

Full of Faith, Full of Hope

*The African-American Experience
from Emancipation to Segregation*

Armstead L. Robinson

AERICAN SLAVERY DISINTEGRATED during the Civil War, and its demise precipitated the collapse of the Confederate quest for national independence. During the decades immediately following the destruction of the South's peculiar institution, conflict inevitably erupted as members of the "Freedom Generation" (former slaves and their immediate descendants) struggled to realize their hopes for economic, political, and social equality. Intense debate over the meaning of freedom occurred both within the states of the former Confederacy and across the nation. During the Reconstruction period, which is generally dated from 1865 when the war ended to 1877 when President Rutherford B. Hayes withdrew the last federal troops from the South, two questions dominated national politics: How could the shattered Union be restored? and How could American society be restructured to accommodate the aspirations of the freed slaves?

In Washington there was deep division over the answers to these two questions between the new President Andrew Johnson and the Republican majority in Congress. An ex-Democrat from Tennessee who had become president when Lincoln was assassinated only five days after Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox, Johnson proposed rapid restoration of the southern states. To this end he issued wholesale pardons of Confederates and encouraged the white leaders of the antebellum states to reestablish civil governments of their own providing only that they profess their loyalty to the United States and accept the new Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution abolishing slavery.

When Congress finally met in December 1865, the Republicans rejected

the legitimacy of these “presidential governments” and denied the admission of their newly elected representatives to seats in the House and Senate. They believed that the process initiated by the president had neither sufficiently punished the former rebels nor provided for the protection and representation of the former slaves. The presidential governments were in the hands of the old white elite, who sent such notorious traitors as Alexander Stephens, the former vice president of the Confederacy, to Washington as congressmen. At the same time these revived governments in the southern states had established wide-ranging “Black Codes,” which segregated the former slaves and circumscribed their rights in the interest of their former owners. After a year of controversy between the president and Congress and the 1866 congressional elections in which the northern voters endorsed the Republican’s approach to Reconstruction, Congress initiated its policy in 1867. This consisted of four acts establishing procedures for the readmission to the Union of the former Confederate states and two amendments to the Constitution—the Fourteenth, which made the former slaves “citizens of the United States” entitled to “equal protection of the laws,” and the Fifteenth, which ensured the rights of citizens to vote would not be “denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

Under the watchful eye of the U.S. Army, voters were registered, state conventions wrote more democratic constitutions providing for universal manhood suffrage, and governments were established in the southern states with the participation of the former slaves as both voters and officeholders. But their reign was short-lived. Angry southern whites using both paramilitary violence and the terrorism practiced by organizations like the Ku Klux Klan and legitimate political activity organized by the revitalized Democratic Party in both the North and the South to reverse the Republican policies and the southern states by reestablishing white rule. In slow but decisive steps during the 1880s the Radical policies of integration were replaced by racial segregation, which was eventually written into southern constitutions and civil law during the 1890s.

Amid this fierce struggle, the Freedom Generation managed to fashion a postslavery culture which rested on family, self-reliance, and the church. They reknit family units scattered by slavery, closed the literacy gap, acquired more than 18 million acres of farmland, and along the way, erected a full panoply of religious, educational, cultural, and social institutions. These successes at community building, however, could not prevent the descendants of the slaves and even those blacks who had been free before the Civil War from falling victim to the vicious system of racial segregation. In 1896, the Supreme Court ruled, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, that Jim Crow laws conformed to the Constitution so long as the states promised to provide what they quickly failed to deliver: “separate but equal” services in racially segregated facilities.

THE FREEDMEN AND AMERICAN SOCIETY

In the midst of the war, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. In its aftermath, Americans, black as well as white, North as well as South, began to grapple with an issue that had been deferred by chattel slavery: What place should freed blacks occupy in American society? Bishop Daniel Payne of the African Methodist Episcopal Church took up this issue during the Civil War in a sermon, “Welcome to the Ransomed,” which he delivered in Washington, D.C. Payne looked beyond the military struggle between North and South as he urged newly freed blacks to adopt the Protestant religious values of the AME Church. “Enter the great family of Holy Freedom,” he exhorted, “not to lounge in sinful indolence, not to degrade yourselves by vice, nor to corrupt society by licentiousness . . . but to the enjoyment of a well-regulated liberty.”

In its missionary activities in the South during and after the Civil War, the AME church urged the freedpeople toward self-reliance to be achieved through religion, education, hard work, and the acquisition of property.

The Emancipation Proclamation, 1863

President Lincoln issued a preliminary proclamation after the Union victory at the Battle of Antietam in September 1862 and urged the Border States to adopt compensated emancipation plans. On January 1, 1863, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation which in the context of the war and the Constitution used the war powers to free the slaves in the areas in rebellion. It signaled a shift in policy, making emancipation a Union war aim and was an important step toward the freeing of all the slaves by adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1865.

That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever, free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the states and parts of states, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any state, or the people thereof, shall on that day be in good faith represented in the Congress of the United States, by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such states shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such state, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States.

*Source: “The Emancipation Proclamation” in Albert P. Blaustein and Robert L. Zangrando, eds., *Civil Rights and the American Negro* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1968), pp. 200–201.*

Black missionaries and black churches reiterated Bishop Payne's message to the freedpeople to turn their energies toward the work of community building essential to "the enjoyment of a well-regulated liberty." The contest between white and black southerners for control over the contours of post-slavery race relations became the framing issue for the next half century of African-American experience.

So crucial were these issues for defining the economy, society, and polity of the postwar South that even before the Civil War ended some southern whites expressed concern about the implications of black freedom. About three months prior to surrendering, Confederate General-in-Chief Robert E. Lee had endorsed a proposal to arm Confederate slaves as a last-ditch measure to avert defeat and gave his full blessing to the revolutionary idea that freedom should be granted to those slaves who served loyally. Explaining his rationale for departing so radically from antebellum racist ideology, Lee articulated clearly the central concern motivating white southerners confronting the aftermath of slavery. "If it end in subverting slavery it will be accomplished by ourselves," he urged, "and we can devise the means of alleviating the evil consequences to both races. I think, therefore, we must decide whether slavery shall be extinguished by our enemies and the slaves be used against us, or [we] use them ourselves at the risk of the effects which may be produced upon our social institutions."

The North also found cause to debate the future of race relations in post-Civil War America. Although Lincoln eventually abandoned the goal of colonization of the freedmen, he did so only after experiments in Haiti and in Central America ended in total failure. Lincoln could not find sufficient numbers of blacks willing to participate in these experiments, and those who did go experienced hardships, which persuaded them that their destiny lay in the United States.

The debate over the means of providing for the welfare of former slaves continued throughout the Civil War. After many false starts, Congress and Lincoln agreed, in February 1865, to establish a federal welfare agency, the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, to supervise social reconstruction in former slaveholding states. Congress gave the Freedmen's Bureau responsibility for both refugees (white southern unionists) and freedmen (black former slaves) and consigned to the bureau some 10 million acres of abandoned southern farmland to be seized for nonpayment of Union war taxes. The bureau was charged to devise an equitable method for redistribution of this land in 40-acre plots to whites and blacks whose loyalty made them eligible for postwar federal aid.

