—an issue that, as an educator, she had dedicated much of her life. Talbert recognized the vital relationship between the welfare of children and black progress. Her resolution demanded the right of children to receive financial support from their fathers and to bear their father's last names. "Mrs. Mary B. Talbert's Report of the International Council Meeting in Christiana in 1921," *National Notes* 25, no. 8 (May 1923), 8.

⁴⁰³ "This speech secured for her and for us, the opening of the daily papers, in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland and other foreign countries. One paper sent an artist to sketch her profile as she sat there in the House of Parliament and later published her address to the world with this picture....Copies of these papers Mrs. Talbert was farsighted enough to bring back with her, which she has modestly shown to some of her ardent and grateful admirers," quoted in "Hon. Mrs. Talbert Returns from Abroad," 11.

⁴⁰⁴ Hon. Mrs. Talbert Returns from Abroad," 12; "National President Tours the South," *National Notes* 25, no. 8 (May 1923), 3.

destiny of mankind on our American soil.”⁴⁰⁵ In the last third of her address, Talbert’s focus shifted from the specific experience of blacks in the United States and invoked instead a broader global identity that encompassed all people of color. Steeped in the rhetoric of pious respectability, which characterized much of the activism of middle-class black clubwomen, Talbert began to lay the foundation for an argument about people of color as crucial players in world history and world affairs. In the post-war era of renewed calls for fairness and self-determination, she proposed that the *darker races* had an important role to play in repairing the world’s understanding of democracy:

Permit the *darker races* to suggest that true and lasting democracy will be real and not a pious dictum when religion as manifested by God and His dealings with the world is copied and put into force by man.⁴⁰⁶

In the early twentieth century, the notion of “the darker races”—a phrase coined by black leaders to refer to the non-European world—emerged as part of a new political project that sought to challenge white supremacy and racist oppression on a global scale by recognizing a common racial experience among non-whites throughout the world.⁴⁰⁷ In the era of expansion of US imperialism and the intensification of racial discrimination at home, African American leaders began to see race and racist oppression as the defining feature of world affairs.⁴⁰⁸

Talbert’s embrace of a more broadly-defined racial identity was indicative of changes occurring within the outlook and focus of African Americans more broadly, as well as within the work of African American women. Talbert’s focus on a more expansive identity that

⁴⁰⁵ Hon. Mrs. Talbert Returns from Abroad,” 12.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁰⁷ See Marc Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japan and China: Black Internationalism in Asia, 1895-1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), especially chapter 1.

⁴⁰⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Negro Mind Reaches Out,” in *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* ed. Alain Locke (1925; repr., New York: Antheneum, 1992), 385-414.

moved her beyond just identifying with people of African descent within the United States became especially evident when she began to voice the frustrations that women of color felt in trying to engage in reform work with white women. Talbert made a specific appeal to her majority white audience to use their positions to improve conditions for women of color globally. Due to the “superior opportunity” that white women possessed by virtue of their race, Talbert charged that white women were “duty bound to lift your voices against the ills that afflict your sisters of color, both in America and elsewhere.”⁴⁰⁹ Despite white women’s calls for a universal sisterhood, they seemed incapable of living up to that ideal as it related to women of color and women from colonized nations. African American women had long believed that white women repeatedly failed to use their influence to speak on behalf of women and children of other races and instead abandoned these groups in order to exploit the privileges of their associations with white men.⁴¹⁰ As the racial biases that characterized white women’s domestic reform emerged in their international work, black women and women from other non-white nations found their voices and visions once again falling through the cracks. Talbert vocalized the frustrations that preoccupied black women due to their involvement in organizations with white women domestically and internationally.

It was, in part, this political project of an empowered global consciousness among African Americans, as well as, the continued frustrations and slow progress that black women experienced as part of the international women’s movement that led Talbert, Margaret Murray Washington, Mary Church Terrell, and other prominent black clubwomen to

⁴⁰⁹ “Hon. Mrs. Talbert Returns from Abroad,” 13.

⁴¹⁰ Talbert went on to say, “You can but appeal to your strong men to justify their claim as leaders of mankind by manifesting those humane virtues that will bind all races to them; and also uphold law and order with righteousness with a firm hand, till no individual or race shall feel the hoof of oppression upon them” “Hon. Mrs. Talbert Returns from Abroad,” 13. For a discussion of black women’s critique of the failure of white feminists to deal with multiple forms of oppression and to rely upon racial privilege, see the first chapter of this dissertation on Anna Julia Cooper as well as Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 120-135.

recognize the urgency of creating an autonomous political space for women of color to pursue internationalism. In 1922, that space would be the International Council of Women of the Darker Races (ICWDR).⁴¹¹

Major shifts in both the national and global terrain compelled black clubwomen to navigate constantly-changing political and cultural meanings of race and gender in the early decades of the twentieth century. In forming the ICWDR, black clubwomen sought to tether the emergent internationalism of the era to a woman-centered ideology defined exclusively by women of color. The intended result was not only to combat the marginalization of women of color within the international women's movement, but to also secure a place for them at the forefront of racial protest by articulating their own race- and gender-based internationalism. As an organization, the ICWDR was not without problems. Members often replicated the elite and middle-class rhetoric that characterized the black clubwomen's movement. Additionally, financial troubles and members' often over-committed schedules plagued their efforts to reach across oceans and continents to form a truly international gathering of women. But the contributions of this organization and its members remain important. By the 1930s, Mary McLeod Bethune and her new policy-oriented organization, the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), had secured for black women a vehicle to impact international affairs within the environs of formal politics (Bethune was also an early member of the ICWDR). The creation of the ICWDR in the early 1920s was a preliminary

⁴¹¹ African American Studies scholar Michelle Rief addresses the discrepancies that exist within both primary and secondary sources about the actual founding date of the organization. These sources claim the founding date occurred on various dates between 1920 and 1924. Rief concludes that the 1922 gathering of black clubwomen for the annual NACW conference in Richmond is the real founding date because this is the date that the constitution was drafted and members of the executive committee were elected. I agree with Rief's assessment here. It is clear that Margaret Murray Washington and other clubwomen discussed the creation of the organization for some time, but the 1922 meeting appears to be the first time that formal action was taken by the women. Michelle Rief, "'Banded Close Together': An Afrocentric Study of African American Women's International Organizing, 1850-1940, and the International Council of Women of the Darker Races" (PhD Diss., Temple University, 2003), 165-166.

moment where collectively black women began to articulate an agenda that challenged the imperial politics of the early twentieth century and also explicitly claimed their place as participants in twentieth-century diasporic and transnational struggles. The founding of the ICWDR is important to the history of black women's organizing in that it marks a moment when black women began to rethink and redefine their role as activists and race leaders and reframed their protests to fit their own lived experiences and visions of freedom. The ICWDR represented an important moment when black women vied to place their organizational strength behind the idea that they belonged to a larger global community beyond just people of African descent. Reflecting their commitment to embracing principles of international cooperation and the commonalities of women's experiences of racism and imperialism, black clubwomen began to forge an international women of color movement.

In a field preoccupied with identifying causes and effects, emergences and departures, making the case for the concrete impacts and legacies of the ICWDR can prove somewhat difficult. With very few recent exceptions, the ICWDR is most often relegated to the footnotes or cursory mentions within works on the history of African American women's organizing.⁴¹² Because the ICWDR never reached the size or level of influence of the NACW, it is most often treated as a promising but unrealized effort on the part of black clubwomen. *But that is not all that it was.* Scholars Michelle Rief and Lisa Materson have led the way in recovering the ICWDR from historical obscurity and resituating the organization as a focal point for analysis within African American women's history. Michelle Rief has argued that members envisioned the ICWDR as a way to create a "close

⁴¹² In a chapter entitled, "Who's In, Who's Out," historian Lelia Rupp discusses the various biases, including race, that complicated the international women's movement. She claims that racial biases led black women to create the ICWDR, but does not draw further conclusions about the ICWDR's importance or broader impact. Rupp, *World of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 75.

bond” among politically active African American women through a stronger commitment to global concerns.⁴¹³ Historian Lisa Materson has utilized the ICWDR to elucidate the late-twentieth century phenomenon of Third World Feminism—with its similar imperative to unite African American, Asian, Latina, and Native women for political mobilization. She has also established that the ICWDR reflected black clubwomen’s movement away from the more conservative, elitist strategies of nineteenth-century racial uplift to embrace more inclusive, global policies for mobilization.⁴¹⁴ Informed by these perspectives, this chapter views the ICWDR as a consequence of black clubwomen’s deep dissatisfactions within both the international women’s movement and burgeoning Pan-Africanism. Consequently, black clubwomen in the ICWDR, led by Margaret Murray Washington, combined an activist, woman-centered ideology with race-based internationalism as a way to ensure their continued leadership within a changing, reformist terrain.

The ICWDR not only reflects the varied international and transnational activities in which black women were engaged, but also represents black women’s efforts to create a new identity for women of color in an era filled with postcolonial challenges and post-war militancy on the part of African Americans. In an era where people of color around the world were beginning to acknowledge a common condition and experience of oppression, the women of the ICWDR took it upon themselves to ensure that women of color would play a key role in conceiving a broad global agenda for liberation and advancement. Empowered by their own black female consciousness, the women of the ICWDR argued that it was not

⁴¹³ Michelle Rief, “‘Banded close together’”. See also Rief’s essay, “Thinking Locally, Acting Globally: The International Agenda of African American Clubwomen, 1880-1940,” *Journal of American History* 89, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 203-222.

⁴¹⁴ Lisa G. Materson, “African American Women’s Global Journeys and the construction of Cross-ethnic Racial Identity,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 32, no. 1 (2009): 35-42.

enough for women of color to play a small part in this struggle; they were better suited to offer more inclusive and effective solutions for oppressed people around the world. Closer examination of the ICWDR reveals the historical connection between female consciousness and the storied fight of people of color against colonization and oppression—a connection that carried forward in black women’s organizing in the twentieth century.

Toward an International Women of Color Movement: The Historical Moment

The brain-child of Margaret Murray Washington, the third wife of Booker T. Washington and an educator at Tuskegee Institute, the ICWDR dedicated itself to “the dissemination of knowledge of people of color the world over in order that there may be a larger appreciation of their history and accomplishments.”⁴¹⁵ The organization encouraged an informed and empowered activism and was driven by the belief that people of color could only act in their best interests through an awareness of, and appreciation for, their history and importance. Women of color the world over, the ICWDR believed, had a crucial role to play in educating their communities and ensuring this empowered activism.⁴¹⁶ The defining feature of the ICWDR was its desire to unite women of color from different nations in a common project to raise awareness and encourage activism against similarly restrictive and demeaning institutions of social, economic and political control.⁴¹⁷ The stirrings of the ICWDR women

⁴¹⁵ “Constitution,” n.d., Mary Church Terrell Papers, (MCT), LOC Reel 14.

⁴¹⁶ The ICWDR was a perfect representation of the black history movement that sought to build African American history as a legitimate and recognized field of study, and, as others have pointed out, the work of these women would play a part in what we now understand as African American Studies. See Julia Ellyn Des Jardins “Reclaiming the Past: Women, Gender, Race and the Construction of Historical Memory in America, 1880-1940 (PhD. Diss., Brown University, 2000), 265. Des Jardins focuses on the ways black women played invaluable roles as teachers, librarians and archivists in increasing the awareness of black history within black communities.

⁴¹⁷ The founding members of the organization established several departments aimed at addressing areas that they felt were most important for the advancement of darker races: Education, Social Issues, Political Affairs, and International Affairs. In one of her initial addresses to the organization Margaret Murray Washington

represented the *Zeitgeist* of the era and also reflected how cognizant black clubwomen were to the changes occurring both within and beyond their communities. Black clubwomen sought to construct their own idea of the universal feminine—an identity that centered on a gendered and raced global identity in the era of Jim Crow racism and high imperialism. Faced with many frustrations and a global imperative to address the challenges faced by people of color in the post-WWI era, black clubwomen relied upon the organizational strength amassed within their national organization, the NACW, to serve as agents of change.

With the inception of the International Women's movement in the United States and Europe in the late nineteenth century, black clubwomen saw an important opportunity to present their race concerns to an even larger global audience. They likewise embraced the great potential in bonding across national lines with fellow activists who shared their belief in the potential of feminine influence to address social, political, and economic problems. The two international women's organizations that black women became most involved in had the suffrage movement and peace movement as their points of origin. Members of the ICW, founded in 1888, dedicated themselves to bringing together women from various nations in order to work on the political emancipation of women. Likewise, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), founded in 1919, was a peace organization aiming to unite socially and politically engaged women to rid the world of war, violence, and arms proliferation.⁴¹⁸

Due to their own persistence, black clubwomen maintained a presence, although small, at most gatherings of these organizations during the early twentieth century, and they

emphasized the ICWDR's goal to empower women to fight for justice and fairness: "[W]e are a band of women, though small, working with every other group of women to bring about the thing for which we all stand—justice and fair play for every woman in every land." Constitution," n.d., Mary Church Terrell Papers, (MCT), LOC Reel 14.

