

Voices of Protest

Progressive Voices

Violent Times

Civil Rights Vanguard

Protesting with Their Feet

New Negroes

New Women



A Man Was Lynched Yesterday

The NAACP flew this flag above Fifth Avenue in New York City each time it learned of a lynching.

In 1919 the Washington, D.C., clergyman Francis J. Grimké gave a rousing welcome to black soldiers who had returned home from the European battlefield. Born a slave in 1852 in South Carolina, Grimké was the nephew of the famous women's rights and abolitionist sisters (and members of a South Carolina slaveholding family) Sarah Grimké and Angelina Grimké Weld and the husband of Civil War-era educator and diarist Charlotte Forten. In his lifetime Francis Grimké had seen three wars, as well as monumental changes in his own condition and that of his people. In childhood he had witnessed the Civil War, and in his teens and early twenties he followed, first with hope and then with disillusion, the unraveling promise of Reconstruction. In midlife he vigorously protested from the Washington pulpit of his Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church the steady erosion of blacks' civil and political rights. In 1898, responding to Booker T. Washington's public posture of accommodation to Jim Crow realities, Grimké had preached a defiant sermon titled "The Negro Will Never Acquiesce as Long as He Lives." He had not wavered in his decades-long fight for racial equality.

Now in 1919—an infamous year of race riots across the nation—Grimké explicitly tapped into the democratic doctrine that had been expounded so generally during the war as he demanded of the returning soldiers a heightened sense of urgency for equality and justice, especially since these fighting men had enjoyed more liberties on foreign soil than in the United States. Grimké did not hesitate to make known his expectations of them. "If it was worth going abroad to make the world safe for democracy, it is equally worth laboring no less earnestly to make it safe at home. We shall be greatly disappointed if you do not do this—if you fail to do your part."

African Americans did not fail to do their part in the pursuit of their rights. Civil-rights leaders such as Du Bois, the Grimké brothers (Francis and Archibald), Monroe Trotter, Ida B. Wells, Nannie Helen Burroughs, and many other black men and women had spoken forcefully against racial discrimination before the war, and they would continue to do so. Some remained in all-black organizations, while others joined with whites in organizations of Progressive-era reform, such as the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, and the National Urban League. However, as World War I went on, and especially after the fighting ended, the older civil rights vanguard was challenged by important new voices of varying ideological positions—socialists, black nationalists, and feminists. African Americans protested racial oppression in a cacophony of voices through journalistic, scholarly, and literary writings that together presented competing visions of a New Negro identity and consciousness. In a social milieu so completely charged with emotion and racial tensions, small wonder that blacks adopted varied strategies and goals.

Progressive Voices

Well before World War I, the NAACP stood out prominently as the leading voice of civil rights activism. The success of the NAACP could be measured by the circulation of its magazine *The Crisis* and its burgeoning membership. In 1910, the first year of its existence, the NAACP launched *The Crisis* under the editorship of W. E. B. Du Bois. The first issue, which appeared in November 1910, rapidly sold a thousand copies. By 1918 the magazine's circulation had increased to 100,000 copies per month. Shortly after the NAACP's initial organization, the first branch was established in Chicago. Within two years, nine others had been

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formed. Each year up until the outbreak of World War I the number doubled, and by 1921 more than four hundred branches were scattered across the United States. They gathered information, raised money, and carried out the aims of the parent organization. Not long after its founding, the NAACP also became a presence on the international scene. Du Bois attended the First Universal Races Congress in London in 1911 and won new friends for the NAACP among the delegates from many lands. Partly to represent the association at that important gathering and partly to refute the message of Booker T. Washington, who toured Europe in 1910, Du Bois stressed that, contrary to Washington's claims, African Americans in the United States were suffering under grave legal and civil disabilities.

The NAACP's growing success was also evident in its legal victories. The Legal Redress Committee under the chairmanship of white lawyer Arthur B. Spingarn, who with his brother Joel sat on the NAACP's biracial board of directors, included white and black attorneys. The lawyers worked closely together, and within a fifteen-year period the NAACP won three important decisions before the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1915, in *Guinn v. United States*, the Supreme Court declared the grandfather clauses in the Maryland and Oklahoma constitutions to be in violation of the Fifteenth Amendment and therefore null and void. In 1917, the distinguished lawyer Moorfield Storey, head of the NAACP's board of directors and former president of the American Bar Association, argued *Buchanan v. Warley* before the Supreme Court and won a stunning victory for the NAACP when the justices declared unconstitutional a Louisville ordinance requiring blacks to live in certain sections of the city.

The Work of the NAACP

The NAACP, though focused on racial reform, functioned in many ways like other Progressive-era reform organizations. Its legal work and campaign against lynching were reminiscent of progressives' demands for more honest, representative, and responsible government. *The Crisis* and other NAACP publications drew public attention to the heinous abuses associated with racial violence and adopted fact-gathering and social-scientific methods to gain broad support for antilynching legislation. In these efforts the NAACP emulated muckraking journalism and other progressive efforts to stamp out social evils through practical, pragmatic reforms. For example, Progressive-era reformers exposed the exploitation of child and women workers, the production and sale of unhealthy food and dangerous drugs, the abuses of corrupt urban political machines, the monopolistic power of trusts, the environmental damage of over-development, and the refusal of the vote to women.