We cannot know how the implementation of this plan might have altered the contours of post-Civil War American society, but we do know that the assassination of Lincoln on April 14, 1865, brought the southern-born former slaveholding Democrat Andrew Johnson to the presidency. Once in office, Johnson blocked implementation of the bureau plan by granting thousands of presidential pardons to the former slaveholders about to lose land due to tax

defaults. Because the American Constitution gives the president irreversible pardoning power, Congress could do nothing to preserve the plan that would have provided access to land for one-third of former slave families. By 1910, self-reliance had enabled freedpeople to acquire almost twice as much land as the bureau plan would have made available, but in the immediate postwar period, the absence of ready access to "free" land meant that most former slaves had few economic choices open to them. Circumstance compelled them to seek waged labor positions on land owned by whites, many of whom were bitter former slaveholders still enraged over the defeat of the Confederacy and impoverished by the failure of their crusade for national independence.

The stillbirth of postwar land reform did not occur without strong protest from those most directly affected. The awkward task of explaining the disappearance of land set aside by Congress for redistribution fell to officials of the bureau who chose not to implicate president Johnson. Bureau officers instead tried to persuade crowds of enraged and frustrated freedpeople that it was they who had misunderstood congressional intent. In the Georgia and South Carolina Sea Islands, blacks who had received land earlier during Sherman's 1864-1865 march to the sea put up such stout resistance that bureau officers called on the Union army to assist in returning possession of the land to former slaveholders.

An angry speech delivered by a freedman, Bayley Wyatt, at Yorktown, Virginia, in the autumn of 1866 suggests how vigorously many former slaves reacted to news that they would not receive promised land. When informed that not only would there be no general redistribution of land to freedpeople, but even the small parcels on which a few thousand lucky blacks had lived provisionally were to be turned back to their former masters, Wyatt invoked the hard days in slavery when "we made bricks without straw under old Pharo." When war came, slaves "sacrificed all we had to come to the Yankees." Responding to listeners who might question whether the freedpeople owned any property before the war, Wyatt pointed out, "Some of us had some money to buy our freedom, and some of us had a house, and some of us had cattle with which we hoped sometimes to buy our freedom." Far from pleading for unearned gifts from the Yankees, Wyatt grounded the claim to land in the sweated equity blacks had amassed through ten generations of uncompensated toil in slavery. "I may state to all our friends," he argued, "and to all our enemies, that we has a right to the land where we are located. For why? I tell you. Our wives, our children, our husbands, has been sold over and over again to purchase the lands we now locate upon; for that reason we has a divine right to the land."

Bayley Wyatt recognized that Yankees did not feel responsible for the sins of the slaveholders. Thus he did not stop at this very direct claim for title to land in the southern states, but rather proceeded to remind northerners in his audience of the sufficient contribution enslaved blacks had made to the much vaunted prosperity of the urbanizing-industrializing North. "And then didn't

we clear the lands and raise crops of corn, of cotton, of tobacco, of rice, of sugar, of everything?" he reminded them. "And then didn't the large cities in the North grow on the cotton and the sugars and the rice that we made? Yes! I appeal to the South and to the North if I hasn't spoken the words of truth. I say they have grown rich and my people is poor." Such arguments availed nothing in the face of the subversive use of presidential pardoning power by Andrew Johnson. Yet Wyatt's rhetoric suggests the sharply conflicting interests evident as whites and blacks inside and outside the defeated South contested for power amid their common struggle to adjust to the demise of slavery.

THE FAILURE OF RADICAL RECONSTRUCTION

Not even Lincoln's legendary political skills could have averted bitter conflict between the president and Congress for control over the process. The enlistment of nearly two hundred thousand blacks into federal forces left the former slaves with a compelling claim to full citizenship. Both the Democrats (out of power during the Civil War) and the Republicans (anxious to prolong their new power) saw resolution of the core issues of Reconstruction as of vital importance to the postwar balance of political power. Republican efforts to grant full civil rights to the former slaves inevitably became a contested issue.

The maladroit policies of President Johnson transformed this unavoidably difficult situation into a prolonged, bitter, and highly partisan political stalemate. Having assumed the presidency after Lincoln's assassination, Johnson sought to be elected president in his own right. Doing so required revival of the southern wing of the Democratic Party, and Johnson did everything he could to facilitate the speedy return to power of friendly conservatives in the states of the former Confederacy. New state and local governments then turned quickly to the matter of racial domination, enacting the Black Codes that made mockery of emancipation by depriving freedpeople of civil privileges in areas such as voting, jury service, office holding, the right to bear arms, and, most important, landownership. The Johnson state governments restored as much of the old order as they dared.

Remarkably, less than eight months after Lee signed the final surrender, the southern political elite stood poised to resume its former position in the national government. Had Congress admitted the delegations sent forward in 1865, direct federal involvement in the affairs of the formerly seceded states would have come to an end, but the severity of the Black Codes helped turn the tide. Public opinion in the North saw these laws as well as the appearance of rebel leaders in Washington as a defiant attempt by intransigent southern aristocrats to deny the hard-won results of Union victory and revive the slave power in a new form. As a result, the Republicans rejected the electoral credentials of every member of Congress from a formerly seceded state. While the Johnson regimes remained in power inside the South, the congressional

Republicans worked to both guarantee minimum civil rights to the former slaves and to prolong their own control of national government, which they had gained when secession reduced the number of Democrats in Congress by 50 percent.

Postwar Republicans had much to defend. Operating under cover of appeals to "national emergency," the party had enacted, in rapid-fire succession, a series of laws that permanently transformed the hitherto conservative position of the federal government on economic development issues. Wartime Republican majorities established a national banking system, national paper currency, direct excise and income taxation, indirect subsidies for railroad construction, aid to higher education, and high protective tariffs for American "home" industries. Before and during the war, Democrats heatedly contested each of these issues. Thus they anxiously awaited, in the immediate postwar years, the return of their southern colleagues, so they could jointly attempt to rescind as much of the Republicans' wartime legislative revolution as possible.

Led by Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner, a nationalist faction within the Republican party that came to be known as the Radicals dominated the Joint Committee on Reconstruction appointed in December 1865 to craft a policy that would protect the freedmen and preserve Republican control over the national government. In the ensuing thirty months, the joint committee submitted a series of measures intended to refashion southern political culture so dramatically as to forever bar a return to power of the "white only" Democratic political leadership that had carried eleven southern states out of the Union. The committee proposed renewal of the Freedmen's Bureau, passage of a federal civil rights law, submission of a constitutional amendment to make citizens out of former slaves, the enfranchisement of freedmen and the disfranchisement of former Confederates, and the subjection of all the seceded states to strict congressional scrutiny as part of the process of gaining readmission to the federal Union. While Johnson fought each measure, the Radicals systematically gained passage of their program over the next two years by using two-thirds majorities to override repeated presidential vetoes.