⁴¹⁸ Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 15-33.

continually made the case for the representation of black women in the international women's movement. In the December 1899 issue of *National Notes*, Adella Hunt Logan, suffragist and professor of English at Tuskegee Institute, wrote a front-page opinion piece about the importance of black clubwomen joining the International Council of Women's national section, the National Council of Women. Hunt argued that misconceptions about people of African descent were not just part of a national problem, but were rather a global affliction. Prejudice against the Negro, Logan asserted, came mostly from ignorance about the race and its people's accomplishments. Thus, a larger audience would afford black women the opportunity to inform the world of important work being done by black people. Indeed, Logan proclaimed, "[i]n no way can we better get the claims of our work for the elevation of the race before the people of the country, and indeed of the world."⁴¹⁹ Logan also asserted that working in tandem with other nations and races was imperative for racial uplift, "[w]e shall be better understood, and we trust, more highly esteemed, by the people of other races and nations, if we are given opportunities to work in sympathy with them, rather than left out of their plans altogether..."⁴²⁰ This sense of urgency led black clubwomen to lobby for representation at all of the major international gatherings of women in the early twentieth century.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁹ Adella Hunt Logan, "Why the National Association of Colored Women Should Become Part of the National Council of Women of the United States," *National Notes* 3, no. 8, (December 1899), 1.

⁴²⁰ Ibid. For more on Logan's fascinating and tragically short life and career, see Rosalyn Terborg, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 59-62 and Adele Logan Alexander, "Private Consequences of a Public Controversy: Grandfather, Grandmother, W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington," *The Crisis* (February 1983), 8-11.

⁴²¹ The ICW would inadvertently play a central role in the founding of black clubwomen's national association. When white women decided to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the ICW at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893 by holding an international women's congress, black women demanded representation at the gathering. When white suffragist May Wright Sewall (president) and the other members of the ICW chose a relatively unknown woman to speak on behalf of black clubwomen at the Women's Congress of the World Fair, black women demanded that well-known women of the race be allowed to participate in the event. Anna J. Cooper, Frances E. W. Harper, Fannie Barrier Williams, Fannie Jackson Coppin, Sarah Jane Early, Hallie Q. Brown and others would participate and give their best impressions of the progress of the race and the important role that

When attending these international gatherings black clubwomen focused intently on their responsibility to accurately represent the experiences and progress of black Americans since emancipation. They also believed black women needed to take a lead role in defining ideas of universal sisterhood, justice, and equality. While attending the International Council of Women conference held in Berlin, Germany in June 1904, Mary Church Terrell felt pointedly that she was carrying the burden of representing not only all African American women, but also all women of African descent.⁴²² German attendees deceived by her Anglo features and fair complexion, freely expressed to her face their desire to gaze upon “die Negerin” (the Negress) rumored to be in attendance.⁴²³ Knowing that the attendees expected her to resemble their stereotypical expectations of an exotic woman of African descent, Terrell’s imperative to speak in unequivocal terms about race relations became strikingly clear:

I wanted to place the colored women of the United States in the most favorable light possible. I represented, not only the colored women of my own country, but since I was the only woman taking part in the International Congress who had a drop of African blood in her veins, I represented the whole continent of Africa as well.⁴²⁴

black women played in that progress and the overwhelming development and success of the black clubwomen’s movement. Their message no doubt appealed to women attending the congress because of its woman-centered philosophy, namely, black clubwomen argued that the success of black people in America would only follow the success of black women. *The World’s Congress of Representative Women: A Historical Résumé for Popular Circulation of the World’s Congress of Representative Women, Convened in Chicago on May 15, and Adjourned on May 22, 1893, Under the Auspices of the Woman’s Branch of the World’s Congress Auxiliary* ed. May Wright Sewall (Chicago and New York: Rand McNally, 1894) 430-438, 696-723; Christopher Robert Reed, “The Black Presence at ‘White City’: African and African American Participation at the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, May 1, 1893-October 31, 1893” Paul V. Galvin Library Digital History Collection, Illinois Institute of Technology, <http://columbus.gl.iit.edu/reed2.html> [accessed April 11, 2008].

⁴²² Terrell was selected by N. A. C. W. President, Josephine Silone-Yates, to represent the national black clubwomen’s association. At the time, Terrell was Honorary President of the National Association of Colored Women. She was also accompanied by Margaret Murray Washington, Josephine B. Bruce and Coralie Franklin Cook. Washington and Bruce held NACW positions as First Vice-President and Executive Committee Chairman respectively. “Minutes of the Third Biennial Meeting or Fourth Convention of the National Association of Colored Women, July 11-16, 1904” *NACW Papers* Part I, reel 1, frames 0276-0297

⁴²³ Mary Church Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2005), 238-239.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 244.

As Terrell would continue to participate in these international gatherings, her idea of whom she represented evolved and grew to include not just people of African descent but also all non-white people. More than a decade later when she attended the WILPF conference in Zurich, Switzerland in May 1919, Terrell expressed a desire to not just speak on behalf of black women of America and the Diaspora, but she believed that that her status also suggested a common experience with women of color all over the world:

There was not a single delegate from Japan, China, and India or from any other country who inhabitants were not white... I was the only one present at that meeting who had a drop of African blood in her veins. In fact, since I was the only delegate who gave any color to the occasion at all, it finally dawned upon me that I was representing the women of all of the non-white countries in the world.⁴²⁵

Despite the few achievements clubwomen like Terrell, Talbert, and Hallie Quinn Brown would make in representing the race at women's international gatherings, black women would over and over again experience indignities and injustices at the hands of white European and American women reformers, some of whom were at best indifferent toward recognizing African American women as equal members and others who were fearful of alienating white members opposed to racial inclusion. Some white women may have been eager to acquaint themselves with the lone Negroes who graced their international gatherings. They were much less eager, however, to take them seriously as equals, a failing that gave rise to a trenchant critique of white internationalism among black clubwomen.

Just a year following her appearance at the ICW gathering in Christiana, Norway, Mary Talbert was denied admittance to the dining hall run by the YWCA at the American Women's club in Paris. Black clubwomen denounced the act as embarrassing and demeaning. W. E. B. Du Bois, on behalf of the NAACP, also published a statement

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 371-372.

protesting Mrs. Talbert's treatment.⁴²⁶ At the 1925 gathering of the ICW in Washington DC, where black clubwomen were represented by Mary McLeod Bethune and Hallie Quinn Brown, black women were outraged when they learned that African American singers were originally not scheduled to perform at the main auditorium for the day's events and were instead scheduled for the Howard Theatre, a colored theatre in Washington. Even worse, when they arrived to attend the evening's festivities they learned that black attendees were relegated to a separate part of the theatre. Black conference attendants, including Bethune and Brown, and the singers scheduled to perform walked out of the gathering in protest.⁴²⁷ The affront was especially egregious given the fact that the president of the American council of the ICW had assured Bethune both in person and through written agreement that black attendants would not be segregated. When asked how black clubwomen understood the affront, Bethune spoke in harsh tones about the ways that discrimination on such a public stage affected more than just African Americans: "It is hard to imagine a greater insult to the colored people of the world....It was a disgrace to the United States in the presence of these women from all over the world."⁴²⁸ Bethune also asserted that the NACW believed the American delegation had not heard the last about this indignity to black women, "[t]he foreign delegates, to whom the American segregation of colored people is a strange, incomprehensible thing, are very angry over it."⁴²⁹ Hallie Q. Brown, also in attendance, said of black women's refusal to accept the forced segregation: "we could not be humiliated in the

⁴²⁶ Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, *Afro-American Women and the Advancement of the Race*, 198; M. J. Brown, *Eradicating This Evil: Women in the American Anti-Lynching Movement, 1892-1940* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 39.

⁴²⁷ Bethune announced the next day that black women would continue to participate in the conference's activities. "Social Upsets Stir Women's Council: Protest Made By Negroes," *The New York Times*, May 7, 1925

⁴²⁸ "Ibid.; Neverdon-Morton, *Afro-American Women of the South and the Advancement of the Race, 1895-1925*, 201.

⁴²⁹ "Social Upsets Stir Women's Council: Protest Made By Negroes," *The New York Times*, May 7, 1925

eyes of the foreign women who had come to believe that America was the land of the free and home of the brave.”⁴³⁰

One of the most striking instances of white women’s failure to deal with racial oppression within the international movement involved Mary Church Terrell and a resolution denouncing the sexual abuse of women during World War I. The executive committee of WILPF drafted a statement demanding the removal of black troops from occupied territory due to reports that they were sexually assaulting German women. All members of the executive committee agreed to sign it, and they requested Terrell’s signature in order to make the resolution unanimous. Terrell believed the accusations were false, the result of a propaganda campaign designed to embarrass and malign black men by depicting them as sexually deviant. Instead of signing, Terrell chose to resign from the organization, insisting that sexual assault during wartime was not a race issue, but rather a reflection of the vulnerability that all women faced during wartime. Terrell’s protest eventually compelled the executive committee to abandon the resolution. And even though the committee chose instead to focus on the injustices of war occupation, the experience had a detrimental impact on Terrell’s inclination toward working with the executive committee of WILPF.⁴³¹ She observed in her autobiography that it was one of her most disturbing experiences as a

⁴³⁰ “200 Negro Singers Refuse to Appear at Music Festival,” *Washington Post*, May 26, 1925, quoted in Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 75.

⁴³¹ Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 401-405. Joyce Blackwell Johnson has a more in-depth discussion of Terrell’s views about women’s vulnerability during wartime in *No Peace Without Freedom: Race and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, 1918-1975* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), see especially chapter 1. For more on black women and WILPF see Joyce Blackwell’s seminal text *No Peace Without Freedom: Race and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, 1918-1975* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004).

member of an international organization and that it caused her to doubt that white reformers could ever truly understand the position of women of color on these matters.⁴³²

Although the constitutions of all of the international women's organizations included clauses that banned the exclusion of any group of women based on race, nation, class, or religious creed, the biases of the organizations' predominantly white, affluent, Christian, and western leadership repeatedly inserted themselves into the interactions between the members.⁴³³ Leila Rupp has pointed out that the large amounts of money and influence that white western women contributed to these organizations ensured that their biases and points of view were disproportionately represented.⁴³⁴

One of the greatest disappointments that black clubwomen had with the international women's movement centered on the issue of suffrage.⁴³⁵ In truth, the issue of suffrage was very divisive for women domestically, and the same was true on the international stage. Although women representing different nations in the ICW agreed suffrage was a matter of political empowerment for women, they never managed to agree on a single strategy for attaining the right to vote for women all over the world. Many members were not keen to tackle overtly political topics and this resulted in the leadership deciding to avoid more controversial issues in the name of inclusion. Believing that the membership of the ICW was too diverse to develop a singular global strategy for attaining the right to vote, the leadership

⁴³² Investigations conducted in Geneva later found the accusations were untrue. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 401-408.

⁴³³ Anna Garlin Spencer, *The Council Idea: A Chronicle of Its Prophets and a Tribute to May Wright Sewall* (New Brunswick: J. Heidingsfeld Co., 1930), 33 ICW Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, box 3, folder 11; Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 50-51.

⁴³⁴ Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 50-51, 70-73.

⁴³⁵ Patricia Ward D'Itri, *Cross Currents in the International Women's Movement, 1848-1948* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999), 69-74, 105-114; Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 15-26.

of the ICW eventually failed to articulate a definitive position on woman suffrage.⁴³⁶ This no doubt was a decision that greatly disappointed black women who had hoped that the international women's movement would also act as a platform for black women to argue for the right of suffrage. When women reformers who refused to relinquish the potential impact of international organizing on the cause of suffrage formed the International Women's Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) in 1904, black women saw little change in their predicament. Although the IWSA's aim was "to secure the enfranchisement of the women of all nations, and to unite the friends of woman suffrage throughout the world in organized cooperation and fraternal helpfulness," the organization was nonetheless dominated and led by white American women. Moreover, Carrie Chapman Catt, IWSA founder and long-time suffrage leader, had developed a notorious reputation among black woman suffragists for using the race question to advance the cause of white women's political rights.⁴³⁷

Historians Rosalyn Terborg-Penn and Glenda Gilmore have documented the ways that southern states mobilized almost immediately to disenfranchise black women after the passage of women's suffrage amendment in 1920.⁴³⁸ Acting quickly to counter this assault on black women's right to vote became paramount for black clubwomen.⁴³⁹ That the ICW

⁴³⁶ On the issue of suffrage, ICW members fell into one of two camps: the suffragists and the maternalists. Suffragists believed that political enfranchisement was a necessary step in improving women's position in society. They also believed that the ballot was vital for women to influence important legislation affecting women and their families, and other issues of concern, including pacificism, temperance, and white slave traffic. Maternalists on the other hand, feared that political enfranchisement would compromise the argument for women's sphere of influence. To maternalists, women's role as mothers, nurturers, and leaders of the domestic sphere provided the basis for women's superiority in dealing with certain questions of social and moral consequence. Organizational leaders envisioned the ICW as a truly universal organization capable of addressing all women's issues, therefore they refused to embrace one faction (suffragists) over the other (maternalists). The definitive showdown between these two groups occurred at the 1899 London meeting organized by suffragists in the ICW. For more see, Jill Liddington, *Long Road to Greenham: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain Since 1820* (London: Virago Press, 1990), 37; D'Itri, *Cross Currents in the International Women's Movement, 1848-1948*, 85-90.

⁴³⁷ Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*, 111-112, 126-127.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 118-128; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 28-37.