Yet the reformist goals of the NAACP, along with the progressive-oriented National Urban League and several African American women's clubs, proved exceptions to the rule. African Americans were, in general, hardly the beneficiaries of the umbrella movement that has come to be called Progressivism. In the South, where the vast majority of the black population lived before 1914, the same southern white politicians who enacted progressive legislation in their states also disenfranchised black voters and passed segregation laws—all in the name of "better government." Whether by conviction or by expediency, southern Progressivism was avowedly racist, asserting that blacks were unfit to vote.

In the North, many progressive intellectuals and political leaders subscribed to the "scientific" racism of the day and justified the exclusion of blacks from the nation's political life. Many progressives applauded imperialism for bringing the "light" of modern civilization to the benighted colored races of the world, and at home they urged the rapid "Americanization" of the culturally alien immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe who were pouring into America's cities. Such attitudes, rooted in notions of Anglo-Saxon superiority,

caused them to turn a blind eye to the problems that African Americans daily faced. Thus the NAACP called for reform of many aspects of white progressives' thinking, including that of progressive reform presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson.

The 1912 Election By 1912 African Americans were sorely distressed by their political options. They had become suspicious of Theodore Roosevelt because of his handling of the Brownsville incident in 1906, and they lacked confidence in President William Howard Taft after he won the presidency in 1908. When officials of the NAACP went so far as to draft a statement for the Progressive Bull Moose Party platform, calling for the repeal of discriminatory laws and complete enfranchisement, it became clear that Roosevelt would give no assurances that his new party would stand unequivocally for full citizenship rights for blacks. Roosevelt permitted the southern white delegates to have their way in ignoring the statement and in barring some black delegates from the convention.

Although skeptical of the Democratic Party, some notable black leaders, among them Du Bois, William Monroe Trotter, and the AME Zion bishop Alexander Walters, turned their eyes toward Woodrow Wilson. Du Bois, Trotter, and other black civil rights advocates clearly chafed at the idea of Booker T. Washington's influence with both Roosevelt and his immediate successor, William Howard Taft. They hoped for better from Woodrow Wilson. Du Bois admitted respecting Wilson as a scholar and had taught his book *The State* to his students at Atlanta University. He believed that Wilson, a historian and the former president of Princeton University, would bring to the presidency a new model of leadership. It had been Alexander Walters more than anyone else who persuaded Du Bois and probably other black leaders of Wilson's goodwill toward African Americans. Walters lived in New Jersey and had met Wilson while he was governor of the state; they had even corresponded. In a letter to Walters about African Americans, Wilson had stated: "I want to assure them through you that should I become President of the United States they may count upon me for absolute fair dealing, for everything by which I could assist in advancing the interests of their race in the United States." Inspired, Du Bois wrote favorably of Wilson's candidacy in *The Crisis*.

Wilson Disappoints But Wilson's victory proved to be a tremendous disappointment and embarrassment to the civil rights leaders who initially supported him. By birth a Virginian, on the race question Wilson behaved no differently than did the many other southern progressives. Soon after his inauguration, he refused to endorse the NAACP's request to form a "national commission on the Negro problem," an idea proposed by Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of the *New York Evening Post*, founding member of the NAACP, and grandson of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Wilson had different priorities. When he was inaugurated as president in 1913, Wilson pledged his administration's commitment to a progressive-minded domestic program he called "the New Freedom."

In the first Congress during his administration, Wilson achieved his progressive-reform agenda through tariff and banking reforms, most significantly the labor exemption provisions of the Clayton Antitrust Act. Economic issues such as these, however, were of less interest to African Americans than the racist practices and institutions that relegated them to the bottom of the nation's economic ladder. Last hired and first fired, black people found equal employment opportunities denied to them because of their race. White labor unions closed their doors to blacks and remained for the most part steadfastly opposed to an interracial alliance in the struggle for higher wages and better working conditions. Banks refused to lend to blacks.

THE CRISIS

A RECORD OF THE DARKER RACES

Volume One

NOVEMBER, 1910

Number One

Edited by W. E. BURGHARDT DU BOIS, with the co-operation of Oswald Garrison Villard, J. Max Barber, Charles Edward Russell, Kelly Miller, W. S. Braithwaite and M. D. Maclean.



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ONE DOLLAR A YEAR

TEN CENTS A COPY

The Crisis—cover of the first issue

The *Crisis* magazine was established by W.E.B. Du Bois for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1910. Du Bois was the most influential and prestigious black leader in the first half of the twentieth century in the United States. The magazine was intended for anyone interested in civil rights and in the state of race relations around the world.

Congress submitted, as well, a flood of bills proposing discriminatory legislation. Proposals were made for laws forbidding interracial marriage, requiring segregation in housing and on public carriers in the District of Columbia, excluding blacks from officers' commissions in the Army and Navy, mandating separate accommodations for black and white federal employees, and banning all immigrants of African descent. Although most of the legislation failed to pass, Wilson by executive order segregated the eating and restroom facilities of black federal employees and phased out most blacks in civil service jobs. Instead of the former merit-based hiring system, blacks were denied civil service jobs simply because of their race. The progressive NAACP retorted that "the efficiency of their [blacks'] labor, the principles of scientific management are disregarded, the possibilities of promotion, if not now, will soon be severely limited." In an open letter to Wilson, dated August 15, 1913, the NAACP leadership protested the racial limits of this progressive president: "For the lowly of all classes you have lifted up your voice and not in vain. Shall ten millions of our citizens say that their civic liberties and rights are not safe in your hands? To ask the question is to answer it. They desire a 'New Freedom,' too, Mr. President."