Enactment of the Reconstruction Acts in 1867 shifted the focus of attention to the struggle in the states over implementation of the congressional plan for facilitating readmission and postslavery adjustment. At its core, this plan envisioned the creation of new biracial Republican alliances in the former seceded states. Using the black 40 percent of the southern population as a base, Radicals reckoned that they could quickly forge a "natural majority" by persuading as few as 25 percent of native whites to become Republicans. This majority would then have the power to dominate southern state and local government for many decades to come. In a number of states, the initial results seemed encouraging; black and white voters sent heavy Republican majorities to state constitutional conventions and to state legislatures in 1867 and 1868.

Because of constitutional provisions that gave the president control over the armed forces, the Radicals in Congress could provide almost no direct assis-

tance to the newly created biracial state governments in the South. When Johnson remained adamantly opposed to the congressional Republican program, the Radicals pushed through acts curtailing executive powers and attempted to remove Johnson the following year. Although Congress did impeach the president, the Senate failed to convict him by a single vote when seven self-described "Stalwarts" refused to join the Republican majority. The weakened president thus completed his term in 1869, handing the presidency over to the Civil War hero Ulysses S. Grant. Support for Republican economic liberalism did not alter Grant's conservative social philosophy; he steadfastly refused to employ federal military power to intervene in southern civil affairs, even in the face of premeditated political violence.

This narrowing of the scope of federal activism in the area of civil rights produced controversy of its own. Women objected with special intensity to the plan to draft a constitutional amendment to guarantee voting rights only for black males. Because the Fourteenth Amendment had granted American citizenship to "all persons born or naturalized" in the United States, the way seemed clear for a Fifteenth Amendment, which simply guaranteed the right to vote for *all* "citizens" of appropriate age, this without reference to gender. The congressional Republicans who balked at this "strong" version of the amendment angered militant advocates of immediate female suffrage.

The former slave orator Frederick Douglass found himself in a difficult predicament over the issue of woman suffrage. Consistent support for women's rights had made him a hero after the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, yet in the postwar era Douglass discovered that he could not retain influence simultaneously within radical suffragist and conservative Republican circles. Douglass, who believed that black men needed the ballot to protect the new rights of all African Americans, urged women to postpone their own demands and accept suffrage for black men as the best deal they could get. He was aware that the Democrats were manipulating the women's suffrage issue to defeat any form of black suffrage. But the female former slave abolitionist Sojourner Truth took Douglass severely to task in a pointed and bitterly ironic address to the 1868 annual meeting of the National Equal Rights Association. She argued, "There is a great stir about colored men getting their rights, but not a word about the colored woman. . . . I want women to have their rights. In the courts women have no rights, no voice; nobody speaks for them. . . . Men have got their rights, and women has got no rights." In the end, Congress enacted a narrow version of the Fifteenth Amendment, protecting voting rights for black men without explicitly mentioning women.

Nonetheless, the grant of suffrage during Reconstruction allowed freedmen to make significant advances. Blacks participated enthusiastically in the rituals of political culture, and a very high proportion of those eligible registered and cast ballots. Hundreds of blacks won elective office at every level of American politics. The state of Mississippi sent two blacks to the United States Senate and more than a score other African-American men served in the House

of Representatives. But southern conservatives refused so easily to surrender control over local and state government. The avidity with which blacks participated in the political process and the independence with which they cast their ballots helps to explain why political violence formed an essential component of southern conservative strategy.

The Reconstruction Amendments to the Constitution

The Reconstruction Era after the Civil War produced one of the major constitutional revolutions in American history as the Republicans forced through three amendments to the U.S. Constitution which freed the slaves, provided the freedmen with citizenship and protected their civil rights, and extended to them the right to vote. The majority of congressional Democrats, who cast themselves as protectors of the white South, opposed each of these changes.

AMENDMENT XIII

Passed by Congress February 1, 1865.

Ratified December 18, 1865.

Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

AMENDMENT XIV

Passed by Congress June 16, 1866.

Ratified July 28, 1868.

Section 1. All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Section 2. Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice President of the United States, representatives in Congress, the executive and judicial officers of a State, or the members of the legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being twenty-one years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participating in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State.

AMENDMENT XV

Passed By Congress February 27, 1869

Ratified March 30, 1870.

Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

White Democrats employed a carefully devised and deviously implemented program first to frustrate the new biracial coalitions, then to divide the voters along racial lines, and, finally, to inflame racial tensions between poorer black and white southerners. Once it became clear that black voters could not be cajoled, bribed, or bullied into casting their precious ballots for racist conservatives, vigilante-style groups sprang into existence throughout the southern states. These groups directed their activities at the white and black leadership of the biracial southern Republican parties. Where intimidation failed to work, vigilante-style violence practiced by paramilitary groups such as the Ku Klux Klan led to the politically motivated murders of thousands of black and white Republicans. As the federal government failed to actively intervene to protect Republicans' right to vote freely, the number of Republican voters decreased in concert with escalating violence. Eventually, southern conservatives "redeemed" their states by replacing biracial governments friendly to the Radical Republicans with white-line racist regimes loyal to the Democratic Party.

While contests for elective office occurred only periodically, daily struggles for the necessities of life dominated the agendas of the millions of former slaves. Freed people emancipated with neither land nor money had, in most instances, to rely upon their own efforts to care for themselves. The question of whether enslavement had left enduring psycho-social scars on the former slaves was hotly contested in the postslavery years, and is even today. The question of the effect life in slavery had on freed people and how long these effects would persist became central to the challenge confronting the Freedom Generation.

Few southern whites believed that the former slaves could cope well with the challenges of freedom. William G. Brownlow, the Republican governor of Tennessee, openly expressed pessimism about whether former slaves could keep body and soul together amidst the difficult conditions present in 1865.

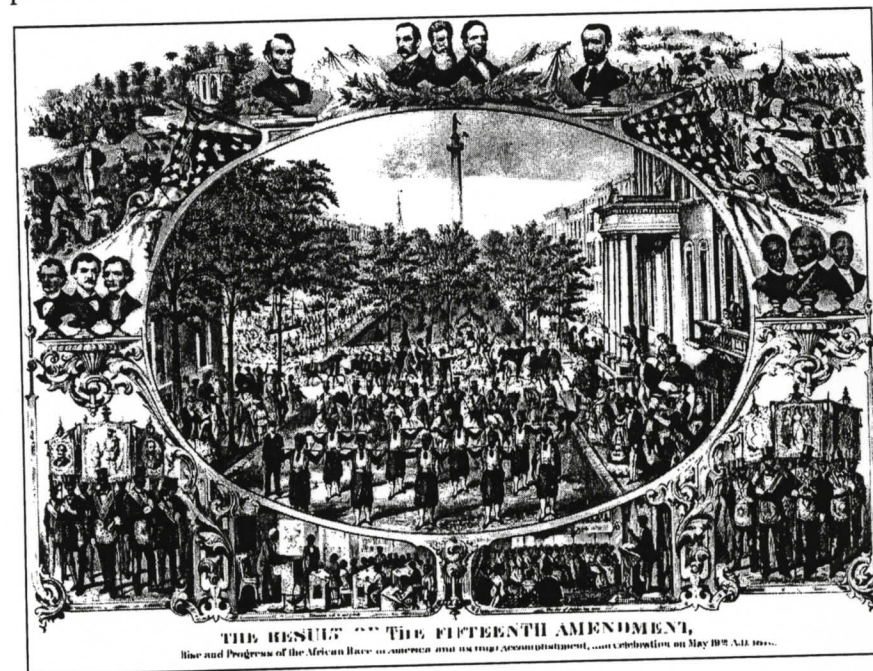
Speech by Black Congressman John R. Lynch, 1882