⁴³⁹ Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*, see especially chapters 6 and 7.

refused to include suffrage in their platform at such a crucial time served as another affront to black women and another instance in which the international women's movement proved incapable of effectively addressing the issues most important to black women and their communities. When black clubwomen eventually came together to form the ICWDR, they committed one of the organization's departments entirely to political issues, with suffrage as the primary focus.⁴⁴⁰ Recognizing that all women had yet to receive the right to vote, Margaret Murray Washington declared that the ICWDR would work to prepare women of color to properly exercise this right:

Our committee on Political affairs will...disseminate information especially in countries and sections of our own country where women have the privilege of suffrage. Suffrage has come more quickly in many countries, and in many sections of our own, than event the most sanguine hoped for. It will finally come to all women, in all sections, of all countries. *What women want to do is to be ready for it.*⁴⁴¹ (emphasis mine)

The issue of suffrage quickly lost the sense of urgency it once had as white women in both the United States and Britain obtained the right to vote early in the twentieth century.⁴⁴² Instead, Anglo-American women turned to defining the universal condition of women in new and different ways—a decision that further excluded African American women still striving for the right to vote for themselves and their communities. The failure of the women's movement, both nationally and internationally, to speak in one voice on the issue of suffrage led to greater disillusionment and frustration among black women activists. Black female reformers expressed a great sense of urgency about the right to vote—an urgency they felt weighed heavier upon them because of the compounded experience of oppression based on

⁴⁴⁰ "Constitution," n.d., Mary Church Terrell Papers, (MCT), LOC box 21, reel 14.

⁴⁴¹ Margaret Murray Washington, "International Council of Women of the Darker Races of the World," n.d., Mary Church Terrell Papers, (MCT), LOC box 21, reel 14.

⁴⁴² Women in the United States won the right to vote with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in June 4 1919; the amendment was ratified by the states August 18, 1920. Women in Britain attained the right to vote through a series of gradual amendments between 1918 and 1928. They ultimately won full suffrage rights July 2, 1928.

their race and sex. In a piece for *The Crisis* concerning the vital importance of suffrage in black women's struggle for equality, Mary Talbert spoke of the heightened challenge that black women faced in comparison to white women, noting "[i]t should not be necessary to struggle forever against popular prejudice, and with us as colored women, this struggle becomes two-fold, first because we are women and second, because we are colored women."⁴⁴³ For black clubwomen, the issue of suffrage was too important to forfeit to the personal whims and ideological differences among white women reformers.

Black women's involvement in the international women's movement also meant that they witnessed the struggles of other women of color in their attempts to work with white American and European female activists. In an era of high imperialism, "feminist orientalism" pervaded the international women's movement.⁴⁴⁴ As a discourse, feminist orientalism provided a justification for white women's civilizing mission by making assumptions about the backwardness of non-western cultures while failing to recognize the devastating effects of imperialism and racism in the lives of people living in colonized countries.⁴⁴⁵ As nationalist independence movements began to emerge in colonized countries women of color spoke out forcefully, denouncing white women's attempts to represent the issues most important to their nations and their communities. Margaret Cousins, a prominent Irish reformer often referred to as the "mother" of Indian feminism, remarked that with the rise of Indian nationalism, Indian women were less inclined to allow white

⁴⁴³ Mary B. Talbert, "Women and Colored Women," *The Crisis Magazine* (August, 1915), 184.

⁴⁴⁴ Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 79-80; Valerie Amos and Pratibha Prammar, "Challenging Imperial Feminism," *Feminist Review* 17 (July 1996): 3-19; Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 17-42; Burton, *Burdens of History*, 27-30.

⁴⁴⁵ Valerie Amos and Pratibha Prammar, "Challenging Imperial Feminism," *Feminist Review* 17 (July 1996): 3-19.

feminists to take a prominent role in progressive movements.⁴⁴⁶ Throughout the 1920s and 30s, women in India, Syria, Turkey and Egypt led the way in demanding independent national sections within the ICW. As a result these women not only gave voice to insurgent independence movements occurring throughout the colonized world, but they also directly challenged attempts by European women to speak for women living in colonized nations.⁴⁴⁷ Witnessing the similar struggles of these women buttressed African American women's recognition of the need for an autonomous space for women of color; subsequently, they began laying the foundations of a new identity that recognized the commonalities between women of color.

Although they were aware of and sympathized with the challenges of other women of color within the international women's movement, black American women were not always impervious to the same racist and sexist ideologies that white women used to advanced their own causes. Spurred by the mission of racial uplift—which was infused with ideas of class differentiation, chastity, temperance, social purity, and religious piety as signs of racial progress—African American clubwomen also promulgated the idea that the community's elites could serve as agents of Western civilization, especially in Africa. In coming together to form the ICWDR, African American clubwomen believed they could form coalitions with similarly situated, reform-minded women of other races to combat the racial prejudice they experienced within the established international organizations.⁴⁴⁸ In a 1924 interview with

⁴⁴⁶ Leila Rupp, "Challenging Imperialism in International Women's Organizations, 1888-1945," in *Identity Politics in the Women's Movement* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), 250-251. Indian women would also be quite vocal in pushing international women's organizations to create separate sections for colonized countries.

⁴⁴⁷ Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 51-81.

⁴⁴⁸ For more on respectability and African American women's civilizing mission see, Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, as well as Gaines' "Black Americans' Racial Uplift Ideology as "Civilizing Mission": Pauline E. Hopkins on Race and Imperialism," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 433-455.

the Chicago Defender, founder and ICWDR visionary, Margaret Murray Washington, gave voice to the profoundly different experiences of women of color and white women, and she explained why she saw fit to bring together a group of women “who are not members of the Anglo-Saxon race.”⁴⁴⁹ Despite the challenges that black clubwomen faced in organizing with white women, much of their work and reform efforts would still rely upon beneficial relationships with white women reformers. For that reason, Washington was careful to not publicly denounce white women, but instead she wanted to highlight only that women of color could address their own unique challenges, “[w]omen of the Anglo-Saxon race are not barred because of antagonistic reasons, but because they, not having the same problems as have women of the darker races have not the same interest and could add nothing to the determined purpose to ameliorate conditions for darker races throughout the world.”⁴⁵⁰

Black clubwomen maintained a commitment to interracial cooperation largely because of their reliance upon the funding and patronage of better-funded white women’s organizations. Black women reformers also saw themselves as ambassadors for their communities who served to improve white attitudes toward blacks and also paved inroads into mainstream society for more African Americans.⁴⁵¹ Interracial cooperation was a vital strategy in eradicating racial antipathy among the broader white population. Nonetheless, the repeated instances of discrimination black women experience within predominantly white women’s organizations significantly transformed their view of the international women’s movement and revealed to them the limits of universality when attempting to work with white women as international activists.

⁴⁴⁹ “International Council Holds Public Meeting,” *Chicago Defender*, August 16, 1924.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*. See especially Gilmore’s discussion of Sarah Dudley Petty, 99-105.

The early part of the twentieth century saw countless disruptions for African American communities. In the nearly fifty years since the end of slavery, the civil rights gained by black Americans were swiftly undermined by a series of discriminatory statutes and legislation as well as state-sanctioned violence that strove to return black Americans to their former condition in the South. In 1896, the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, set the tone of what African Americans could expect in the ensuing decades, solidifying the notion of “separate but equal” and ensuring that blacks were barred from the most basic attributes of daily life. As blacks migrated out of the South, seeking greater opportunities in the North, they were greeted again by numerous violent outbreaks instigated by whites who resented black competition for jobs, housing, and social and political power. The systematic lynching of socially, economically, and politically successful black Americans, which began in the late nineteenth century and continued unabated in the early part of the new century, embodied one of the many injustices meant to sever African American’s access to the privileges of citizenship.⁴⁵²

Black Americans responded to these intensified racist attacks on their rights and communities with rugged determination, renewed optimism about possibilities for change,

⁴⁵² Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Howard Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1955; repr., Oxford University Press, 2002); Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1951); Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Jane Dailey, Glenda Gilmore, and Bryant Simon, ed. *Jumpin’ Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co, 2008); Stephanie Cole and Natalie J. Ring, ed. *The Folly of Jim Crow: Rethinking the Segregated South* (Austin: Texas A&M University Press, 2012); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*; William H. Chafe, Raymond Gavins, and Robert Korstad, ed. *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell About Life in the Segregated South* (New York: The New Press, 2014).

and an emergent, culturally-defined militancy.⁴⁵³ Both World War I and the Great Migration were momentous in the everyday lived experiences of black Americans and also key to transforming the character of black protest in compelling ways. The thousands of black Americans who migrated to the North seeking opportunity found both unskilled and semi-skilled labor that paid wages much higher than the rates provided by southern agricultural labor. The sheer density of black populations and the absence of the more suffocating aspects of southern racism created conditions for greater economic and political advancement as well as opportunities for black Americans to exalt their own artistic expressions and African-descended past.⁴⁵⁴

While many new migrants in the North found opportunities to create new ways of life for themselves and their families, they also had to learn how to physically and psychologically navigate spaces populated by people and ideas that were wholly unfamiliar. Their encounters

⁴⁵³ Selected works on New Negro radicalism, see Cornelius L. Bynum, *A. Phillip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Barbara Foley, *Spectres of 1919: Class and Nation in the Making of the New Negro* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003); David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979); Tony Martin, *Literary Garveyism: Garvey, Black Arts, and the Harlem Renaissance* (Dover, MA: Majority Press, 1983); William J. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left: African American Writing and Communism Between the Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Jeffrey B. Perry, *Hubert Harrison: The Voice of Harlem Radicalism, 1883-1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth Century America* (New York: Verso, 1998); Henry Louis Gates, Jr. "The New Negro and the Black Image: From Booker T. Washington to Alain Locke." Freedom's Story, TeacherServe©. National Humanities Center. July 7, 2014. <<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1917beyond/essays/newnegro.htm>>; Joyce Moore Turner, *Caribbean Crusaders and the Harlem Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005); William L. Van Deburg, *Modern Black Nationalism: From Marcus Garvey to Louis Farrakhan* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

⁴⁵⁴ Eric Arnesen, ed. *Black Protest and the Great Migration: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002); Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, and Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); James M. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Theodore Kornweibel, Jr., *No Crystal Stair: Black Life and the Messenger, 1917-1928* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975); Mark Robert Schneider, *"We Return Fighting": The Civil Rights Movement in the Jazz Age* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002); Joyce Moore Turner, ed. *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 260-267; J. Trent Alexander, "The Great Migration in Comparative Perspective: Interpreting the Urban Origins of Southern Black Migrants to Depression-Era Pittsburgh," *Social Science History* 22, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 349-376.

with West Indian immigrants had a tremendous impact upon black communities in the North. Often, these Caribbean migrants came to the US more politically radical after itinerant journeys that included Europe, the Caribbean, and Latin America. The relationships between black Americans and their Caribbean neighbors were often fraught with hostility and conflict, but these encounters nonetheless produced new thinking and new theories that became the basis for a more militant racial protest.⁴⁵⁵

World War I was a watershed moment that created the basis for a global-centered politics and cultivated an extant desire for a Diasporic, transnational community. Many African Americans grew to see the war as a familial skirmish among Europeans over their control of colonized nations. Galvanized by the efforts of colonized people in Egypt, India, and other national minorities in Eastern Europe to push for self-determination, national and ethnic sovereignty, as well as acknowledgement of their rightful place as members of an international arrangement, black Americans began to define their own plight as part of a worldwide struggle for political rights and recognition. The service of thousands of black troops overseas not only demonstrated the vulnerabilities of American racism but also served to deepen this fictive kinship between African Americans and black and brown people abroad. In a 1918 edition of *The Crisis*, W. E. B. Du Bois, who had planned to write a sweeping history of the Great War and black Americans, articulated the common destiny of people of color as a result of the conflict, “soon or late” he prognosticated, the world would see an independent China, self-government for India and Egypt, and “an Africa for the Africans and not merely for business exploitation. Out of this war will rise, too, an American

⁴⁵⁵ Thomas Holt, *Children of Fire: A History of African Americans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 252-260. Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth Century America* (New York: Verso, 1998), 122-184. See also, Mildred C. Fierce, *The Pan-African Idea in the United States, 1900-1919: African American Interest in Africa and Interaction With West Africa* (New York: Garland, 1993); Stephens, *Black Empire*; Turner, *Caribbean Crusaders and the Harlem Renaissance*;

Negro, with a right to vote and a right to work and a right to live without insult.”⁴⁵⁶ Although Pan-African conferences had occurred since the turn of the century, the post-war Peace Conference occurring at Versailles presented one of the first large-scale efforts on the part of black Americans to represent their concerns within an international body.⁴⁵⁷ Northern migration empowered African Americans by increasing their political and cultural power in major metropolitan areas. Likewise, military service overseas during the First World War also facilitated greater interaction between African Americans and other members of the Diaspora and contributed to great social and political consciousness. This new consciousness would consequently change the landscape of black political protest in a way that would infuse the movement for racial equality with a new militancy and urgency.⁴⁵⁸

African Americans’ claims of being part of a global community of people of color oppressed by imperial exploitation were informed not only by the United States’s complicity in the violent rapacity of Europe, but also by America’s own determination to compete with other Western nations as a formidable imperial power. As America’s role in the changing geopolitical climate became more complex, so did the ways in which black Americans identified themselves as part of broader social and political movements against injustice. In a little more than twenty years, the US utilized military force to intervene in the name of hemispheric stability in several conflicts throughout the Caribbean and Latin America.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁶ W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Black Soldier,” *The Crisis* 16 (June 1918), 60, quoted in David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 551-552.

⁴⁵⁷ Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and US Foreign Policy, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 16-20.