Men and women at the Amenia Conference

Group portrait of men and women attending the NAACP-sponsored Amenia Conference in Amenia, New York, August 1916.

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Monroe Trotter, although declining to be a member of the integrated NAACP, went with a delegation of his own organization to the White House. His protest against the segregation of federal employees so sorely offended Wilson that he called for Trotter's immediate dismissal from his presence. President Wilson would be no friend to African Americans. In 1915 they began to fight residential segregation ordinances that were springing up all over the country. When the president ordered the Marines to occupy Haiti in 1915, African Americans loudly protested the violation of that country's sovereignty and territorial integrity; particularly repugnant to them was the killing of several hundred Haitians ostensibly to restore peace and order. African Americans took offense at Wilson's admiration of D. W. Griffith's film *Birth of a Nation* when it was released in 1915. NAACP branches in various cities picketed the film, which was based on the antiblack novels of Thomas Dixon. *Birth of a Nation* told a most sordid and distorted story of Reconstruction-era black emancipation, enfranchisement, and violation of white womanhood. Its glorification of the Ku Klux Klan condoned vigilante violence, and the film did more than any other single medium to nurture and promote the myth of black domination and debauchery during Reconstruction. Wilson praised the film as "history writ in lightning."

African Americans Protest Racial Policies

The time had come, the more aggressive NAACP leaders believed, to consolidate and achieve a unity in thought and action that had previously been impossible. In 1916, Joel Spingarn called a conference at his home in Amenia, New York, to discuss the plight of African Americans. The Amenia Conference, as it came to be known, brought together the most distinguished African Americans of the day. The conference attendees drew up no impassioned manifesto, and their resolutions showed no bitterness, but all participants agreed to work quietly and earnestly for enfranchisement, the abolition of lynching, and the enforcement of laws protecting civil rights. It was an eventful prelude to America's entry into World War I.

The Amenia Conference

Violent Times

The World War I rallying cry of "100% Americanism" morphed into a postwar national hysteria of "super-patriotism" that took several forms: the rise of racist and xenophobic groups such as the Ku Klux Klan; the Red Scare, with its government-authorized raids against perceived communists between 1918 and 1922; isolationist foreign policies; and an increasing number of lynchings and racially motivated mob violence, directed particularly against African Americans.

The Ku Klux Klan had reawakened in the southern states in 1915. In the ten months following the war's end, however, Klan membership soared from a few thousand to over 100,000 white-hooded "knights," who openly declared their goal of "uniting native-born white Christians for concerted action in the preservation of American institutions and the supremacy of the white race." By the 1920s the Ku Klux Klan had become a national organization with cells in several New England states as well as in New York, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and other northern and midwestern states. This white supremacist group assumed the responsibility for punishing people whom it considered dangerous—African Americans, Asians, Roman Catholics, Jews, and the foreign-born in general. The Klan assumed a semi-official role in many communities, taking the law into its

The Resurgent Ku Klux Klan

own hands and luring public servants into its membership. In many communities, candidates for public office feared defeat if they were not on good terms with the Klan.

African Americans had few rights that the Klan felt obliged to respect, and the actions of this militant organization fully confirmed its assertion that the United States was a "white man's country." Throughout the South and Southwest, African Americans lived in constant fear of the hooded bands of night riders who burned crosses to terrify those whom they considered undesirables. In the West the Klan carried out similar actions against the ethnic Japanese population. Wherever it established itself, the Klan was blamed, correctly or incorrectly, for the atrocities committed in the vicinity: floggings, brandings with acid, tarring and featherings, hangings, and burnings.

African American soldiers were especially targeted. Ten black soldiers, several still in their uniforms, were lynched. Mississippi and Georgia mobs each murdered three returned soldiers. In Arkansas two were lynched, and Florida and Alabama each took the life of a black soldier by mob violence. Fourteen black men were burned publicly, eleven of them burned alive. In utter despair an African American editor in Charleston, South Carolina, cried out: "There is scarcely a day that passes that newspapers don't tell about a Negro soldier lynched in his uniform. Why do they lynch Negroes, anyhow? With a white judge, a white jury, white public sentiment, white officers of the law, it is just as impossible for a Negro accused of crime, or even suspected of crime, to escape the white man's vengeance or his justice as it would be for a fawn to escape that wanders accidentally into a den of hungry lions. So why not give him the semblance of a trial?"

Nothing compared to the more than twenty-six urban race riots in the summer of 1919—termed the "Red Summer" by NAACP officer James Weldon Johnson because of the widespread bloodshed. By then race relations had been pushed to the breaking point by the continued migration of African Americans and subsequent competition for peacetime jobs. Egged on by native racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan, the lawless element of the white population undertook to terrorize blacks into submission. In the meantime, unrest and disappointment seized a considerable portion of the black population. When it became clear that whites sought to deprive blacks of their wartime gains, the latter bristled into action, determined to defend themselves in an unprecedented show of action.