The impartial historian will record the fact that the colored people of the South have contended for their rights with a bravery and a gallantry that is worthy of the highest commendation. Being, unfortunately, in dependent circumstances, with the preponderance of the wealth and intelligence against them in some localities, yet they have bravely refused to surrender their honest convictions, even upon the altar of their personal necessities. They have said to those upon whom they depended: You may deprive me for the time being of the opportunity of making an honest living; you may take the bread out of the mouths of my hungry and dependent family; you may close the school-house door in the face of my children; yea, more, you may take that which no man can give, my life, but my manhood, my principles you cannot have!

Source: *Congressional Record*, April 27, 1882, 47th Cong., 1st Sess. XIII, pp. 3384–87.

"The negroes, like the Indian tribes," Brownlow predicted, "will gradually become extinct, having no owners to care for them, and not owning property in them, they will cease to increase in number—cease to be looked after and cultivated—while *educated* labor will take the place of slave labor. Idleness, starvation and disease will remove the majority of this generation. The better class of them will go to work to sustain themselves." Census reports, however, demonstrate the error of Brownlow's prediction; the numbers of blacks steadily increased in the decades after emancipation, along with their economic and social independence.

The economic base for the successful transition from slavery to freedom came primarily from continued southern reliance on commercial production of the same staple crops (cotton, tobacco, sugar, hemp, and rice) that slaves had cultivated prior to the war. So long as the South remained primarily agrarian, its economy would contain sectors in which the freed people could find employment, although most such jobs paid little beyond bare subsistence. While hardly the comfortable life in freedom the slaves had hoped to find, subsistence employment gave the freed people the means to survive and then move toward independence. The former slaves tried virtually every strategy possible to better conditions for themselves and their families. As one freed-



The Civil War amendments, and especially the Fifteenth Amendment granting the right to vote to black males, were widely celebrated and represented the belated guarantee of constitutional rights to black Americans that would form the basis for the civil rights gains of the twentieth century. Credit: The Library Company of Philadelphia.

man put the matter, "What's de use of being free if you don't own land enough to be buried in? Might juss as well stay slave all yo' days."

Black ambitions to own land encountered a major obstacle, the adamant refusal by white landowners for years after the Civil War to sell land to them. "In many portions of the Mississippi Valley," wrote one observer, "the feeling against any ownership of the soil by negroes is so strong, that the man who would sell small tracts to them would be in actual personal danger. Every effort will be made to prevent negroes from acquiring lands; even the renting of small tracts to them is held to be unpatriotic and unworthy of a good citizen." Small wonder then that a large majority of freedpeople experienced systematic frustration in their determined crusade to move beyond subsistence wages and toward the self-sufficiency of landownership.

Agriculture in the postwar South underwent a prolonged decline in the decades after the Civil War. The shortage of capital to fund repairs of war damage acted as a drag on economic recovery. But war damage merely exacerbated the economic sluggishness produced by the poorly developed state of southern credit, marketing, transportation, and communication facilities: all impediments inherited from slavery. However, the most important factor retarding the postwar economy was the weakness in market demand for southern agrarian staples. Demand for cotton, sugar, rice, and tobacco remained stagnant for decades. In turn, this left little room in the market for new producers, like the millions of former slaves, anxious to acquire property as a means to economic and social independence.

Although most of the Freedom Generation remained landless, adverse conditions did not prevent a substantial number from becoming small landowners. Freed blacks acquired property most readily in areas outside the centers of commercial agriculture. Thus the greatest concentration of black landowners appeared in the regions with depleted soil along the Atlantic and Gulf coastlines and in the southern "backcountry." Blacks who acquired land did so in painfully small increments; they moved from sharecropping to share tenancy, from tenancy to partial ownership, and finally to full landownership. Of the 900,000 black farming families recorded by the U.S. Census in 1910, 20 percent claimed full ownership, 5 percent claimed partial ownership, and 75 percent remained sharecroppers and tenants. This remarkable rate of acquisition shows that racial discrimination impeded but did not prevent property accumulation among the freedpeople in the five decades after emancipation.

Freedpeople in urban areas also experienced mobility into the middle and upper classes. In 1860, slaves made up 80 percent of southern artisans. Long after the war, freedmen became barbers, butchers, and blacksmiths, dominating trades that provided an important source of economic independence. In addition, a small group of hardy freed entrepreneurs embarked upon independent business ventures. Poorly developed transportation made drayage (conveying freight) a lucrative occupation for freed entrepreneurs who acquired wagons and teams. Robert Reed Church, a Memphis freedman, par-

layed a small initial capital stake into a substantial fortune by focusing on leisure and real estate; Church busied himself acquiring saloons, "fancy houses," and rental property in areas populated by blacks. By 1890, this entrepreneurial acumen had enabled Church to amass a fortune, which made him the first millionaire in African-American history.

Geographic mobility offered landless blacks some alternative avenues of opportunity, and migration assumed many forms. Large numbers of freedpeople abandoned agrarian life and moved to urban areas; the destinations tended to be inside the South until the 1890s when urban areas in the mid-Atlantic and midwestern states began receiving large black migrations. Agriculture remained the primary occupation, and it appears that the bulk of black migrants moved in search either of higher wages or of opportunities for landownership. The quest for higher wages prompted movement out of the Atlantic coastal states and into the new cotton regions in the Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi "black belts"; in the Southwest, black migrants emerged in Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana. A series of concerns (anger over political violence, frustration over lack of opportunity, and land hunger) prompted three large organized migrations: the back-to-Africa Liberian exodus of 1877-1879; the Kansas "Exodusters" of 1879-1881; and the utopian black township movement to Oklahoma in the 1890s. Although at the turn of the century most of the Freedom Generation remained in the former slaveholding states, post-Civil War migrations set the stage for the rural-to-urban movements that reshaped the contours of life among African Americans in the twentieth century.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS

Although political participation and economic autonomy played a crucial role in the postwar life, it was in the realm of community building that blacks achieved their most significant long-term gains. Family reunification became the first task undertaken by most former slaves. During the Civil War and continuing for years thereafter, freedpeople did what they could to reknit the fabric of family life frayed during slavery. For many freedpeople, reunification involved solemnizing marriages begun during slavery. The Freedom Generation used the Freedmen's Bureau as well as local courts to solemnize scores of thousands of existing unions, a surprising number of which had endured for many decades. In other instances, reunification involved extensive travel in search of kin forcibly separated from their families. The former slave William Curtin, for example, rejoiced over the return, at war's end, of his father, who had been sold to Virginia from Georgia: "Dat was de best thing about de war setting us free, he could come back to us." Not all quests ended happily. Indeed, the often-futile attempt to reconstitute black family units disrupted during slavery was a frequent preoccupation. Lucinda Lowery posted this notice:

Information Wanted, of Caroline Dodson, who was sold from Nashville [Tennessee], Nov. 1st, 1862, by James Lumsden to Warwick, (a trader then in human beings), who carried her to Atlanta, Georgia, and she was last heard of in the sale pen of Robert Clark, (a human trader in that place,) from which she was sold. Any information of her whereabouts will be thankfully received and rewarded by her mother.