⁴⁵⁸ Du Bois, “The Negro Mind Reaches Out,” 385-414; Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro*; Michelle Ann Stephens, *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 39-55; Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 13-62; Isabel Wilkerson, *Warmth of Other Suns*, 1-16.

⁴⁵⁹ Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 26-34. For detailed discussion of American imperial actions especially in the Caribbean and Pacific Islands, see Philip Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban War and the Birth of American Imperialism I* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972); Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United*

American military might was combined with the pressure that US financial institutions imposed on foreign economies to further American financial interests in global markets. While many African Americans expressed varying attitudes toward US imperialism—from support, to ambivalence, to outright rejection—Pan-Africanism provided a basis for identifying with other non-white groups who bore the brunt of imperialist racism and exploitation. In *Rising Wind*, Brenda Gayle Plummer extolled the globalizing effect that Pan-Africanism had on black protest, noting that, “Pan-Africanism expanded Afro-American consciousness by rescaling questions of racial justice to global dimensions.”⁴⁶⁰ The very phrase “the darker races,” popularized by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and employed by a wide range of scholars, activists, and organizations in the early part of the twentieth century, indicated growing awareness of a social, political, and cultural identity that encompassed more than just the descendants of Africa.⁴⁶¹

From the organization’s inception, black clubwomen used the NACW to express their concern for people of African descent. They focused especially on Western Africa and the Caribbean, where several clubwomen held stake as missionaries and as the wives and relatives of American diplomats. When Ida B. Gibbs Hunt reported in 1906 on the work she had done in Madagascar—the nation where both her husband and father were stationed as US diplomats—she thought it was especially important to report on the particular hardships of

States, 1492-Present (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005), 297-320, 407-408; Louis Perez, *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Perez, *Cuba Between Empires, 1878-1902* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007); Richard Immerman, *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Paul Kramer, *Race, Empire and the United States and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

⁴⁶⁰ Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 12.

⁴⁶¹ Elliot Rudwick, “Du Bois’ Last Year as *Crisis* Editor” *The Journal of Negro History* 27, no. 4 (October 1958), 526-533.

women. She revealed the development of burgeoning anti-imperialist nationalism among African people, noting that “because of the subjection to which Africans have had to submit, the general cry now is “Africa for Africans.” Similarly, Georgia De Baptist Faulkner returned from Liberia, where she served as a missionary while residing with her husband, who was a city physician. Faulkner reported that mission work performed among young women and their children furthered the intention of “instilling right principles within the child.” She concluded her remarks by sharing a desire to see greater communication between black American club women and women in Western Africa: “[t]here could be some way,” she suggested, “whereby direct communication, as well as transportation, could be opened between the colored women of America and the colored women of Africa; also, that some day one of our conventions might be held in Africa.”⁴⁶²

Reflecting their investment in Victorian notions of piety, respectability, industriousness, and domesticity, clubwomen saw their activities in these parts of the world as part of an extended uplift project that they were performing for their own communities at home. Part of this campaign also included trying to influence the imperial powers to afford colonized peoples more autonomy and control over their lives and nations.⁴⁶³ At the 1906 convention, members of the NACW charged the Executive Council with the responsibility of sending a

⁴⁶² *Minutes of the Fifth Convention of the National Association of Colored Women, Held July 9-14, 1906, NACW Records I*, reel 1, frames 0298-0317. Both Hunt and Faulkner were charged with beginning the work of founding an International Association of Colored Women spanning the U.S. and Africa.

⁴⁶³ The records of the NACW are particularly rich in depicting early efforts of black women’s collective international activism. The NACW included several women who served in foreign fields and these women used their knowledge and experience to inform other members of the importance of looking to the world stage for a greater field of activism. See especially the minutes from the 1906 NACW conference held in Detroit, Ida Gibbs Hunt spoke about her work among the women of Madagascar. Georgia DeBaptist Faulkner, recently returned from Liberia, spoke about her work among children in the country. Faulkner suggested that clubwomen needed to seek a way to have permanent communication between the black American women and women in Africa. Both Hunt and Faulkner were charged with investigating the possibility of creating an international association for black American and African women. It appears that nothing came from this. *Minutes Fifth Convention of the National Association of Colored Women* (n.p., 1906) in *NACW Records Part 1*, reel 1, frames 0298-0317

petition to the United States Congress denouncing “the atrocities enacted on the Congo” by Belgium colonial administrators—“atrocities attracting the serious and sympathetic attention of the entire civilized world.”⁴⁶⁴

In addition to the challenges black women faced in working with the international women’s movement, they also faced new developments in black protest that embraced race pride, militancy, and national self-determination. The period that poet and reformer Frances E. W. Harper defined as the “woman’s era” had given way to new forms of black protest that redefined the history of the African American experience in the United States and, most importantly, eschewed conservative, accommodationist uplift strategies for a more militant, empowered, and subversive stance.⁴⁶⁵ Both Deborah Gray White and Paula Giddings have written about the ways that this era of New Negro consciousness challenged the social and cultural justifications for black clubwomen’s activism and reform. As cultural and protest movements, such as the Harlem Renaissance and Garveyism, emphasized a new self-awareness and militancy, black populations who had been the beneficiaries of black clubwomen’s reform work had new ways to define the issues most important to their communities.⁴⁶⁶ Organizations such as the NAACP and National Urban League—groups that black clubwomen helped to establish—were often providing community services and support

⁴⁶⁴ The 1918 edition of *National Notes* included part of the final text of the petition. It is unclear when the petition was finally sent to Congress. It reads, in part: “To the Congress of the United State{s} of America: Therefore, understanding that testimony relating to the existence of such grave abuses as recited above in the administration of the Congo Free State has been submitted to your honorable bodies:--We, the undersigned petitioners, respectfully ask that you will give the said testimony your most earnest attention, and that you will take such action as you may deem fitting and necessary for the promotion of an impartial investigation of conditions in the said Congo Free State, and for an authoritative adjudication of the issues to which these conditions are related.” “NACW’s Petition to Congress Concerning the Congo Situation,” *National Notes*, 1918 quoted in Jacqueline Anne Rouse, “Out of the Shadow of Tuskegee: Margaret Murray Washington, Social Activism, and Race Vindication,” *The Journal of Negro History* 18, nos. 1-4 (Winter-Autumn, 1996), 46n28.

⁴⁶⁵ White, *Too Heavy A Load*, 110-113; Darlene Clark Hine, *Hine Sight: Black Women and The Re-Construction of American History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 15-20; Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 184-197; Ula Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 83-85.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

(that had once been the purview of black women) with more resources and greater financial backing from white benefactors. Ultimately, these developments were good for black communities, but they placed new pressures on black clubwomen to carve out space for their voices when dealing with communities that were no longer preoccupied with Victorian notions of piety and respectability, and were instead more inclined to see themselves as workers in an urban, industrialized, and global economy.⁴⁶⁷

The Black Nationalism espoused by Marcus Garvey captured the imaginations of thousands of new migrants to urban centers by focusing on a militant separatism and black entrepreneurship. Garvey's UNIA was one of the first truly black transnational movements of the early twentieth century.⁴⁶⁸ Himself a native of Jamaica, Garvey strongly encouraged blacks to relinquish their social and cultural ties to the United States and instead recognize Africa as the true home of black people. Garvey's massive appeal was far-reaching as he called on black people to define themselves beyond the boundaries of the nation. Historians Ula Taylor and Barbara Bair have demonstrated that black women found several avenues to

⁴⁶⁷ For decades, African-American clubwomen operated on a woman-centered race progress ideology that touted black women's unique ability to address the injustices of discrimination and race hatred that afflicted black communities. They often focused on Victorian principles of piety, respectability, industriousness as ways to lift black people to prosperity and equality and to break the cycles of racist oppression and exclusion from the privileges of citizenship. Black clubwomen had on many occasions openly criticized black men's inability to lead their communities. They proclaimed that race progress in the years following emancipation would best be fulfilled under the purview of black women. Anna Julia Cooper perhaps best articulated this idea in *A Voice from the South*. See also, Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 95-102, 203-204; White, *Too Heavy A Load*, 133-136; Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "Discontented Black Feminist: Prelude and Postscript to the Passage of the Nineteenth Amendment," in *Decades of Discontent: The Women's Movement, 1920-1940* ed. Lois Scharf and Joan M. Jensen (Wesport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 267-268. Cheryl Hicks has written the most definitive book on this topic. *Talk with You Like a Woman* examines the tensions that existed between new black female migrants to New York City and the established black female reformers who sought to mission to them. These young women challenged the authority of their female elders in ways that upset black reformers. As thousands of young women of color migrated to northern, urban centers and experienced newfound independence and control over their lives, they rejected ideologies of respectability that held them to high standards to piety and chastity. Instead, young working-class women sought to define their own ideas of respectability in ways that highlighted their financial independence, their willingness to challenge agents of authority, and their ability to define their lives on their own terms. Cheryl Hicks, *Talk With You Like A Woman: African American Women, Justice, and Reform in New York, 1890-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 103-121.

⁴⁶⁸ White, *Too Heavy a Load*, 120-124, 135-137; Stephens, *Black Empire*, 81-83.

exercise leadership in the movement, but Garvey almost exclusively articulated his ideas of empowered blackness in masculine terms: “this is the age of men, not pygmies, not of serfs and peons and dogs, but men, and we who make up the membership of the Universal Negro Improvement Association reflect the new manhood of the Negro.”⁴⁶⁹ Deborah Gray White argued that Garvey’s movement—despite significant involvement of women—created an active political space primarily for men that in many ways countered the woman-centered narrative of empowerment that had defined late-nineteenth-century racial uplift.⁴⁷⁰

Garvey encouraged African Americans to eschew cultural assimilation in the west and instead look to Africa as a source of collective history and identity. According to Garvey, the rape and pillaging of Africa in the name of Christianity and civilization served as an imperative for people of African descent to reclaim the territory and resources of the continent for self-protection, self-government, and self-determination. Garvey was among the vanguard of race leaders in the 1920s who harnessed black frustrations with the injustices and failures of the post-World War I era for political advancement. In the process, he engendered an impassioned race pride, which laid the groundwork for an empowered Pan-African movement.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁹ *The Negro World*, June 23, 1923 cited in Barbara Bair, “True Women, Real Men: Gender Ideology, and Social Roles in the Garvey Movement,” in *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Woman’s History* ed. Dorothy O. Helly and Susan M. Reverby (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1992), 156.

⁴⁷⁰ “But the Renaissance itself fell under masculine influence. Although not all of the literature and poetry of the era was written by men, most of it was. Black men also received most the grants and patronage from philanthropists, and they were freer to frequent bars where the intelligentsia gathered. More mobile tan women, who were often tied to the home with familial responsibilities, men could travel, expand their experiences, and generally develop as artists.” White, *Too Heavy a Load*, 120. For more on the role of women in the UNIA, see Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey* and Bair, “True Women, Real Men: Gender, Ideology, and Social Roles in the Garvey Movement,” 154-166. Bair especially has greatly informed historians understanding of the roles played by women in the UNIA. She argues that women were the “backbone” of the movement, playing vital roles in UNIA’s most important initiatives. For more on this see Bair, “Comparing the Role of Women in the Garvey Movement,” Marcus Garvey: Look for Me in the Whirlwind, 2001, accessed May 25, 2014, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/garvey/sfeature/sf_forum_14.html.

⁴⁷¹ Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 23-29.

The challenges facing black clubwomen in the women's movement, as well as the changing landscape of racial reform, compelled them to change and adapt the strategies of their organizing. These changes would become manifest in the way that clubwomen articulated the objectives of the ICWDR. Black clubwomen used the ICWDR to define an autonomous, collective, woman-centered space for activism among women of color. Their stated mission reflected an awareness of the ways in which the world was changing, as well as the necessity for a more global approach to reform. It also reflected the philosophy that women necessarily had to play a central role in bringing change. The ICWDR existed as part of black clubwomen's vision to ensure that women of color remained prominent and constructive within the era's most active and influential movements against prejudice and discrimination as well as an earnest attempt to frame black women's lives as part of a global racial and political identity encompassing all women of color. While several women took part in the founding of the ICWDR and the subsequent drafting of the group's objectives and principles, the organization was in truth the brainchild of educator and movement leader Margaret Murray Washington.⁴⁷²

Washington's Vision: Imagined Community of Women of the Darker Races

As a long-time leader and exemplar within the black clubwomen's movement, Margaret Murray Washington proved well aware of the myriad challenges facing African American communities as well as the leaders and reformers representing the interests of the race. Like most of her contemporaries, internationalism had long been a part of Washington's vision

⁴⁷² Washington wrote, "For many years it has been a dream of the writer to see a small group of women banded together for a definite purpose—to study the conditions of all women of the darker races and to work out plans by which we might all be benefited educationally, socially and politically." [undated] MCT papers, LOC Box 21, reel 14. Washington was also responsible for contacting clubwomen around the country and inviting them into the organization.

and activism long before the creation of the ICWDR. Washington graduated from Atlanta University and subsequently served for many years as an instructor at Tuskegee Institute where she frequently taught courses focused on women in Western Africa and the Caribbean⁴⁷³ Washington also served as the representative of black clubwomen within the National Council of Women, the ICW's national section for American women. Much of her international experience also came from traveling with her husband and supporting his endeavors. Washington accompanied her husband during a summer 1899 trip to Europe during which Booker T. Washington played a significant role in facilitating the budding Pan-African movement led by Henry Sylvester Williams.⁴⁷⁴ Williams convinced Booker T. Washington to attend one of the meetings of his pioneering Pan-African organization, the African Association. While he never became an active member within the organization, Booker T. Washington used his power and influence to promote the coming Pan-African Congress, advising his followers to participate in what he saw as very important race work. Booker T. Washington remarked that his experiences during this trip "heightened his awareness of the welfare of subjugated people in various parts of the world."⁴⁷⁵ During this same trip, Margaret Washington attended the International Council of Women meeting with her husband in London, England and secured an audience with the Queen, which was

⁴⁷³ Jacqueline Anne Rouse, "Out of the Shadow of Tuskegee: Margaret Murray Washington, Social Activism and Race Vindication," *The Journal of Negro History* 81, Nos. 1-4 (Winter-Autumn, 1996), 41.