In July 1919 Longview, Texas, also witnessed the nightmare of a race riot. Several white men were shot when they went into the black section of the town in search of a black schoolteacher who was accused of sending a news story to *The Chicago Defender* describing the lynching of an African American the previous month. Whites in the town were alarmed over this show of strength among blacks, and they poured into the black section determined to teach them a lesson. Many homes were burned, a black school principal was flogged in the streets, and several leading black citizens were run out of town. It was several days before the town returned to normal. In the following week a riot of more violent proportions broke out in the nation's capital. Newspaper reports of blacks assaulting white women whipped the irresponsible elements of the population into a frenzy, although it early became clear that the reports had no basis in fact. Mobs, consisting primarily of white sailors, soldiers, and Marines, ran amok through the streets of Washington for three days, killing several African Americans and injuring scores of others. On the third day, blacks retaliated when hoodlums sought to invade and burn their section of the city. The casualty list mounted, but before order was restored the number of whites killed and wounded had increased considerably as a result of the blacks' belated but effective action.

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The most serious racial outbreak occurred in Chicago in late July 1919. To southern blacks, Chicago had become “the top of the world,” and thousands had migrated there during and after the war in search of employment and freedom. **The Chicago Riot of 1919** Within less than a decade, the city’s black population had more than doubled, and the census of 1920 showed approximately 109,000 blacks living there. There had been some friction in industry, but the abundance of jobs had kept tensions to a minimum. The most serious friction arose over the issues of housing and recreation. With blacks spreading into white neighborhoods, white residents sought to prevent the infiltration by bombing black homes. Groups of young whites took it upon themselves to frighten blacks into submission and to prevent their continued movement into white sections of the city.

The riot that began on July 27 had its immediate origin in an altercation at a Lake Michigan beach. A young African American swimming offshore had drifted into water that was customarily used by whites. White swimmers commanded him to return to his part of the beach, and some threw stones at him. When the young man sank and drowned, blacks declared that he had been murdered. Although his recovered body showed no signs of having been stoned, it was too late to save the city from a riot that was already in progress. Distorted rumors about the incident and about subsequent events at the beach circulated among blacks and whites. Mobs sprang up in various parts of the city, and all night there was sporadic fighting. The next afternoon, white bystanders attacked blacks as they went home from work. Some were pulled off streetcars and whipped. Many people of both races were injured in these clashes, and at least five were killed.

On the South Side, a group of young blacks stabbed to death an old Italian peddler and a white laundry operator. During that day and the next, the riot spread, with mobs of both races terrorizing the opposite group. For thirteen days Chicago was without law and order, despite the militia being called out on the fourth day of the riot. When the authorities counted the casualties, the tally sheet gave the results of a miniature war. Thirty-eight people had been killed, including 15 whites and 23 blacks; of the 537 injured, 178 were white and 342 were black, with no indication of the racial identity of the remaining 17. More than a thousand families, mostly black, found themselves homeless as a result of the burnings and general destruction of property. The nation’s worst race riot shocked even the most indifferent observers into the realization that interracial conflict in the United States had reached a serious stage.

During the next two months, race riots erupted in Knoxville, Tennessee; in Omaha, Nebraska; in Elaine, Arkansas; and several other places. The Knoxville riot began when a white woman stumbled and fatally injured herself while running from a black man who was later accused of attempting to assault her. When he was arrested, a mob **More Riots** formed and an attempt was made to take him from the jail. During the general riot that followed, scores of people were injured, some fatally, and more than \$50,000 worth of property was destroyed. The troops that were called out went into the black section and “shot it up” when a false rumor was circulated that some blacks had killed two white men. Black people were stopped on the streets and searched. A black newspaper declared, “The indignities which colored women suffered at the hands of these soldiers would make the devil blush for shame.”

In Omaha a mob almost completely destroyed the county courthouse by fire in order to grab a black man who was in jail on a charge of attacking a white girl. The group succeeded



Chicago Race Riot of 1919

Whites stone an African American man, who later died of his injuries, during the 1919 Chicago race riots.

in seizing him, and dragged him through the streets, shot him more than a thousand times, mutilated him beyond recognition, and finally hanged him at one of the busiest downtown intersections. Meanwhile much damage was done to property, and several blacks were severely beaten.

In Elaine, Arkansas, when black farmers met to make plans to force their landlords to replace their existing debt peonage with a fair settlement, a deputy sheriff and a posse broke up the meeting. In the melee, the deputy was killed. That ignited a reign of terror in which scores of blacks were shot and several killed. In a subsequent trial, which lasted less than an hour, twelve black farmers were sentenced to death, and sixty-seven others received long prison terms. In 1923 the Supreme Court, in *Moore v. Dempsey*, ordered a new trial in the Arkansas courts for the black farmers who had been convicted of murder and sentenced to death after the 1919 Elaine race riot. NAACP lawyers had argued that the Arkansas men had not received a fair trial, because, among other things, blacks were excluded from the jury, and the Court accepted this argument. To members of the NAACP, such victories underscored the crucial strategy of the legal assault.