Until late in the 1880s, such notices appeared in black newspapers, offering powerful testimony to the strength of family ties fashioned in bondage and then disrupted by chattel slavery.

Enumerations of the American population taken between 1870 and 1910 reveal the overwhelming preponderance of two-parent families among rural and urban blacks, North and South. More than 90 percent of rural blacks lived in kin-based extended family units; 80 percent of urban blacks were similarly situated. Thus did an "invisible" institution of the slave community (the extended family) emerge in the wake of emancipation. The emphasis upon family imposed heavy responsibilities on postwar blacks who took on the burden of procuring the necessities of life both for themselves and for their dependents.

THE BLACK CHURCH

This quest for independence arose principally from the black churches, which served as the primary pillar in the indigenous process of community development that enabled freedpeople to avoid wallowing in a postslavery trough of "idleness, starvation, and disease." From this base arose a full array of benevolent, social, and educational institutions, in rural as well as in urban areas. And, it was these independent institutions controlled by black people that facilitated the successful adaptation to freedom.

Because most of the southern states did not provide publicly supported social services, black communities were compelled to turn inward, to find spiritual resources for survival, and to erect an institutional infrastructure to provide essential services for the sick, elderly, dead, and dying. By pooling scarce resources in church-sponsored social and benevolent agencies, the freedpeople employed a sturdy self-reliance that enabled them to meet successfully the challenge of caring for themselves and for their dependents. Locally governed churches provided the sites from which the freedpeople launched most of the independent social, benevolent, and educational institutions that ensured the survival of the Freedom Generation.

Even within the same denomination, urban/rural differences exerted strong influences. In the city of Memphis, Tennessee, for example, a former slave preacher named Morris Henderson assumed the leading role in erecting an independent black social infrastructure. Early in 1865, the Reverend Henderson left comfortable quarters in the basement of the white-controlled First

Baptist Church in favor of an outdoor "brush arbor." This move symbolized the determination of the recently freed to seek places where they could worship without supervision or interference. By 1869, Henderson's church claimed a membership of more than 2,500 adults: the largest among the black churches in Memphis. In 1870, Henderson moved into a new building on Beale Street, the location where the Beale Street Baptist Church stands to this day, and First Baptist Beale became the "Mother Church" for many satellite churches, which embarked on community building in other parts of Memphis. Reverend Henderson and his wife, Mary, assumed responsibility for social and benevolent activity in their church, out of which would emerge such groups as the Daughters of Zion, the Sisters of Zion, and the Sons and Daughters of Zion, who pooled the meager resources of impoverished urban blacks for mutual aid.

In rural Iberia Parish, Louisiana, 200 miles west of New Orleans, similar institutions arose appropriate to the agrarian circumstances. Beginning in 1868, a group of families related by marriage and kin ties that had survived during slavery took advantage of the 1866 federal Homestead Act to purchase a series of adjoining parcels of land. In 1873, this group of extended families established the independent settlement of Free Town and set aside land for Mt. Olive Baptist Church, named to symbolize arrival in a place of independent refuge. An equal number of men and women signed the church charter, and under the leadership of Reverend Robert Dyas and his wife, Sarah, the settlement moved quickly to establish its own church, cemetery, and school. Mt. Olive functioned as the center of community life, with a small store for supplies and a gristmill to grind cereal grain into meal and flour. The church also spawned a Young Men's Mutual Society which then organized an agricultural co-op to supply credit that independent black landowners often found extremely difficult to acquire. Mt. Olive stands today as substance and symbol of the efficacy and staying power of the family-based self-help infrastructure devised by the Freedom Generation.

Church-based community development left a quite varied legacy. The churches where most former slaves worshiped emphasized direct religious experience over liturgical piety. Color-caste and social class factors also influenced preferences among numerous Christian denominations. The Baptist Church became the favored denomination among the poor, darker-skinned working-class majority of freedpeople, while the AME church drew its adherents principally from a somewhat more affluent and lighter-skinned minority. In 1906, the National Baptist Convention, largest of the black-dominated religious groups, claimed more than 2.2 million members; the second largest group, the AME, claimed about 500,000 members. Other Protestant denominations, the Presbyterians and the Episcopalians, attracted markedly smaller number of literate, light-skinned professionals and entrepreneurs. And only in the state of Louisiana did Catholicism claim substantial numbers of black adherents.

EDUCATION

Nothing better illustrates the significance of community-based institution building than progress achieved by the freedpeople in the struggle to throw off the blanket of illiteracy with which slavery had shrouded them. Southern states displayed such penury toward the education of blacks that religious groups bore the principal burden of primary education until late in the nineteenth century. Attempts undertaken during the Civil War to educate freedpeople supplied the foundation, in postwar years, for a church-based network of privately funded primary schools throughout the South. Black churches organized thousands of Sabbath Schools, designed to provide freedpeople with the rudimentary skills necessary for independent biblical study. This Protestant emphasis on personal engagement with the Scriptures led to a more general demand for formal schooling for younger blacks.

Commenting on the alacrity with which freed children in Memphis responded to new opportunities for education, a skeptic wrote: "The Negroes, particularly the children, show an insatiable desire to learn—a greedy fondness for books." The intensity of educational interest displayed in Memphis attracted the attention of a philanthropist from the state of Pennsylvania, Dr. Francis LeMoyne, who donated \$20,000 in 1869 to help to build a college "To fit Men and Women for entering early into the practical business of life." LeMoyne Normal and Commercial School opened its doors in the fall of 1871; and LeMoyne-Owen College continues today to discharge its educational mission as an historically black liberal arts college.

This pattern recurred throughout the southern states. Opened during the Civil War/Reconstruction era in response to demands among freedpeople for education, these black schools rapidly evolved into normal schools, colleges, and universities. Fisk University grew out of a school opened at Nashville, Tennessee, in 1866. Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, Howard University in the national capital, and Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, all opened their doors in 1867. In fact, practically every one of the historically black colleges and universities now in operation dates its founding to the period 1865 to 1915.