⁴⁷⁴ For more on Williams see, Mathurin, Owen, *Henry Sylvester Williams and the Origins of the Pan-African Movement, 1869-1911* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976); Marika Sherwood, *Origins of Pan-Africanism: Henry Sylvester Williams, Africa, and the African Diaspora* (New York: Routledge, 2012). For more on Pan-African consciousness and organization, as well as, the African American and African Caribbean connection see, Edward L. Cox, "Rekindling the Ancestral Memory: King Ja Ja of Opobo in St. Vincent and Barbados, 1888-1891"; Cox, "Race Men: The Pan African Aspects of William Galwey Donovan's and T. Albert Maryshow's Campaign for Political change on Grenada," *Journal of Caribbean History* 36, no.1 (2002): 69-99.

⁴⁷⁵ Washington quoted in David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 248-249. Of Washington, Lewis says, "The success of Williams's novel effort [of the first Pan-African Congress in London in 1900] was in no small degree due to the influence of Booker T. Washington."

covered in the August 1899 edition of *National Notes*.⁴⁷⁶ A little more than a decade later, in April 1912, Booker T. Washington convened “The International Conference on the Negro” at Tuskegee Institute where he laid out a three point plan focused on social conditions in foreign countries, foreign missions, and education to help promote the Tuskegee model of industrial education to black people living throughout the world.⁴⁷⁷

Washington had for many years discussed with her husband her desire to create an organization for women of color dedicated to international issues. She was encouraged by her husband’s assertions that black people needed to engage in internationally focused activism in America and throughout the world.⁴⁷⁸ Booker T. Washington had long used his position at Tuskegee to engage in the emergent Pan-African movement, to speak out on imperialism, and to expand the African American missionary network further into the continent of Africa.⁴⁷⁹ What is perhaps most interesting to note is that the educational model and the fact-finding committee structure that served as the basis of the ICWDR’s work almost exactly mirrored the structure outlined by Booker T. Washington at “The International Conference on the Negro” April 1912.⁴⁸⁰ Given Washington’s close working relationship with her husband, it is well known that she shared many of his views, and, most likely, the beginnings

⁴⁷⁶ “Tea with the Queen” *National Notes*, August 1899, 4.

⁴⁷⁷ Robert M. Park, “Tuskegee International Conference on the Negro” *The Journal of Race Development* 3, no. 1 (July 1912), 117-120.

⁴⁷⁸ In May 1924 Charlotte clubwoman Mary Jackson McCrorey wrote an article about the work of the ICWDR. The article discussed the conversations that Washington had with her husband about the possibilities of creating such a group and his eager approval of the concept. Mary Jackson McCrorey to Margaret Murray Washington, May 16, 1924, MCT, MSRC, box 102-12, folder 240.

⁴⁷⁹ Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 112-172.

⁴⁸⁰ Robert M. Park, “Tuskegee International Conference on the Negro,” 117-120. Also see Booker T. Washington, “Opening Address: The International Conference on the Negro, Tuskegee, Alabama, April 17th 1912,” accessed May 1, 2012, <http://www.btwociety.org/library/speeches/07.php>. B.T. Washington’s hope for the three day conference was that attendees would take the methods used at Tuskegee and use them to support people of color throughout the world, he said, “...in observing the methods that we are trying to employ at Tuskegee and then, in so far as it is possible, in informal discussion based upon their observations to see to what extent the methods here can be applied to the problems concerning the people in the countries that are populated by the darker races.”

of the ICWDR were kindled in conversations and engagements with her husband as well as in her early work at Tuskegee.⁴⁸¹ Washington's efforts provide insight into an important yet often overlooked moment where it is possible to trace the connection between an emergent and ever-changing black internationalism and a distinctly feminist activist vision. The ICWDR represented Washington's effort to engage women of color in a concerted, collective effort to define the role of women in a global battle against oppression and exploitation. Washington spearheaded the efforts to bring NACW members to the ICWDR, and she played a pivotal role in articulating the vision and objectives for the organizations during its founding.

At the first official meeting of the ICWDR in 1922, which occurred after the NACW's Biennial meeting in Richmond, Virginia, members gathered in Washington, DC to draft an early version of the constitution that was later refined and edited during the subsequent year and a half. After electing Washington president, ICWDR members elected several officers and established various committees to carry out the most important work of the organization: the foreign relations committee was headed by Philadelphia clubwoman Addie Dickerson; the committee on education was headed by Mary B Talbert; and Lugenia Hope was the head of the Social Committee. Mary Church Terrell and Addie Hunton were elected to serve as first and second vice-presidents, respectively.⁴⁸² While paying special attention to Haiti and Africa, the constitution affirmed their intention to study the lives and conditions of women and children "the world over," while also developing social programs to help improve those

⁴⁸¹ In 1924, Mary Jackson McCrorey sent a brief history about Washington and the ICWDR to Washington for approval. In it she stated that the Council was not a "spasmodic thing" but instead an idea that Washington had long envisioned for clubwomen and that her husband had approved and encouraged among black clubwomen. Mary Jackson McCrorey to Margaret Murray Washington, August 8, 1924, MCT Papers, MSRC, box 102-12, folder 240.

⁴⁸² International Council of the Women of the Darker Races of the World," [1922], MCT papers box 21, reel 14.

conditions.⁴⁸³ Founding members intended to eventually create an organization representing socially active and organized women from all over the world, eventually comprising the ICWDR of one-hundred American members and fifty foreign members.⁴⁸⁴ Anticipating the time and effort it would take to build the membership of the ICWDR, members instead focused their earliest efforts on broadening the awareness of their members, expanding their knowledge of other nations and foreign affairs, and encouraging members to view themselves as part of a multi-ethnic, multi-racial community of women of color. To further that aim the most important work of the organization was the creation of study groups of clubwomen called “Committees of Seven.” Similar to study groups that Washington had formed in previous years at Tuskegee, the committees were essentially consciousness raising groups where clubwomen gathered to read selected texts, travel, organize presentations by foreign women, and exchange information about the history and current events of foreign nations.⁴⁸⁵

Indeed for Washington and other founding members, the acquisition of knowledge, especially about oneself and one’s history, was an inherently political act. Washington believed that one of the greatest inhibitors to the progress and achievement of people of color, especially on the world stage, was a lack of awareness of themselves and their own history. Without pride and a strong awareness of self, people of color could not expect to be major actors in world affairs, and therefore could not play major roles in transforming the

⁴⁸³ ICWDR Constitution [no date] MCT papers box 21, reel, 14.

⁴⁸⁴ One of the requirements for admission was that potential members had to already be engaged in significant social work on behalf of the racial community.

⁴⁸⁵ International Council of the Women of the Darker Races of the World,” [1922], MCT papers box 21, reel 14; ICWDR Constitution [no date] MCT papers box 21, reel, 14. The term “consciousness raising group” was popularized by various feminist activists in the twentieth century. For more on what it entails see, Susan Brownmiller, *In Our Time: A Memoir of a Revolution* (New York: Dial Press, 2000); Chicago Women’s Liberation Union, “How to Start Your Own Consciousness Raising Group,” (1971), Chicago Women’s Liberation Union Archive, <https://www.uic.edu/orgs/cwluherstory/CWLUArchive/cwlu.html>, accessed July 15, 2015.

circumstances of their own lives in the nations where they lived. In her 1924 address, Washington spoke about the importance of race pride in national progress. The final version of the ICWDR constitution would reflect this language almost verbatim:

Our object is the dissemination of knowledge of peoples of color the world over, in order that there may be a larger appreciation of their history and accomplishments and so that they themselves may have a greater degree of race pride for their own achievements and touch a greater pride in themselves.⁴⁸⁶

Even as Washington indicated that the goal of the Committees of Seven was to help increase participants' pride in the achievements of their race, the ICWDR mission was also motivated by more heuristic ideals. In a letter to Lugenia Burns Hope, Washington explained that greatest concern for ICWDR members had to be the lack of literature in schools that taught black children about their own history. Therefore one of the objectives of the ICWDR was to get new literature in schools for black children, literature that taught them about their own history and the world:

The first thing we are doing, is trying to get into every school, private, public and otherwise Negro Literature and History. We are not trying to displace any other literature or history, but trying to get all children of the country acquainted with the Negro. We feel that we can do this if we all pull together. Go at it carefully and thoughtfully, in the schools where you have influence.⁴⁸⁷

Washington went on to elaborate on this critical pedagogy of women of color, explaining that it was a matter of self-preservation for the race, especially the younger generations:⁴⁸⁸

I think you will be surprised to know how many schools North and South even our own schools where our children are taught nothing except literature of the

⁴⁸⁶ “[no title] Address by Margaret Washington,” November 10, 1924, MCT Papers MSRC, box 102-12, folders 238-240.

⁴⁸⁷ Margaret Murray Washington to Lugenia Burns Hope, September 15, 1922. MSRC MCT papers box 102-12, folder 239.

⁴⁸⁸ I am greatly indebted to Christine Nganga for informing my thinking about critical pedagogy and women of color, African American women specifically.

Caucasian race. We are not fighting any race, we are simply looking for our own. The first law of nature is Self-Preservation.⁴⁸⁹

Washington hoped to transform the ways that young people of color thought about their role in history and place in the world. ICWDR members relied upon their experience and expertise as educators and school administrators and, overall, stewards of childhood education. The focus on education reflected the centrality of education to black women's programs for racial reform. This was an era in which education remained one of the greatest avenues of professional advancement for black women. Most ICWDR members possessed either a background in education, founded their own educational institutions, or they were married to the deans and principals of the nation's most prominent African American schools. This meant that they were in prime positions to transform the educational platform in black schools at the time and Washington intended for members to use those connections to lobby for the necessary changes to school curriculums. In a letter to Washington, Lugenia Hope emphasized the importance of the committee work among black women and the importance of becoming intimately familiar with the assigned texts in order to make the best case to school officials for changing the curriculum.⁴⁹⁰ Highlighting the imperative that ICWDR members initiate such a program, Washington declared, "If we, as teachers, do not think to do this, who will do it?"⁴⁹¹ ICWDR members' ultimate intention was to create an

⁴⁸⁹ Margaret Murray Washington to Lugenia Burns Hope, September 15, 1922. MSRC MCT papers box 102-12, folder 239

⁴⁹⁰ "We must be very careful with our program—we must know our job when we go the Supts of schools. We must be able to discuss each book, show the fine points so we must study our books and motion for [illegible] the book in the schools." Lugenia [Ginnie] Hope to Margaret Murray Washington, September 21, 1922, MCT papers, MSRC Box 102-12, Folder 239

⁴⁹¹ Margaret Murray Washington, [no date], MCT papers, LOC, box 21, reel 14.

educational model that could be used by women of color to represent the histories and accomplishments of their nations and races.⁴⁹²

The task of establishing a program of black history for school age children was carried out in conjunction with the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC), where Washington and several prominent black clubwomen were members. In 1925, the CIC created a ten-year program to improve the quality of education at black schools in the South. The goal of implementing courses in black history and literature to share with schools throughout the South was quickly taken up by black women educators, many of whom played central roles in the schools as both teachers and administrators. The women of the ICWDR believed that the educational and consciousness-raising focus of the organization made it the perfect platform to carry forth this important work.⁴⁹³ By 1930, ICWDR members had created an elaborate school curriculum based on African American history to be used for school age children. The curriculum is remarkable not only for its comprehensiveness, but also because of how effectively it utilized the most forward thinking schools of thought at the time. The curriculum reflected a particular interest in showing the ways that social phenomena played a key role in shaping the racial experience of black people. Sections of the curriculum focused

⁴⁹²Benedict Anderson partly informs my thinking here. In founding the ICWDR black clubwomen were engaging in the creation of their own imagined community. The identity that they were creating for women of color the world over was not inherent or natural, but rather constructed within the specific historical context of post-WWI global order. This identity was limited to women from the non-white, colonized nations; they imagined themselves as sovereign and free to make decisions concerning their own direction unencumbered by any imperial or national entities and their recognition of a community of women of color sought to minimize the differences among their members—class and social—in order to emphasize a global identity. The ICWDR contained all of the elements that Anderson outlined for the creation of modern nationalism. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso Books, 1991), 6-7.