Although less numerous and devastating, riots continued after 1919. Two of the worst occurred in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Rosewood, Florida. In June 1921 the blacks and whites of Tulsa, Oklahoma, engaged in fighting, which Buck C. Franklin, a local black attorney, and some others preferred to call a "race war." Nine whites and twenty-one blacks were

known to have been accused of the killing. The accused persons were blacks at the time the burning began. The town was restored, and a young black man was killed on the anniversary of the consequences.

In January 1923, Rosewood, Florida, was destroyed. The homes were driven down. Not a single person witnessed. Not a single person investigated, and a feature film was made of the survivors.

In 1925 Dr. J. P. Morgan, an American physician, had purchased a house on the side of his home at the time of the killing of a white man. The response to trial. The response, *The Defender*, *The Pitts*, an example of courage. The question: "Why did the NAACP come to the aid of Arthur Garfield Hays Sulzberger, notes that Boyle, notes that Boyle contracted during the riot with other persons. Sweet to suicide.

In the postwar period, many blacks die in their own defense. The poets of the period, such as Langston Hughes, wrote:

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known to have been killed, and several hundred were injured. On hearing that a black had been accused of assaulting a young white woman, blacks took arms to the jail to protect the accused person, who, it was rumored, would be lynched. Altercations between whites and blacks at the jail spread to other parts of the city, and general rioting, looting, and house burning began. Four National Guard companies were called out, but by the time order was restored, more than \$1 million worth of property had been destroyed or damaged. The young black man was subsequently exonerated of any wrongdoing. On the seventy-fifth anniversary of the riot, the state legislature created a commission to revisit the causes and consequences of the riot.

In January 1923 a white mob from a neighboring town destroyed predominantly black Rosewood, Florida, after a white woman falsely accused a black male of assaulting her. Rosewood was burned to the ground, many of its residents were murdered, and the survivors were driven into exile and threatened with death if they disclosed the violence they had witnessed. Not until the early 1980s did some residents break silence. As a result of the publicity, investigations followed that produced a book, a scholarly study, a television special, and a feature film on the "Rosewood Massacre." In 1994 the Florida legislature provided for each of the survivors of the violence to receive reparations of \$150,000.

In 1925 Detroit exploded in violence when whites attempted to prevent an African American physician, Ossian H. Sweet, from living in a house that he and his wife Gladys had purchased in a white neighborhood. When a mob of 400 to 500 whites gathered outside his home and began to hurl stones, gunfire rang out from inside the Sweets' home, killing a white man in the crowd. Sweet, his brother, and friends in the house were brought to trial. The response of black self-defense was lauded in the black community. *The Chicago Defender*, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, and other black newspapers rallied with praise for Sweet's example of courage rather than capitulation to the mob. In *The Crisis*, Du Bois posed the question: "Which example would you follow, if you were 'free,' black, and 21?" The NAACP came to their defense, employing the famous white attorneys Clarence Darrow and Arthur Garfield Hays. All were finally acquitted, but irreparable harm had been done to the Sweet family and to race relations in Detroit. The historian of the Sweet case, Kevin Boyle, notes that Gladys Sweet succumbed soon after to tuberculosis, which she most likely contracted during her imprisonment in the Wayne County jail, and that this tragedy along with other personal and financial losses over subsequent decades eventually drove Ossian Sweet to suicide.

In the postwar racial strife, African Americans exhibited a willingness to fight and to die in their own defense, refusing to be intimidated into submission. One of the outstanding poets of the period, Claude McKay, expressed the feelings of a great many African Americans when he wrote:

If we must die, let it not be like hogs
 Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
 While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
 Making their mock at our accursed lot.
 If we must die, O let us nobly die,
 So that our precious blood may not be shed

In vain; then even the monsters we defy
 Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
 O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!
 Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,
 And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!
 What though before us lies the open grave?
 Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
 Pressed to the wall, dying but fighting back!

Many American whites freely suggested that foreign influences—especially exposure to the French tradition of equality during the war and Bolshevik propaganda after the 1917

“Outside Agitation” Russian Revolution—had caused blacks to fight back. Perhaps there was some truth to that. As Francis Grimké reminded returning American black soldiers, they had been treated on foreign soil better than in their own land. The Russian Revolution in 1917, and even earlier the influence of the Socialist Party of America under labor leader Eugene Debs, had attracted, if only temporarily, some black leaders, including McKay and Du Bois. However, black Americans all along the political spectrum (from conservative to moderate to radical left) ridiculed the claim that their new assertiveness was the result of “outside agitation.” American blacks needed no outsiders to awaken their sense of the tremendous contradiction between America’s professed beliefs and its actual practices.

In October 1919 *The Pittsburgh Courier* declared, “As long as the Negro submits to lynchings, burnings, and oppressions and says nothing he is a loyal American citizen. But when he decides that lynchings and burnings shall cease even at the cost of some bloodshed in America, then he is a Bolshevik.” That December, the hardly radical *Washington Bee* announced: “We heard nothing of this so-called ‘Bolshevism’ until the unrest in Russia had inflamed and aroused the persecuted common people during the world war. It is not Bolsheviks but just American injustice that is responsible.” The militant *Crusader*, edited by the radical leftists Cyril R. Briggs and Richard B. Moore, regarded such accusations as a compliment. In a scathing denunciation of mob violence and rioting in America, its editors asserted, “If to fight for one’s rights is to be Bolsheviks, then we are Bolsheviks and let them make the most of it!”