An assessment of progress in black literacy reveals the impact of access to education. The 1870 U.S. Census reported an 85 percent adult literacy rate for southern whites compared to less than 10 percent for black adults; only 8 percent of freed children of school age attended school while 33 percent of southern white children did. By 1910, the emphasis among members of the Freedom Generation on educating the young had significantly altered these figures. The 1910 U.S. Census reported that white school attendance had doubled to 60 percent, while the rate for blacks was 43 percent: an increase of more than 400 percent. Access to formal education led to enhanced literacy. For while former slaves (blacks over age sixty-five) reported literacy of 20 percent (compared to 85 percent for whites over sixty-five), blacks ages ten to

fourteen recorded an 80 percent literacy rate in comparison to a 95 percent literacy rate for southern whites of the same age. The rapid closure of the literacy gap between white and black adolescents suggests that forty years of emphasis on schooling had brought younger members of the Freedom Generation to a literacy rate within striking distance of their generational peers.

No person better exemplified the positive impact of access to education on black upward mobility than Booker T. Washington. Born into slavery in 1856 in Franklin County, Virginia, Washington would gain fame as the head of Tuskegee Institute, an agricultural and technical school created by blacks in central Alabama as a "college" to educate local youths. Washington's formal education came at Hampton Institute, an agricultural and technical school founded in 1868 by Union General Samuel Chapman Armstrong to educate "contrabands" at Fortress Monroe. When black leaders from Tuskegee asked Armstrong to suggest someone to oversee creation of their school, Armstrong named his prize pupil, Booker T. Washington, as the freedman best qualified to duplicate in Alabama what had been achieved in Virginia. From humble beginnings in 1881, Washington succeeded not only in creating at Tuskegee an institution devoted to practical education but in making himself the most powerful African-American of his day. Ties to captains of industry, to philanthropists, and to leading Republicans like the future president Theodore Roosevelt would transform Booker T. Washington into a major figure in American life.

As significant as were Washington's later achievements, his early life sheds light on the grim circumstances in which most members of the Freedom Generation lived. Shortly after emancipation, Washington's stepfather moved the family from the plantation on which they had lived to a new residence in West Virginia where he had served his duty tour as a Union soldier. While Washington proved to be an exceptionally bright ten-year-old, the pressure of economic necessity compelled a division of time between rudimentary education and labor in the salt and coal mines. Encouragement from his mother, who secured work in domestic service, allowed him to leave the mines and continue his journey to higher education at Hampton Institute.

BLACK WOMEN ORGANIZE

Although talent and good fortune separated Washington from the mass of freedpeople, the ambition for improvement that motivated him was widespread. A remarkable group of black women led the way in refashioning the institutional infrastructure improvised during the first decades after emancipation. Maggie Lena Walker became the first woman bank president in the United States when she founded the Saint Luke Penny Savings Bank in Richmond, Virginia, in 1903. Born in 1867, Walker, in 1883, graduated from Richmond's Colored Normal School; she taught school, helped found Woman's Union (an insurance company), and was selected, in 1899, to serve as Right

Worthy Grand Secretary of the Independent Order of St. Luke, a black mutual benefit society. Mary McLeod Bethune founded the Daytona (Florida) Normal and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls in 1904, using "\$1.50 and a prayer." Born to freed parents in South Carolina in 1875, Bethune received her primary education at a school operated by the Presbyterian Board of Missions for Freedmen. After a 1922 merger with an all-boys school, Bethune changed the name of the institution she founded to that which it bears today, Bethune-Cookman College.

The impetus for institution building in northern cities often came from southern migrants. Jane Edna Hunter, born in 1882 to freed parents in South Carolina and educated at an AME normal school, went to Cleveland, Ohio, in 1905 to pursue a nursing career for which she had trained at Hampton Institute. Personal experience with the harsh conditions in which single southern female migrants generally lived pushed Hunter into organizing a group of black women pledged to give a nickel per week to support the Working Girls' Home Association, which they founded in 1911. When migration from the South increased Cleveland's black population 300 percent between 1910 and 1920, the city's association was forced to make radical changes to meet new demands for social services. Renaming her group after the eighteenth-century black poet Phillis Wheatley, Hunter devised a plan of expansion which led to the opening of an eleven-story facility in 1927, making the Phillis Wheatley Association the largest independent black settlement house in the United States.

Such examples of female social activism were repeated throughout the nation. Nothing better captures the motives for this activism than a speech delivered by Nannie Burroughs in 1900 to the National Baptist Convention's annual meeting. Burroughs, born in Richmond in 1878, titled her speech "How the Sisters are Hindered from Helping"; her appeal won approval for the creation of a Woman's Convention to serve as an outlet for women's "burning zeal" to serve the interests of the race. The assumption by black

women of primary responsibility for social and benevolent activity continued unabated, leading to the founding in 1896 of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), dedicated to promoting "the welfare of our race." On NACW's Founding Board were many prominent black women, including Olivia Davidson Washington, wife of Booker T. Washington. Mary Church Terrell, first NACW president, daughter of the Memphis millionaire Robert Reed Church and a graduate of LeMoyne College, captured the essence of black female benevolent activism in a speech delivered to the New York Charity Organization Society in 1910. "If anyone should ask me what special phase of the colored American's development makes me the most hopeful of his ultimate triumph over present obstacles," Terrell wrote, "I should answer unhesitatingly, it is the magnificent work the women are doing to regenerate and elevate the race."

Female benevolent activity relied on small donations and volunteer activity to support relief work. Similar methods generated the many millions of dollars raised to pay for construction, in the years 1885 to 1915, of the monumental church edifices that now stand in cities North and South, edifices which give elegant and eloquent testimony to the success of community building initiated by members of the Freedom Generation.

THE RISE OF JIM CROW

When Mary Church Terrell expressed optimism about "ultimate triumph over present obstacles," she referred, obliquely, to the period of intense racial crisis that confronted African-Americans at the turn of the century. Contestation over racial issues occurred both among African Americans and between blacks and whites. Regionwide passage of Jim Crow segregation laws focused interracial strife on issues of equal access to public activities and facilities. And friction between blacks reflected principled disagreement over the best strategy for ameliorating the problems besetting African Americans. These multiple dimensions of the movements protesting racialism and segregation would remain at the forefront of concern for the balance of the twentieth century.

Statutory racial segregation emerged in the 1880s as southern states enacted laws mandating separation of blacks and whites. Jim Crow began in Tennessee in 1881 with the enactment of a law allowing railroads to offer separate first-class accommodations for black and white passengers. Soon thereafter, the long-simmering friction over black claims for equality erupted in the wake of a second period of failed interracial political alliance. In the same way that Radical Reconstruction collapsed amid organized political violence, so did the Populist Movement. The failure of the farmers' crusade, which had initially supported biracial activity, to achieve agrarian reform left a residue of embittered racialism that found expression both in political violence and in discriminatory laws. And while individual southern states worked to enact Jim Crow statutes, the ideology of social Darwinism accorded the sanction of

The Convention of The National Association of Colored Women, 1904

The National Association of Colored Women's Clubs in the fourth convention assembled, with gratitude acknowledge the Divine guidance of the Supreme Ruler of the Universe and thank Him for the preservation of our President, executive officers and other members.