⁴⁹³Linda Rochell Lane *A Documentary of Mrs. Booker T. Washington* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 221-222.

on economic explanations of racial antipathy toward blacks and also focused on centrality of black labor to both agricultural and industrial economies.⁴⁹⁴

Washington relied on the works of historian Carter G. Woodson to create a new curriculum for school children and she also appealed to Woodson for his personal advice on the best works to share with ICWDR members. In 1922, Washington wrote to Woodson and informed him of her desire to integrate Negro History and Negro Literature” into those schools that served African American children, “Do you think the time for it is right?” she implored, “I certainly think so.”⁴⁹⁵ Washington also asked Woodson to offer a list of books that especially addressed the history of women of color in the Caribbean, Africa, as well as India, which could be used by the education committee to design a course of study for ICWDR members and for the new curriculum they would offer to the school systems.⁴⁹⁶ When Washington asked clubwomen to begin forming their own study groups to review the most relevant literature for the new school curriculum, one of the first books she recommended was Woodson’s recent publication, *The Negro in Our History*. Woodson’s book, which he revised and expanded in several editions throughout the 1920s, was a pioneering work that aimed to create a global vision of African Americans and their history. Woodson’s narrative begins in Africa and proceeds by explaining the role played by Africans and African-descended people in the development of the Western world. Woodson’s work was part of an emerging school of black scholars in the early twentieth century that stressed the importance of Africans as world historical actors and creators of a refined, intellectual

⁴⁹⁴ “An Outline for A Study Program on Race Relations,” MCT Papers, LOC box 21, reel 14.

⁴⁹⁵ Margaret Washington to Carter G. Woodson, October 3, 1922 quoted in Jacqueline Anne Rouse, “Out of the Shadow of Tuskegee: Margaret Murray Washington, Social Activism and Race Vindication,” *The Journal of Negro History* (Winter/Autumn, 1996), 41.

⁴⁹⁶ Margaret Washington to Carter G. Woodson, October 3, 1922 quoted in Jacqueline Anne Rouse, “Out of the Shadow of Tuskegee: Margaret Murray Washington, Social Activism and Race Vindication,” *The Journal of Negro History* 18, nos. 1-4 (Winter/Autumn, 1996), 41.

culture, but also endeavored to show the truly global nature of black history by revealing its existence within the nexus of the histories of Europe, Africa, and the Americas.⁴⁹⁷ Woodson's book was the perfect selection for Washington to offer clubwomen to facilitate their thinking about their connections to other countries and cultures.

The ICWDR's agenda of uncovering the past accomplishments of the race as a way to engender race pride was not only a central organizing principle of Afrocentric and Pan-African scholarship and activism of the era, but was also a core belief of early black feminist thought. Nineteenth and early-twentieth century African American women reformers from Maria Stewart to Fannie Barrier Williams to Anna Julia Cooper had long encouraged education, reading and scholarship as a form of empowerment for women.⁴⁹⁸ The ICWDR's emphasis on educational enrichment and consciousness-raising brought together practices that were central to the nascent black transnationalism of the twentieth century and activities that black women had long defined as part of feminist practice.⁴⁹⁹ Consciousness raising and education were for ICWDR members a core component of expanding the activism of black women further into the global arena.

While the ICWDR organized around a formal structure that included elected officers and committee members, the core of the work of the organization was completed in informal settings—churches, private homes, and community houses where women engaged with the

⁴⁹⁷ For a discussion of Woodson's interest in Africa, see Sterling Stuckey, *Going Through the Storm: The Influence of African American Art in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 120-137; Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro in Our History* (1922; Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2007), 22, 58, 71-81. For more on Woodson, see Jacquelin Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson: A Life in Black History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993).

⁴⁹⁸ See Beverly Guy-Sheftall, "Introduction: The Evolution of Feminist Consciousness Among African American Women," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought*, ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: New Press, 1995), 1-22.

⁴⁹⁹ For more discussion on the practices of black transnationalism, as well as black women's contributions to these practices, see Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 118-186.

most modern, forward-thinking scholarship in order to spark them into action. Clubwomen from all over the country wrote to Washington expressing their anticipation for the organization and the potential in what it could do for black clubwomen and women of color throughout the world. Prominent women of the NACW saw great need for an international coalition of women of color charged with addressing global forms of oppression. Sallie Stewart, president of the Indiana Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, wrote to Washington and expressed great excitement for the organization and its potential for women of color "...in its activities there is wonderful opportunity for women of the race in this country to say nothing of foreign countries."⁵⁰⁰ Maggie Lena Walker commented to Washington that she knew of so many women who knew "so little of the other darker races," and she thanked Washington for bringing "...attention to this phase of work."⁵⁰¹ Mary Talbert spoke to the need for bringing "the forward thinking women of China, Japan, and Constantinople and Africa. We need women from each one of these groups to join with us in solving the problem of the women of the darker races of the world."⁵⁰² Talbert's call reflects a vision that defined the work of black women from the very beginning: that only women have the ability to define and address their own concerns and challenges. In her letter to Washington, Talbert reaffirmed her commitment to a woman-centered political ideology and subsequently tied it to the idea that black women were part of a broader group of women who experienced disenfranchisement, social and economic exploitation, and racist oppression.

⁵⁰⁰ Sallie W. Stewart to Margaret Murray Washington, February 9, 1924, MSRC MCT papers, box 12-102, folders 239 and 240. MCT Papers, Moorland Spingarn Research Center.

⁵⁰¹ Maggie L. Walker to Margaret Murray Washington, October 16, 1924, MSRC, MCT papers, box 12-102, folders 239 and 240.

⁵⁰² Mary B. Talbert to the International Council of Women of the Darker Races, July 21, 1923, MSRC, MCT Papers, box 12-102, folders 239 and 240.

Talbert recognized the agency of women of color in dealing with their own unique experiences of oppression.⁵⁰³

ICWDR members were eager to write to Washington to recount their successes in recruiting clubwomen and to outline their individual courses of study. Arkansas clubwoman Mary Josenberger wrote to Washington proclaiming that she had “never enjoyed anything more in her life” than the Sunday meetings with fellow Committee of Seven members. In addition to reading literature suggested by Washington, Josenberger recounted that the women had spent the last couple of weeks covering Japan and China and intended to move on to India thereafter. For each nation, committee members covered topics, such as “Historical Facts,” “Government,” “Religion and Culture,” “Education,” and “International Relations.”⁵⁰⁴ In March 1925, New York City clubwoman and Y.W.C.A board member, Elizabeth Ross Haynes, wrote to Washington about a coming presentation by two of Haynes’s personal acquaintances who had just returned from trips to Haiti and India. Committee members often utilized their existing connections to bring women from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Haiti, Puerto Rico, India, China, and Japan into their groups, and they also encouraged the more well-traveled members to offer their own experiences abroad as a way to educate fellow clubwomen.⁵⁰⁵ Black clubwomen made good use of the resources available to them, including the existing institutional strength and organization of the NACW.

⁵⁰³ For more on the woman-center ideology of black clubwomen see, Guy-Sheftall, “The Evolution of Feminist Consciousness Among African American Women,” 1-22 and Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, see especially chapter 6.

⁵⁰⁴ Mary Josenberger to Margaret Murray Washington, December 20, 1924, MCT Papers, MSRC, box 12-102, folders 239 and 240. In a 1925 letter to Washington, Janie Porter Barrett wrote, “In March we take up the women of China, in April the women of India, in May the women of Africa and sometime later the women of Japan. The plan is to have each one dress in native costume and carry out their customs and manners in refreshments as well as dress.” Each member was also asked to share something she had learned about each country. Janie Porter Barrett to Margaret Murray Washington, March 6, 1925, MCT Papers, MSRC, box 12-102, folders 239 and 240.

⁵⁰⁵ Elizabeth Ross Haynes to Margaret Murray Washington, March 8, 1925, MCT Papers, MSRC, box 12-102, folder 239 and 240.

However, in their early efforts, members ran into a number of challenges that were the result of the difficulties of trying to form a truly international body of women of color.

Early Efforts and Challenges

Correspondence between Washington and the other women indicated that, given the already substantial organizational commitments of most ICWDR members, they found it difficult, at times, to be in the same city at the same time in order to proceed with the work of the organization. Members often expressed sentiments similar to those in a 1922 letter from Mary Jackson McCrorey (the ICWDR's correspondence secretary) to Margaret Washington. McCrorey recounted her months-long trip away from Charlotte, North Carolina, and offered her apologies for missing the most recent meeting in Washington, DC. While McCrorey was sad to miss the gathering, she learned of what had transpired from Lugenia Hope as they passed through Charlotte on their way to different destinations.⁵⁰⁶ In addition to the multiple commitments of the members, the organization also faced a series of financial difficulties, and members found that they lacked the resources and funding needed to support all of their activities. Collecting necessary funds from members continued to plague the organization for much of its existence. But these challenges did not stop ICWDR members from beginning to lay the foundation for a global program for women of color.⁵⁰⁷

Indeed, the creation of the ICWDR required mobilizing a group of prominent and active clubwomen who traveled the country for various engagements and professional duties, but

⁵⁰⁶ Mary Jackson McCrorey to Margaret Washington, September 18, 1922, MCT papers, MSRC box 102-12, folder 239.

⁵⁰⁷ Correspondence between Mary Josenberger, ICWDR Treasurer, and Margaret Murray Washington indicates ongoing financial difficulties of the organization. Mary Josenberger to Margaret Murray Washington, April 9, 1925, MCT Papers, MSRC, box 12-102, folder 239 and 240. Josenberger also sent a mass communication in May of 1925 imploring members to pay their dues on time. Mary Josenberger, May 1, 1925, MCT Papers, MSRC, box 12-102, folders 239 and 240

despite their many commitments, there was no doubt about their enthusiasm for and commitment to this new organization. NACW members saw great need for this work within existing programs for racial uplift, and they were unanimous that Washington was the best clubwoman to bring the organization into fruition.⁵⁰⁸

In addition to the consciousness-raising meetings of the Committees of Seven, the ICWDR also launched a series of initiatives in both Haiti and Western Africa to address the status of women and young girls. Haiti played a central role in the founding of the ICWDR and the development of its educational program. Haiti captured the imagination of African Americans ever since its triumph over European powers in the Haitian Revolution in 1804, which liberated the island and made it the first black republic in the Western Hemisphere.⁵⁰⁹ During the nearly twenty-year U.S. occupation of the island—beginning in 1915—under the guise of paternalistic tutelage, Haiti became the centerpiece of an anti-imperialist critique, as well as a source of great race pride among black people in the United States. Black clubwomen were especially concerned about the effect of the occupation upon women and young girls in Haiti; particularly troublesome were reports coming back from the island that white US soldiers subjected Haitian women to brutally violent treatment and sexual assault—an occurrence that touched a painful nerve with African American women.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁸ The following from a letter written by Mary Jackson McCrorey reflects the sentiment expressed by many women about Washington's fitness for leadership of the new organization: "I heartily commend all that was done; and in this connection let me express to you, my dear Mrs. Washington, my appreciation of your service in initiating this movement looking toward sympathetic understanding and cooperation among our women of the darker races. You are the one woman to stand at the head of this great big, vital job." Mary Jackson McCrorey to Margaret Murray Washington, September 18, 1922, MCT Papers, MSRC, box 12-102, folders 239 and 240.

⁵⁰⁹ Thomas O. Ott, *The Haitian Revolution, 1789-1804* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973); Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo, *Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness And Transnational Identity In The Nineteenth-Century Americas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

⁵¹⁰ Mary Church Terrell cited these reports in a March 1921 letter she wrote to Jane Addams denouncing WILPF's proposed resolution to remove black soldiers from occupied German territory because of charges of rape. Of white American soldiers' treatment of Haitian women, Terrell wrote, "Our own American soldiers treated the Haitian women brutally. On good authority it is asserted that young Haitian girls were not only

The ICWDR sent at least two fact-finding missions to Haiti in the 1920s. In 1922, Emily Williams, the wife of the dean of Tuskegee and a close associate of Washington, visited Haiti on behalf of the ICWDR. She returned to the island again in 1923 for a few months. Prior to Williams's selection, ICWDR members intently deliberated over who was best to represent the organization and who could be the most reliable to return with a thorough and thoughtful report. Deciding to send a representative to Haiti required soliciting rather large donations from members, so the chosen individual had to be a representative woman—someone who best embodied the values and impeccable reputations of clubwomen.⁵¹¹ These deliberations reflected the privileged, middle class biases of ICWDR members, but also exposed black clubwomen's anxieties about scrutiny of their work by those outside of the movement. Some suggested Washington lead the investigation in order to allay the concerns of members, but this was not possible due to Washington's advanced age and her other commitments. Williams was a perfect fit for the mission due to her connection to Tuskegee and her marriage to a prominent leader within the community.⁵¹² Williams was later appointed to head the Education Committee of the ICWDR.

cruelly misused, but were actually murdered by some of our soldiers. ...[i]t is not at all difficult for me to believe that white Americans would treat colored women as brutally as our soldiers are said to have treated Haitian women." Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 403. Historian Mary Renda discusses African American outrage over reports of violence against women in Haiti by US soldiers in *Taking Haiti*, 160-163, 284. Mary Talbert, anti-lynching activists, NAACP member and founding member of the ICWDR also played a pivotal role in initiating James Weldon Johnson's investigative trip to Haiti as a result of reports that she heard of U.S. Marines slaughtering "helpless and defenseless women and children." "Hon. Mrs. Talbert Returns from Abroad," 11.

⁵¹¹ Nannie Helen Burroughs wrote to Washington: "with reference to the representative to Haiti: I am sure you must have considered the matter very carefully before asking the women to put One Hundred Dollars in it. I do not know the person and, like in many other things, we will have to trust your judgment. On the surface, it doesn't appeal to me as a very wise thing to do. If you were going, I would say O. K. , but a hundred dollars is too much to put into an investigation unless we get an unusual person and are sure that they are going to bring back a hundred dollars' worth....the least setback will militate very seriously against us." Nannie Helen Burroughs to Margaret Murray Washington, November 18, 1922, MCT Papers, MSRC box 102-12, folders 239 and 240.