Civil Rights Vanguard

In the years immediately following World War I, no meeting of a national African American organization neglected to register its protest against the failure of the United States to grant first-class citizenship. In July 1919 the NAACP met in Cleveland and adopted resolutions expressing great concern over the status of blacks, particularly given the urban riots that had already commenced. Trotter’s National Equal Rights League met in September in Washington, D.C.—another riot-torn city of the “Red Summer.” The next month, the National Race Congress also met in Washington and passed protest resolutions. Organized in 1919, the Commission on Interracial Cooperation sought to mitigate racial strife. The commission worked primarily in the South and was led by white Methodist minister Will W. Alexander and other prominent white and black southerners. The CIC set up several ten-day schools for whites and blacks to train leaders in promoting interracial work. Local interracial committees were organized, and upon the creation of sufficient interest state

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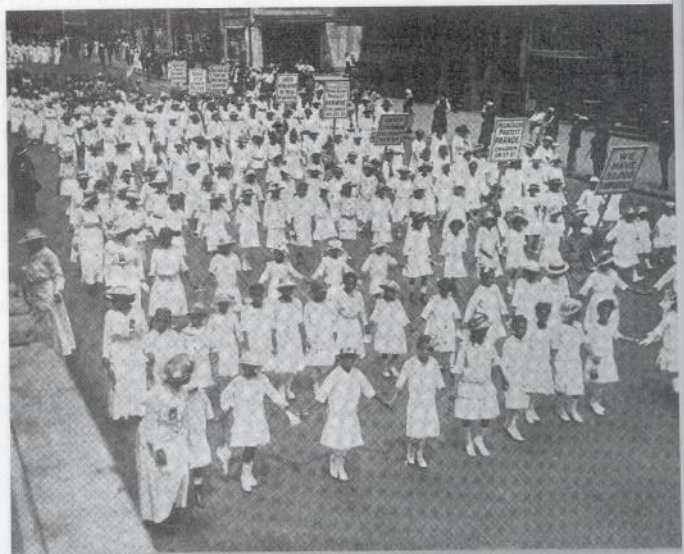
committees were set up. Although the commission did not attack segregation, it spoke out against lynching, mob violence, debt peonage, and disfranchisement. At about the same time the National Baptist Convention adopted resolutions in favor of a more complete integration of African Americans into American life.

Throughout these years, the interracial NAACP stood out as the most established and strongest advocate of blacks' civil rights, and no organization fought lynching and mob violence as systematically and persistently. After learning of a lynching, the NAACP would display a banner outside the window of its New York City offices solemnly announcing, "A man was lynched yesterday." The NAACP responded to the East St. Louis Riot of 1917 with a silent parade. The march was the brainchild of the NAACP organizer James Weldon Johnson, who described the haunting, soundless trek of ten thousand people along Harlem's streets. "They marched in silence," Johnson reported, "but some of those who watched turned away with their eyes filled," while "boy scouts distributed leaflets, which explained why they were marching." It was a brilliant strategy of counterintuitive power—to march, according to Johnson "because we deem it a crime to be silent in the face of such barbaric acts."

Lynching did not cease, however. Walter White's investigative reporting in *The Crisis* detailed the gruesome facts. His light skin enabled him to go undetected to crime scenes and secure as much data as possible concerning the tragedies. Walter White's book *Rope and Flag: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (1929), based on findings over a ten-year period, was hailed as a startling exposé. One of the most lurid accounts described the lynching of a husband and wife in May 1918, in Valdosta, Georgia. White wrote: "The murder of the Negro men was deplorable enough in itself, but the method by which Mrs. Mary Turner was put to death was so revolting and the details are so horrible that it is with reluctance that the account is given." He did go on to give the facts. Mary Turner had threatened to find out the names of the men in the mob who had killed her husband, to get warrants, and to bring them to justice. She, too, was hanged and burned to death in a publicly advertised execution in front of a crowd of onlookers, and her unborn child (she was eight months pregnant) was torn from her womb and stomped to death.

In May 1919 the NAACP held a national conference on lynching at which the chief speaker was Charles Evans Hughes, the former Supreme Court justice who had been the unsuccessful Republican candidate for president in 1916. (In 1930, Hughes would be reappointed to the Court as chief justice by President Herbert Hoover.) By 1920 it was waging a relentless crusade against lynching. In 1921 the NAACP sponsored two hundred antilynching rallies in various parts of the United States. Largely in cooperation with black women's clubs under the leadership of Mary Talbert and others, the NAACP had raised more than \$45,000 by 1924. These funds provided needed assistance for the NAACP's legal work. The columns of *The Crisis* persisted in reporting lynchings, and in 1919 the NAACP

The Persistence of Lynching



Children in Silent Protest Parade, 1917

These children, all dressed in white, marched in New York's Harlem in silent protest against the East St. Louis riot of 1917.

that “the movement started without any head from the masses, and such movements are always significant.” Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City, remarked on the uniqueness of “no visible leader.” Without an identifiable leader, blacks nonetheless moved with a sense of collective destiny through the help of friends and family members who had preceded them, migration clubs, church-member networks, railroad workers, and other circuits of communication—all facilitating the transition to and in the new urban environment. A literal movement at the grassroots level had been set in motion, and this demographic shift would afford African Americans a national presence and influence in the industrial workforce, in music and the arts, in the electorate, in religion, and in new political movements. From these varied arenas black voices of protest arose.