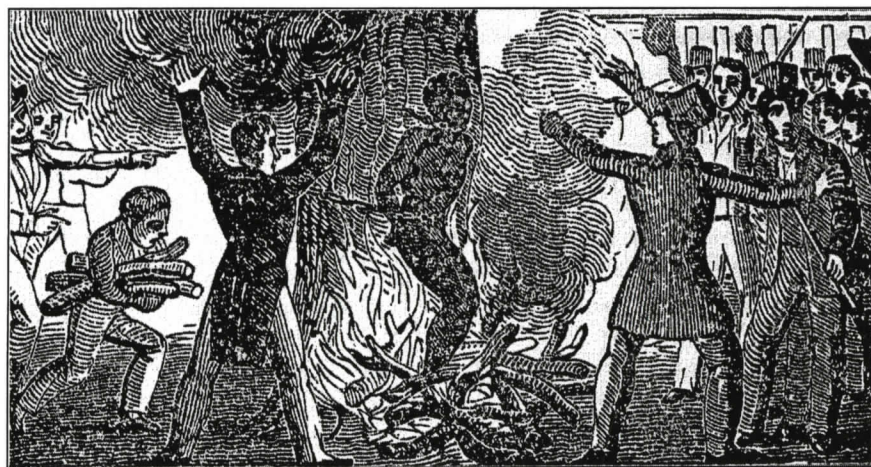
We pledge renewed efforts and loyalty along all lines in this, our national organization, continuing to stand for adherence to our motto "Lifting as We Climb," for we believe that in it lies the future hope of the race.

Source: Minutes of the Fourth Convention of the National Association of Colored Women, held at St. Paul's Church, St. Louis, Missouri, July 11 to 16, 1904.

"science" to Eurocentric racism. By 1910, Jim Crow had spread throughout the South, mandating cradle-to-grave segregation of whites and blacks in the public sphere.

Questions about how best to counter racist violence, Jim Crow laws, and scientific racialism sparked intense debate among African Americans. Far from achieving a consensus, black educators, politicians, intellectuals, and social activists articulated sharply conflicting strategies that reflected the broadened spectrum of social conditions among blacks in the late nineteenth century. The core issue was this: Should blacks fight against Jim Crow or acquiesce in that which they could not control while building strength for a counterattack when conditions improved? Mobility and class differentiation had created bases for diversity and dissent unimaginable amid the generalized poverty characteristic of the immediate postslavery years.

Late in his life, Frederick Douglass attempted to formulate a platform for unified action and watched in shocked horror as the number of lynchings rose dramatically amid the tumult of the 1880s. Averaging 100 each year for thirty years, lynchings took place throughout the South. They were especially prevalent in thinly populated rural areas recently experiencing significant black immigration. The ritual public murders generally involved black male "strangers" who were falsely accused of sexual assault on local white women. The fateful coincidence of lynchings, Jim Crow laws, and social Darwinism prompted a deeply concerned Douglass to ask, in 1889, whether "American justice, American liberty, American civilization, American law, and American Christianity could be made to include and protect alike all American citizens in the rights which have been guaranteed to them by the organic and fundamental laws of the land."



"Lawless Burning of Men 'By the Many.'" The practice of violence against slaves common before abolition endured after emancipation with the mob lynching of free blacks, which reached epidemic proportions in the 1890s. From *American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1840*. Credit: The Library Company of Philadelphia.

CONFRONTING LYNCH LAW

Douglass was joined in his attack on lynching and racialism in 1892 by the black journalist Ida B. Wells. Born a slave in 1862, Wells received her primary and collegiate education in Mississippi. After working as a teacher for several years, Wells purchased, in 1889, part ownership in a newspaper, the *Memphis Free Speech and Headlight*, published by the Beale Street Baptist Church, from which she launched a vigorous assault against lynching. Frustration over the complicity of city leaders prompted Wells to urge Memphis blacks to join the migration to Oklahoma. The departure of several thousand workers angered local businessmen who found in a May 1892 editorial a pretext for silencing Ida B. Wells. For not only did Wells dispute ritual charges of sexual assault against victims of lynching but also she questioned whether repeated reliance on false charges might not be "very damaging to the moral reputation of [white] women." Within days, irate civic leaders forced closure of the *Free Speech* and exiled Ida B. Wells to Chicago.

Once in Chicago, Wells maintained her activism. She soon launched a vigorous protest against the decision by organizers of the 1892–1893 Columbian Exposition to deny the inclusion of an exhibit by American blacks, revealing

Ida B. Wells-Barnett on Lynching

... If the Southern citizens lynch Negroes because "that is the only successful method of dealing with a certain class of crimes," then that class of crimes should be shown unmistakably by this record. Now consider the record.

It would be supposed that the record would show that all, or nearly all, lynchings were caused by outrageous assaults upon women; certainly that this particular offense would outnumber all other causes for putting human beings to death without a trial by jury and the other safeguards of our Constitution and laws.

But the record makes no such disclosure. Instead, it shows that five women have been lynched, put to death with unspeakable savagery during the past five years. They certainly were not under the ban of the outlawing crime. It shows that men, not a few, but hundreds, have been lynched for misdemeanors, while others have suffered death for no offense known to the law, the causes assigned being "mistaken identity," "insult," "bad reputation," "unpopularity," "violating contract," "running quarantine," "giving evidence," "frightening children by shooting at rabbits," etc. Then, strangest of all, the record shows that the sum total of lynchings for these offenses—not crimes—and for the alleged offenses which are only misdemeanors, greatly exceeds the lynchings for the very crime universally declared to be the cause of lynching. . . . Instead of being the sole cause of lynching, the crime upon which lynchers build their defense furnishes the least victims for the mob. In 1896 less than thirty-nine per cent of the Negroes lynched were charged with this crime; in 1897, less than eighteen per cent; in 1898, less than sixteen per cent; in 1899, less than fourteen per cent; and in 1900, less than fifteen per cent, were so charged.

Source: *The Independent* (N.Y.), May 16, 1901.

the influence of scientific racist dogma that blacks had never accomplished anything worthy of representation on the "Great White Way," the name given to the exposition's brightly lighted main promenade. Wells sought out Frederick Douglass and persuaded him to join, both in publishing an antilynching pamphlet, "The Reason Why: The Colored American Is Not In The World's Columbian Exposition." Douglass bemoaned the decision as a lost opportunity "to show some results of our first thirty years of acknowledged manhood and womanhood." Ridiculing the denial of black achievement by exposition organizers, Douglass argued instead that they excluded blacks because of their unwillingness to acknowledge that slavery had existed and their reluctance to broach the subject of black achievement lest such an exhibit implicitly condemn widespread lynching. Douglass saw the epidemic of lynching as "proof that the Negro is not standing still . . . he is alive and fighting his way to better conditions than those of the past." Precisely because "the enemies of the Negro see that he is making progress," insisted Douglass, "they naturally wish to stop him and keep him in just what they consider his proper place."