⁵¹² Emily Williams' husband was William T. B. Williams, the Dean of Tuskegee Institute and a nationally recognized educator.

Williams submitted her report to the ICWDR upon her return. And while her findings did not make it to the archives, a letter Williams wrote to Washington about her visit revealed much about her impression of the Haiti and its people. Despite a commitment to foster greater understanding among various nationalities and races, her language still reflected the middle-class values of clubwomen and the civilizationist rhetoric that at times motivated their work.⁵¹³ After informing Washington of the details of her arrival, Williams expressed shock over the living conditions of the Haitian people, “[t]hey need help!” The solution according to Williams resided within the student body of Tuskegee and the uplift work students could perform among the Haitian population. “I hope you will begin the day you get this letter to talk with the Haitians now in school about returning to their own country as teachers.”⁵¹⁴

While in Haiti, Williams formed a close association with Theodora Holly, the daughter of the famous nineteenth-century emigrationist, James Theodore Holly. Holly was working in Haiti as a missionary with children, and she served as a primary contact for Williams during her investigative trip. After Williams returned to the United States, Holly took it upon herself to write to Washington expressing her excitement about the “splendid work” of black women in the United States based on a report given to her by Williams. She conveyed her commitment to the work of the ICWDR. During the organization’s first meeting in Richmond in 1924, ICWDR members named Holly Vice President for Haiti and urged black women to “cooperate in every way” with her to support Haitian girls.⁵¹⁵ In her letter, Holly

⁵¹³ Kevin Gaines. *Uplifting the Race*, 129. See also Gaines essay on Pauline Hopkins and civilizing mission, “Black Americans’ Uplift Ideology as Civilizing Mission: Pauline Hopkins on Race and Imperialism,” 433-455.

⁵¹⁴ Emily Williams to Margaret Murray Washington, December 12, 1922, MCT Papers, MSRC, box 102-12, folders 239 and 240.

⁵¹⁵ ICWDR Constitution [no date] MCT papers, LOC box 21, reel, 14.

similarly expressed her desired outcomes for young women and girls in Haiti in tones characteristic of racial uplift:

Our Haitian girls are splendid so far as talents and social cultures are concerned, but are not alive to the worldwide progress of Woman in general and of their Colored American sisters in particular. In my feeble way I am trying to rouse them to the consciousness of what Womanhood owes to the world, and what each woman can accomplish within the compass of her own home and community.⁵¹⁶

While correspondence from Williams and Holly demonstrated the abiding influence of racial uplift within the black clubwomen's movement, when it came to US occupation of Haiti, ICWDR members continued to develop and articulate a more forceful critique of the injustice of American presence within the Caribbean nation. In 1926, Addie Hunton visited Haiti as the ICWDR representative on a six-person interracial women's committee organized by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). The mission came about as the result of pressure that Hunton and other women of color placed upon WILPF to investigate the conditions of the occupation.⁵¹⁷ With peace activist Emily Greene Balch, Hunton co-authored a chapter on race relations in *Occupied Haiti*, a comprehensive report on the committee's findings after their three week sojourn. Hunton and Balch were highly critical of how the US occupation affected the nation. They deplored the abysmal treatment of the Haitian people during the occupation and argued the only solution for rectifying the injurious effects of the occupation was the immediate, full self-determination of Haitian people. Hunton and Balch particularly highlighted the ways that racial prejudice exacerbated the appalling conditions of the occupation: "[t]he traditional attitude of the white American

⁵¹⁶ Theodora Holly to Mrs. Booker T. Washington, June 14, 1923, MCT Papers box 102-12, folders 239 and 240. MSRC

⁵¹⁷ Joyce Blackwell, *No Peace Without Freedom: Race and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915-1975* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 116.

to black men is merely intensified in Haiti by the fact that the country is the black man's.”⁵¹⁸ Also, they explained, those observing conditions within the nation “felt that the color line was drawn much as it is in the southern part of the United States.”⁵¹⁹ They concluded that there was little benefit to come from the continued occupation of the island and that the morale and will of the Haitian people were being destroyed by the occupation which would hinder progress within the Caribbean nation for generations. While the report produced by the committee would eventually lead to an investigation by the federal government which precipitated the end of the occupation nearly ten years later, Hunton, Balch and the others were correct about the long-term effects of occupation.⁵²⁰

ICWDR members utilized existing networks in order to craft their agenda concerning work to be done in Africa. ICWDR members turned to the work of Adelaide Casely-Hayford, a Sierra Leonan Pan-Africanist and educator, who directed a vocational school for girls in Freetown, Sierra Leone. ICWDR members passed resolutions in support of her work and included her reports in their organizational activities.⁵²¹ Casely-Hayford was a great admirer of the black clubwomen's movement. During one of her first trips to the United States in the early 1920s she developed the idea for creating a training school for young women after visiting with Margaret Washington at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and Nannie H. Burroughs' at the National Training School for Girls in Washington, DC Casely-Hayford became a member of the ICWDR and remained deeply committed to the goal of inspiring young women to have pride in their race and their history as a form of empowerment. After

⁵¹⁸ Addie Hunton and Emily Greene Balch, “Racial Relations,” in *Occupied Haiti*, ed. Emily Greene Balch (New York: Garland Publishing, 1972), 114.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 113-120; Blackwell, *No Peace Without Freedom*, 116-115-117; Kristen E. Gwinn, *Emily Greene Balch: The Long Road to Internationalism* (Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 136-141.

⁵²¹ ICWDR Constitution [no date] MCT papers, LOC box 21, reel, 14.

her school opened in Sierra Leone in October 1923, she continued to travel to the United States soliciting support for the school's continued operation.⁵²² ICWDR members viewed Casely-Hayford's efforts as emblematic of the kind of work that clubwomen should be doing all over the world for the sake of young women and girls. Members maintained regular contact with the Chicago West African Women's Club founded in support of Casely-Hayford's work. Black clubwomen remained hopeful that places like Sierra Leone and Haiti would serve as bastions of black independence in the world.⁵²³

Given black clubwomen's interest in both Haiti and Western Africa, they were naturally driven to participate in the 1927 Pan African Congress that took place in New York City. The Congress focused primarily on the US occupation of Haiti and made strident calls for the removal of US troops and the establishment of self-government for the Haitian people; a platform very much in line with that of the ICWDR. Du Bois's efforts to organize the Pan-African Congress suffered several setbacks due to lost financial backing by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and other supporters believed Du Bois to be too profligate in his spending. Political differences had also driven past supporters from the group, and the Congress had lost several participants due to their greater interest in the more radical international agenda of Marcus Garvey and the UNIA.⁵²⁴ In seeking support for the fourth Congress, Du Bois turned to black clubwomen, especially Ida Gibbs Hunt and Addie Hunton, who at the time served as an executive officer in the ICWDR. Without their support this congress most certainly would not have happened. Hunton and Gibbs also scored

⁵²² H. Evelyn Rieley and Evelyn Casey to Mrs. Booker T. Washington, October 25, 1924. MCT Papers, MSRC box 102-12, folders 239, 240.

⁵²³ H. Evelyn Rieley and Evelyn Casey to Mrs. Booker T. Washington, October 25, 1924. MCT Papers, MSRC box 102-12, folders 239, 240.

⁵²⁴ For information on how Du Bois's rift with Garvey fractured the Pan-African Congress movement see, Wilson J. Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 265-271; Adele Logan Alexander, *Parallel Worlds: The Remarkable Gibbs-Hunts and the Enduring (In)Significance of Melanin* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 212-216.

another major victory for black clubwomen by playing a major role in setting the agenda of the Congress—something that had been a problem for women in the past who felt Du Bois had overlooked their contributions.⁵²⁵ Ida Gibbs Hunt wrote to Hunton to express not only her frustrations in working on the Pan-African Congresses but also her desire to see the Congress take a more radical direction in its concerns for the powerless and oppressed:

I've worked hard...without receiving much thanks...tho I'm not working for thanks but for the good of the cause. I've often tho't that the P.A.C. works too openly, and that simply served to cause the colonial powers to give us a few of the reforms asked for as a little sop, while throwing a cordon of armed force around us.⁵²⁶

In 1929, Addie Dickerson who was at the time serving as president of the ICWDR, corresponded extensively with Du Bois about the possibility of sending ICWDR representatives to the Pan-African Congress scheduled to in Tunis, Morocco, as well as of coordinating the transnational gathering.⁵²⁷ This Congress however, never materialized.

ICWDR members also saw significant parallels between Jim Crow racism in the United States and the protracted efforts by the British to demean and exploit colonized Indians. Interest was the result of their own conclusions about the social and political exploitation of Indian people as well as a broader interest among African Americans that stretched all the way back to the nineteenth century.⁵²⁸ At the 1924 gathering of the ICWDR in Chicago, members invited two young Indian women studying at the University of Chicago to discuss their experiences in their homeland. The two students expressed their approval of black women's attempts to bring together women from all over the world but admitted that the

⁵²⁵ Alexander, *Parallel Worlds*, 212-216.

⁵²⁶ Ida Gibbs Hunt to Addie Waites Hunton, September 1927, quoted in Alexander, *Parallel Worlds*, 215- 216.

⁵²⁷ Addie Dickerson to W. E. B. Du Bois, October 30, 1929. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (Sanford, NC: Microfilming Corp. of America, 1980-1981) reel 28.

⁵²⁸ Gerald Horne has produced the definitive scholarship on India and African Americans, see Horne's *The End of Empires: African Americans and India* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 1-17, 79-92.

work would be “a difficult program.”⁵²⁹ Unfortunately, transcripts of the full remarks of the two young women do not exist, but writing and correspondence of ICWDR members indicates that they believed there was much to be learned from the Indians’ anti-racist, anti-imperialist struggle against Britain. ICWDR members repeatedly referenced India in their correspondence between one another, and they often indicated a desire to place India at the forefront of their educational program along with Haiti and Western Africa.⁵³⁰ One of the ICWDR’s most prominent members, Mary Church Terrell, took great interest in the sub-continent and referenced the struggle for Indian independence in her popular, national column, *Up-to-Date*. In 1928, when poor farmers in Bardoli, Gujarat collectively refused to pay a twenty percent tax hike imposed upon them by the British, Terrell highlighted this instance of civil disobedience as a model of the possibilities of collective action among oppressed people:

The peasants of India have beaten the British, but not with machine guns or gas....[when] the British government dispatched armed police, military detachments, machine guns, tanks and airplane bombers to occupy the territory...the farmers went right on in the even tenor of their way...following instructions laid down by their leader, the great Mahatma Gandhi....⁵³¹

The influence of Asia on the thought and activism of African American activists and intellectuals has been underanalyzed and eschewed in favor of a focus on how African Americans’ engagement with European or Afro-centric thought.⁵³² W. E. B. Du Bois’s

⁵²⁹ “International Council Hold’s Public Meeting,” *The Chicago Defender*, August 16, 1924, 10.

⁵³⁰ Mary Josenberger to Margaret Murray Washington, December 20, 1924, MCT Papers, MSRC, Box 12-102, Folder 239 and 240; Janie Porter Barrett to Margaret Murray Washington, April 9, 1925, MCT Papers, MSRC, box 102-12, folders 239 and 240; Janie Porter Barrett to Margaret Murray Washington, February 12, 1925, MCT Papers, MSRC, Box 102-12, Folders 239 and 240; Elizabeth Ross Haynes to Margaret Murray Washington March 8, 1925, MCT Papers, MSRC, box 102-12, folders 239 and 240.

⁵³¹ Mary Church Terrell, “Up-to-Date,” *Chicago Defender* February 9, 1929: A2.

⁵³² Bill V. Mullen and Cathryn Watson, eds., *W. E. B. Du Bois on Asia: Crossing the World Color Line* (Jackson, MS: The University Press of Mississippi, 2005), ix- x. Historian Gerald Horne has perhaps done the most to break the field of African American history outside of its Afrocentric and Eurocentric frames. See

preoccupation with the Asian sub-continent is perhaps the most well-known of all of the late nineteenth and early-twentieth century African American reformers.⁵³³ Throughout his life, Du Bois penned several works that reflected his belief that Asia (a designation that included India, China, and Japan, among other nations) was “the fraternal twin to African—and African American—struggle for political freedom and cultural self-preservation.”⁵³⁴ While Du Bois receives most credit for his attention to Asia, most notably in his novel, *Dark Princess*—the novel itself focusing on events in Berlin, India and Japan—African American women through the ICWDR drew inspiration through the experiences of Asian women and were keen to learn about the women of both Japan and China in their Committees of Seven meetings. European imperialism in Asia and the historic Japanese defeat of Russia in the 1905 war served to turn the African American gaze to the farther reaches of the globe. Marc Gallicchio writes about the ways in which African Americans saw the defeat of a white imperial nation by a minority nation as an indication of a turning racial tide globally—a tide that would eventually unite non-white people against their American and European oppressors: “All over the world the diversified races are coming into close and closer contact as never before. We are nearer China today than we were to San Francisco yesterday.”⁵³⁵

Conclusion

Financial troubles continued to plague the ICWDR, and the organization suffered from the divided commitments of its most high-profile members. The 1925 death of Margaret Murray

especially his works, *The End of Empires; Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920*. American History and Culture Series. (New York: New York University Press, 2005); *White Pacific: U.S. Imperialism and Black Slavery in the South Seas After the Civil War* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007).