Equally important, in the early twentieth century blacks from the Caribbean islands were also on the move. Most of these immigrants were impoverished peasants and workers

Migration from the Caribbean

heading for destinations in mainland Central America, other islands in the Caribbean, and the United States. The collapse of the sugar economy, a series of natural disasters (floods, droughts, cyclones, and hurricanes), and colonial land policies had resulted in the displacement of agricultural workers in Jamaica, Barbados, St. Kitts, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Nevis, and other islands. Much of the former peasantry joined the ranks of the unemployed in these islands’ capital cities. Although some of this labor force was absorbed by the emerging banana industry, which gained momentum in the late nineteenth century, the banana industry never reached the scale of the earlier sugar industry. Compounding the effects of hunger and abject poverty, the status of health care on the islands was abysmal—much worse than in the days of slavery when doctors had a lucrative trade attending to the slaves of wealthy planters.

More than 140,000 migrants from large and small Caribbean islands entered the United States between 1899 and 1937, with Jamaicans the largest contingent. The great part of Caribbean immigrants to the United States arrived through Ellis Island and remained in New York City.

Although Afro-Caribbeans had been coming to the United States since the early days of slavery and, in the early nineteenth century, as free people, nothing matched this voluntary migration in the early decades of the twentieth century. The migratory stream swelled between 1912 and 1924, coinciding with the internal northward migration of African Americans. The Afro-Caribbean migration reached a high point in 1924, with 10,630 persons entering the country in that year. This number fell dramatically with the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, which restricted all foreigners from entering the United States according to national-origins quotas and race. The act reduced the Caribbean inflow by 95 percent of the 1924 inflow. The number of Caribbean immigrants plummeted during the depression years of the 1930s. In 1933 only 84 Caribbean islanders were listed in the immigration records; it was after the United States entered World War II that the number of Caribbean immigrants increased.

Most but not all Afro-Caribbean immigrants to New York between 1890 and 1924 hailed from the English-speaking islands—the British West Indies, as the islands were then called. An outstanding immigrant from Puerto Rico was Arthur Alfonso Schomburg, for whom the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem is named. Born Arturo Alfonso Schomburg in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 1874, he had come to New York in 1891, as part of an earlier wave of migrants. The multilingual Schomburg worked at Bankers Trust Company on Wall Street from 1906 to 1929,

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but during these years his role as a bibliophile and supporter of black history earned him his enduring reputation. Schomburg amassed one of the world's largest collections of books, documents, and artifacts related to people of African descent. In 1911 he helped to establish the Negro Society for Historical Research. The society boasted an international membership of blacks from the Americas, Europe, and Africa, endeavoring "to show that the Negro race has a history that antedates that of the proud Anglo-Saxon race" and "to collect useful historical data relating to the Negro race, books written by or about Negroes, rare pictures of prominent men and women . . . letters . . . African curios of native manufacture." In 1925 New York City's 135th Street Public Library purchased and housed Schomburg's collection for public access. It later grew to become the Schomburg Center.

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, Caribbean migrants to the United States, unlike those who migrated from the islands to Central America to work (for example, on the Panama Canal), were disproportionately educated and skilled. By 1930, 25 percent of the black population of Harlem was of Caribbean origin. The black-owned *The New York Amsterdam News* informed its readers that Harlem housed the world's second largest West Indian population. (Kingston, Jamaica, was the largest in the early 1930s.)

Caribbean immigrants were proportionally overrepresented in the population of successful black New Yorkers. Although they constituted only 0.8 percent of the city's overall black population in 1930, Afro-Caribbeans accounted for 14 percent of the city's business leaders and for more than 8 percent of the doctors listed in *Who's Who in Colored America* for the period from 1915 to 1932. Historian Winston James notes that Caribbean migrants were also more highly visible in radical movements—some of them had been political activists back home. This was true of the black nationalist Marcus Garvey, who before coming to the United States had led a strike at his workplace in Kingston, Jamaica.

Winston James attributes the New York Caribbeans' overrepresentation in nontraditional civil rights politics to a number of factors. Afro-Caribbeans not only had a higher level of education and literacy; their greater geographic mobility and travel experiences relative to African Americans also opened them to a greater sensitivity to black diasporic oppression. At the same time, class more than race distinctions shaped social relations on majority-black Caribbean islands, and this fact led some of the educated migrants to find common cause with white Marxists and to gravitate toward interracial leftist organizations in the United States. Afro-Caribbeans, unlike African Americans, tended to exhibit weaker ties to the traditional black churches and felt little attachment to the Republican Party. Yet the war had undeniably been a consciousness-raising experience for both Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans on many similar levels, not least of which was an experience in the armed forces that translated into menial positions, humiliation, segregation, and inequalities in housing, medical care, and public accommodations.



Arthur Alfonso Schomburg

Born Arturo Alfonso Schomburg in Puerto Rico, Arthur Schomburg amassed a great collection of works on peoples of African descent and helped establish the Negro Society for Historical Research in the early decades of the 20th century in New York.