Concerns about the "proper place" for African Americans and the best strategy for coping with violent racial conflict remained at the forefront, particularly among those charged with responsibility for symbolic evocations of "progress." Organizers of the Cotton States Exposition planned for Atlanta in 1895 adopted a radically different tact than had the organizers of the Columbian Exposition. Rather than exclusion, they authorized the construction of a "Negro Building" and invited Booker T. Washington to give the opening address. A champion of the interests of black landowners who generally approved of an emphasis on education to improve farm productivity, Washington viewed his Atlanta speech as an opportunity to bring about racial peace through a carefully crafted appeal to the self-interests of the growth-oriented political and business boosters of the "New South." Without hope of effective enforcement of civil rights from the national government, Washington saw little value in Frederick Douglass's appeals to American constitutional idealism. "Our greatest danger," Washington argued in his famous Atlanta address, "is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the production of our hands, and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labor, and put brains and skills into the common occupations of life. . . . It is at the bottom of life that we must begin, not at the top. . . . Nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities," Washington submitted in disapproval of Ida Wells's strident protest. He also insisted that "the wisest among my race" deemed "agitation of questions of social equality [as] the extremest folly." These views prompted Washington to offer a compromise to the South's best men: he would acquiesce in segregation, which he felt powerless to overturn in the short run, in return for the end of lynching. As Washington put it, "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." Delivered

seven months after Frederick Douglass's death, the speech prompted the *New York World* to describe Washington as "a negro Moses."

Dissonant responses to the hallmark speech of Washington's career reflected the importance of this symbolic passing of the torch of African-American leadership. Considerably less complimentary reviews came from a number of black intellectuals, most prominent of whom was the Harvard-trained sociologist W. E. B. DuBois. This cofounder of the NAACP sharply criticized Washington's effort to fashion an accommodation with segregation laws as well as his emphasis on industrial education. Instead, DuBois advocated bold action in behalf of civil rights and argued for the use of liberal arts education to create a "Talented Tenth"; DuBois saw educating elite blacks as the best method of proving to a doubting world the civilizing capacity of African Americans.

Washington also met similar harsh criticism even from those more familiar with the realities of the agrarian South. Ida B. Wells, herself a former slave and product of Hampton, acknowledged the salience of industrial education for improving the lives of rural-agrarian blacks, but chastised Washington for his emphasis on Tuskegee to the detriment of other black colleges and universities. Above all, however, Wells found fault with Washington's stand on the central issue of the day, whether blacks should acquiesce in segregation or fight openly against it. "It is indeed a bitter pill," she wrote, "to feel that much of the unanimity with which the nation today agrees to Negro disfranchisement comes from the general acceptance of Mr. Washington's theories."

Booker T. Washington remains an enigma. Was the "Wizard of Tuskegee" unaware of the uses white supremacists made of his compromise, or did he believe that elite southerners could control former Populists who eventually supported Jim Crow so enthusiastically? It may well be that Washington's personal relations with the power elite led him to err badly in estimating the virulence of racialism and the efficacy of heavy reliance on the influence his elite patrons could exert upon turn-of-the-century southern politics.

Booker T. Washington died in 1915, shortly before World War I opened the way for more than a million southern blacks to head north in search of opportunity. Left unresolved in debates between Washington and his critics was the strategic question: Should blacks attempt to "use segregation as a weapon to remove segregation?" How far to rely on self-reliance? When to form alliances with whites? With which ideological factions should such alliances be forged? When to rely on constitutional litigation as opposed to direct protest? These issues continued to remain matters of contention well into the twentieth century.

CONCLUSION

Despite the obstacles set in their path, the members of the Freedom Generation imparted a legacy of achievement to its progeny. And their earnest desire for recognition of their achievements found powerful symbolic expression in

the successful agitation launched by black Virginia attorney Giles B. Jackson concerning the 1907 celebration of the tercentennial of English settlement at Jamestown. Much as had Ida B. Wells, Jackson sought recognition of black achievements in this celebration of American nationality. Like Wells, Jackson believed any such exhibit was woefully incomplete if it lacked evidence of the material advances made by African Americans after slavery.

Centennial organizers initially responded ambivalently, but a persistent Giles G. Jackson eventually won out. When he received the go-ahead in 1903, Jackson incorporated "The Negro Development and Exposition Company of the United States." He then set out to procure and exhibit examples of "everything" blacks had done so that "the world may form a correct opinion of the Negro race in this country." Jackson solicited financial support from every former slaveholding state and from Congress. North Carolina appropriated \$5,000, and was the only state to give financial support. Congress appropriated \$100,000 to assist the project. President Theodore Roosevelt visited the Negro Exhibit in June 1908, as subsequently did Booker T. Washington, both of whom expressed amazement at the range of displays it contained. In this large three-story building designed and constructed by blacks were displayed some ten thousand individual exhibits; they covered the gamut of artistic, literary, industrial, and handicraft work submitted by black religious, educational, and social groups throughout America.

Giles B. Jackson took special pride in statistics that showed the scope and scale of organizational activity undertaken by the Freedom Generation. Jackson pointed out that the 1900 U.S. Census counted twenty-four thousand black church buildings "with a seating capacity of six millions, eight hundred thousands"; property owned by these churches was valued at \$26,662,448. The commitment to education remained so strong that blacks contributed more money in 1900 to support black primary schools (\$1,469,000) than the \$1,346,000 that was appropriated by southern state governments. Higher education remained an object of interest as well, enabling Jackson to report, "There are now in the country 136 colleges and 'Industrial Schools' exclusively for the education of negroes." The proliferation of urban social service agencies evidenced continued self-reliance. "The results were simply marvelous," Jackson concluded, "and we think it not too much to say that the Negro Exhibit was the central figure of the Exposition." The expansive pleasure Giles B. Jackson expressed concerning the Negro Exhibit reflected the understandable pride former slaves and their children took in the construction of a self-sustaining black community. Their achievements had proven skeptics like the Tennessee Reconstruction Governor Brownlow to be unequivocally wrong.

Nonetheless, the subjugation of the Freedom Generation to domination by *de jure* segregation shows that post-Civil War America did not achieve the hoped-for transition to racial democracy. This failure led, in the twentieth

century, to the massive out-migration of African Americans from the former slaveholding states to urban regions throughout the United States. The legacy of failed racial democracy evident in the Jim Crow laws would help precipitate the Civil Rights movement a half-century later, and the seeds of the contemporary "urban crisis" were sown in the racial discrimination experienced by so many African-American urban emigrants. The lost opportunities of the emancipation era reveal that America had yet to honor fully the compact the Great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln, made solemnly at Gettysburg: the sacred pledge that saving the Union by the destruction of chattel slavery would promote "A New Birth of Freedom" in a unified America.

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