⁵³³ Bill V. Mullen and Cathryn Watson, eds., *Du Bois OnAsia*, ix-xxv.

⁵³⁴ Bill V. Mullen and Cathryn Watson, eds., *W. E. B. Du Bois on Asia: Crossing the World Color Line*, viii.

⁵³⁵ W.E.B. Du Bois, “The World Problem of the Color Line,” *Manchester Leader*, November 16, 1914; Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japan and China*, 1-29.

Washington was a major loss for the black clubwomen's movement. She was the progenitor and chief visionary of the ICWDR, and the advancement of the organization suffered as a result of Washington's passing. The last known meeting of the organization occurred in 1938. Addie Dickerson, the Philadelphia clubwoman who emerged to lead the International Council after Washington's passing, encouraged members to attend a gathering of the ICWDR in Washington, DC as several black clubwomen were already there to commemorate fifty years of the YMCA working with African Americans.⁵³⁶ Unfortunately, records for this gathering did not make it to the archives. After the 1927 Pan-African Congress, the ICWDR did not participate in many high-profile events. Instead the organization served as a kind of touchstone or clearinghouse for members to report on their commitments in other well-established, better-funded organizations.

It is important, however, to not just understand the decline of the ICWDR in terms of a membership spread too thin or persistent financial troubles. In many ways, the ICWDR planted the seed for the changing priorities of black clubwomen that occurred over the course of the 1930s and prepared black women for new vehicles of change that became available to them. In 1935, Mary McLeod Bethune founded the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). Bethune envisioned this new organization as an umbrella for all black women's associations nationally. More than a self-help or racial uplift organization for black communities, Bethune imagined the NCNW as a major lobbying group for black women's concerns, and her efforts to form this new organization grew largely out of her own frustrations with the obstacles impeding black clubwomen's engagement in national affairs. Modeled after Bethune's successes in the Roosevelt administration, the NCNW endeavored

⁵³⁶ Addie Dickerson was elected president of the ICWDR in 1928 and served in the position for the ensuing decade.

to broaden black women's involvement with formal seats of power. Bethune explained her vision for this new organization as such:

The National Council of Negro Women has as its aim the bringing together of the Negro race for the united effort, in the things where we need to be united. It does not aim to stand in the way of the program of any individual organization, but to pool our interests, in order to be able to show the activities of Negro women in this country wherever pressure is needed, on whatever needs to come together for the opening of doors for our group.⁵³⁷

Her exposure to the inner workings of the federal government through the National Youth Administration of the Roosevelt Administration and through presiding over Roosevelt's Black Cabinet allowed her to rework her understandings of what it would take for African American leaders to be most successful in pushing ahead their agenda for racial progress. Bethune undoubtedly embraced activities that fostered race pride and self help, but the heart of her agenda was to see black women serve as brokers at official seats of power leading all the way up to the presidency and the world's geo-political organizations. The emergence of the NCNW—a powerful organization that eventually superseded the NACW in terms of influence—reflected the changing political realities for black women organizing in the New Deal Era.⁵³⁸

As a past president of the NACW and early member of ICWDR, Bethune understood the importance of international affairs for women of color and especially black women in the United States. During the 1939 meeting of the NCNW, members specially recognized the organizing of the ICWDR and cited its role in furthering black women's transnational work: "...the Council, appreciating the work of the International Council of Women of Darker

⁵³⁷ Bethune quoted in Joyce A. Hanson, *Mary McLeod Bethune and Black Women's Political Activism* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 169.

⁵³⁸ For a discussion of black women's activism and the changing political climate created by the New Deal, see Evelyn Brookings Higginbotham, "Clubwomen and Electoral Politics in the 1920s," in *African American Women and the Votes, 1837-1965* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 150-151. For full discussion of NCNW activities as a political lobbying organization see Joyce A. Hanson, *Mary McLeod Bethune and Black Women's Political Activism* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 164-205.

Races, place[s] special emphasis on methods of interpreting the status of Negro women internationally.”⁵³⁹ The ICWDR remained listed as an affiliated organization of the NCNW until 1941, a date that most certainly had to do with the 1940 death of President Addie Dickerson. The NCNW continued many of the consciousness-raising activities of the ICWDR and aspired to both reflect and foster black women’s concerns for international affairs as well as their belief that black Americans shared a similar experience of oppression with people of color from all over the world.

In the early 1940s, the NCNW began a series of “Summer Seminars” where members traveled to foreign nations on “missions of contact and study, in behalf of the membership of the [NCNW] of the United States.”⁵⁴⁰ Hosted by a woman’s group named, La Asociacion Cultural Feminina, NCNW representatives traveled to Cuba where they were greeted by several “unique and interesting Negro organizations” and attended nine seminars hosted at the University of Havana. Selected topics of the lectures NCNW members attended included “The Cuban Negro Woman in Her Battle for Liberty,” “History of Education and Culture of the Negro Woman in Cuba,” and “The Social Life of Cuba and the Negro Woman.”⁵⁴¹ Members later attended another seminar in Haiti and pledged to expand these educational excursions to other Latin American countries and Asia. Additionally, *The Aframerican*, the official journal of the NCNW frequently reported on international affairs and often ran editorial pieces by guest authors in English, French and Spanish in order to appeal to a broader audience.⁵⁴²

⁵³⁹ Minutes of the National Council of Negro Women, Inc., November 4, 1939, p. 1, 7 Series 2, box 1, folder 5, National Council of Negro Women Papers, National Archives for Black Women’s History, Washington, DC quoted in Lisa Materson, “African American Women’s Global Journey’s and the Construction of Cross-Ethnic Racial Identity,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 32 (2009): 40.

⁵⁴⁰ Sue Bailey Thurman, “The Seminar in Cuba,” *The Aframerican* (Summer and Fall 1940), 4.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, 7-8; Madame Elie Lescot, “La Femme Haitienne,” *The Aframerican* (Summer and Fall 1940), 18;

In 1945, Bethune, who was at the time serving as vice-president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), was chosen by President Roosevelt to be a Special Representative of the State Department at the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco.⁵⁴³ In a telegraph to Walter White, Bethune expressed her support for resolutions concerning an international bill of rights and colonial reform to be put forward by the NAACP. She also articulated what she thought was the importance of having women's voice represented at this historic gathering:

We are happy in the thought that you are one of the organizations which will have a representative as a consultant to the American Delegation at the World Security Conference in San Francisco in view of the excellent thought given to this problem by your organization and the Council on African Affairs. The National Council of Negro Women endorses the point of view expressed in the resolutions of these two organizations from this standpoint we offer the use of our name and the influence of the [6 and ½] million Negro women of America and pushing for conference consideration of these points affecting the colonial and dependent areas of the world.⁵⁴⁴

Bethune faced some challenges in establishing the NCNW early on. Bethune's national prominence and connections within the federal government presented a threat to some clubwomen who believed her work would overshadow and eventually supplant the efforts of the NACW. Once Bethune overcame the challenges of legitimating the presence and objectives of the NCNW by reassuring clubwomen that both organizations could co-exist and work together, her organization succeeded in broadening the ICWDR's aspirations to create a global, transnational movement for women of color.⁵⁴⁵ In this way, the ICWDR is an

⁵⁴³ For a full accounting of Bethune's trip to San Francisco for the UN founding meeting, as well as Walter White's efforts to sabotage her presence at the meeting, see Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 132-136.

⁵⁴⁴ Mary McLeod Bethune to Walter White, April 16 1945, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (Sanford, NC: Microfilming Corp. of America, 1980-1981) reel 59.

⁵⁴⁵ For an in-depth discussion of Bethune's efforts to legitimize the work of the NCNW and her criticism of the NACW's focus on the politics of respectability rather than the politics of system change, see Joyce A. Hanson, *Mary McLeod Bethune and Black Women's Political Activism*, 165-173.

important link not only within the history of black women's transnational organizing, but also between the histories of the NACW and the NCNW.

Members of the ICWDR worked to bring to the forefront the voices of women on issues and world events that had captured the attention of thousands, if not millions, of people of color and mobilized them in various ways against social, political, and economic exploitation. Examining the history of this organization elucidates the strategies that African American women used not only in their domestic work, but also within transnational feminist organizing. As movement activists, African American women were always responsive to developments in national and geopolitical world affairs. When it came to organizing on the world stage, they utilized the race- *and* woman-centered model that had made the black clubwomen's movement one of the most formidable reform movements of the early twentieth century.

Epilogue

As adults, we must affirm, constantly, that the Arab child, the Muslim child, the Palestinian child, the African child, the Jewish child, the Christian child, the American child, the Chinese child, the Israeli child, the Native American child, etc., is equal to all others on the planet. We must do everything in our power to cease the behavior that makes children everywhere feel afraid.

~Alice Walker, “Why I’m Sailing to Gaza”

During the summer of 2011, poet and activist, Alice Walker, prepared to sail to the Gaza Strip with a convoy of 10 ships and more than 1,000 activists carrying supplies in response to a maritime blockade of by Israel and Egypt. The planned voyage was shrouded in controversy because a group of ships carrying supplies to Gaza the previous year ended fatally with nine on board being killed and also because many opposed to the endeavor accused those involved of promoting terrorism against Israel. The convoy ultimately was not successful in reaching Gaza to deliver supplies to Palestinians because of international pressures from the United States, France, Turkey, and many other nations that did not support the efforts of those involved to essentially end the blockade.⁵⁴⁶

Before embarking on the voyage, Walker gave interviews to several media outlets explaining her decision to join the convoy named Freedom Flotilla II. In her comments, she chose to contextualize her engagement with geopolitical affairs with her own experiences as a black woman registering black people to vote in the 1960s South. In traveling to Gaza, Walker remarked that she felt,

an awareness of paying off a debt to the Jewish civil rights activists who faced death to come to the side of black people in the American south in our time of need. I am especially indebted to Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman who

⁵⁴⁶ For more background on events leading up to the blockade, see Carol Migdalovitz, *Israel's Blockade of Gaza and the 'Mavi Marmara' Incident* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2010).

heard our calls for help – our government then as now glacially slow in providing protection to non-violent protesters – and came to stand with us.⁵⁴⁷

Efforts to deliver supplies beyond the blockade, according to Walker, truly concerned the lives of the children living in the Gaza Strip:

And what of the children of Palestine.... I see children, all children, as humanity's most precious resource, because it will be to them that the care of the planet will always be left. One child must never be set above another, even in casual conversation, not to mention in speeches that circle the globe.⁵⁴⁸

In her service to those children, Walker remarked that she would “fly the Goodman, Cheney, Schwerner flag in my own heart.”⁵⁴⁹

For Walker, the Freedom Flotilla II represented one moment in several decades of activism concerning international affairs.⁵⁵⁰ In addition to her forceful stance on the conflicts between Palestine and Israel, Walker has committed much of her writing and activism to injustices in South Africa, Burma, and to opposing the United States’s wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. She has tied her activism to her biography as an African American woman steeped in experiences of American racism, but yet used her position of marginalization to create a more expansive and inclusive definition of liberation. This site of common experience of oppression then becomes a site for further political mobilization. These most

⁵⁴⁷ Alice Walker, “Why I’m Joining the Freedom Flotilla to Gaza,” *The Guardian*, June 24, 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jun/25/alice-walker-gaza-freedom-flotilla>, accessed November 12, 2015.

⁵⁴⁸ Alice Walker, “Why I’m Sailing to Gaza,” CNN.com, June 21, 2011, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/OPINION/06/21/alice.walker.gaza/>, accessed November 12, 2015.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid. Seth Cagin, Philip Dray, *We are Not Afraid: The Story of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney and the Civil Rights Campaign for Mississippi* (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2006)

⁵⁵⁰ Walker’s work also that has also included other black feminists such as Angela Davis, Barbara Ransby, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall. See “Justice for Palestine: A Call to Action from Indigenous and Women of Color Feminists” <http://alicewalkersgarden.com/2011/07/3101/>, accessed November 15, 2015.

recent events in the life of Alice Walker were part of a trajectory of the much longer history of African American women working in the global arena.

* * *

This dissertation grew out of recent turns in US historiography, but it also grew from and informs my own experiences in the academy. When I first arrived at my graduate institution, I was immersed in a vibrant community of feminist scholars posing compelling questions about the United States and the world, the possibilities and the limitations of feminism in the context of empire, and the nature of empire's impact upon national identities. These questions caused me to think about myself as well as the historical actors I researched in a much larger context. Often missing from these conversations were answers about how these questions had bearing on the history of African American women. I realized this occurred because of assumptions made within various field about the lives, work, and careers of African American women—assumptions that either African American women did not think globally or that black women lacked the power to be engaged in a broader arena because of their compounded marginalization.

Cooper, Wells, and Washington treated the global arena as their own terrain through their travels, writing and organizing. They claimed a broader space for their activism in order to undermine the limitations of being an African American woman in the United States. American racism and sexism, which had the intention of restricting the movement and opportunities available to these women, had the contrary effect of pushing them to think beyond the boundaries of nation and race. What's more, each of these women understood that their critique of the nation necessitated an engagement with empire.

Cooper, Wells, and Washington not only demonstrate the opportunities that transnationalism offered African American women to create greater mobility and agency in their lives and work, but they also necessitate that historians utilize the archives of African American women to reveal more about the imbrications of race, nation, and empire.

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