Window in Time

Alain Locke on Harlem

Here in Manhattan is not merely the largest Negro community in the world, but the first concentration in history of so many diverse elements of Negro life. It has attracted the African, the West Indian, the Negro American; has brought together the Negro of the North and the Negro of the South; the man from the city and the man from the town and village; the peasant, the student, the business man, the professional man, artist, poet, musician, adventurer and worker, preacher and criminal, exploiter and social outcast. Each group has come with its own separate motives and for its own special ends, but their greatest experience has been the finding of one another. Proscription and prejudice have thrown these dissimilar elements into a common area of contact and interaction. Within this area, race sympathy and unity have determined a further fusing of sentiment and experience.

Source: *The Survey Graphic Harlem Issue* (March 1925).



New Negroes

The mass of the “leaderless” migrants from the American South and the Caribbean islands would soon find organizations and leaders who would challenge the civil rights vanguard, perceiving their liberal rights, integrationist goals to be the Old Guard Negro style. A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen emerged on the political scene during World War I, and they would continue afterward as important new black American voices of protest. Caribbean migrants, who attracted sizeable followings, included Hubert Harrison (Virgin Islands), Cyril Briggs (Jamaica), J. A. Rogers (Jamaica), Claude McKay (Jamaica), Wilfred A. Domingo (Jamaica), Richard B. Moore (Barbados), and most of all Marcus Garvey (Jamaica).

Race and Class Politics: Civil Rights, Black Nationalism

Periodically at ideological odds with each other, African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans also fractured internally along lines of political dissent—usually disagreeing over the primacy of class versus race protest. The lines that separated advocates of civil rights, of socialism, and of black nationalism were drawn but were clearly messy. The predilection of black Americans to emphasize race increasingly came to be adopted by Caribbean migrants the longer they remained in the United States. Over time, Afro-Caribbeans tended to acknowledge a far more virulent racism than they had experienced at home. In his sixth year in the United States, the poet Claude McKay succinctly conveyed this awakening of consciousness when he confessed: “It was the first time I had ever come face to face with such manifest, implacable hate of my race, and my feelings were indescribable. . . . I had heard of prejudice in America but never dreamed of it being so intensely bitter.”

Caribbean-born Hubert Harrison was deeply admired by American-born A. Philip Randolph. Harrison analyzed the race question from a socialist perspective. His prewar writings

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appeared in the white leftist journals *The Masses*, *The Call*, and *The Liberator* and drew attention to the role of race in relation to class politics. However, Harrison, McKay, Domingo, and other Afro-Caribbean leftists grew frustrated at the failure of the white Left to address forcefully racism in white working-class ranks, as well as racism's effect in both popular and scientific discourse. Harrison resigned from the Socialist Party of America as early as 1914 and continued his prolific writing and street-corner oratory. In 1917 he founded the Liberty League and began editorship of the organization's magazine *The Voice*. On July 4 of that year Harrison called for a "New Negro" leadership, not of the Talented Tenth but of the masses of black people.

Declaring their independence from the old civil rights vanguard, Harrison in November 1917 continued to insist on the "need for a more radical policy than that of the NAACP." He was the first to attack Du Bois's "Close Ranks" article. Between 1920 and 1922, Harrison edited Marcus Garvey's *Negro World*, but he never ceased to head the Liberty League or to bring its racialized class perspective to his *Negro World* articles. In 1921 Harrison called for a Black International, likely borrowing from the Communist Third International founded in Moscow in 1919. Likewise Cyril Briggs and Richard Moore, founders of the African Blood Brotherhood in 1918, edited their decidedly leftist Afro-centric magazine *The Crusader*, which operated between 1918 and 1922. Although initially sympathetic to the Garvey movement, Briggs and the ABB completely lost patience with Garvey and in 1922 adopted a pro-Communist ideological stance and advocated working-class revolution.

Debates over integration versus separation and capitalism versus socialism raged in black-edited magazines. African American editors W. E. B. Du Bois and A. Philip Randolph parted ways over the race-class divide. Du Bois, a member of the Socialist Party of America, resigned his membership in 1911 and **Du Bois and "Close Ranks"** in 1912 penned a scathing *Crisis* editorial against the white Left for its silence on racial inequality. Du Bois, unquestionably a critic of capitalism, wrote scathing articles against colonialism and also white privilege.

For all their differences, Hubert Harrison worked cooperatively with the NAACP in 1917 in its Silent Protest Parade in response to the East St. Louis riot. The NAACP's antilynching reportage consistently won *The Crisis's* respect; its articles on this issue were reprinted in a number of radical magazines. Du Bois wrote in sufficiently diverse voices, however, that he served as fodder for critiques from the black Left. His "Close Ranks article," which advocated that blacks put the race struggle on a backseat to their patriotic duty to their country during wartime, stirred equal ire from black leftists and black nationalists. Du Bois's earlier criticism of white socialists, when coupled with his wartime rhetoric, only widened fissures within the black political elite.

A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen regularly defended the white Left while criticizing the NAACP as an elitist and moderate in the pages of their magazine *The Messenger*. In an editorial supportive of the International Workers of the World (the IWW, or "Wobblies," as they were popularly known) in August 1919, they urged "the Negro labor unions to increase their radicalism, to speed up their organization, to steer clear of the Negro leaders and to thank nobody but themselves for what they have gained." In June 1919 and in response to the riots, a cartoon in *The Messenger* caricatured Du Bois as an "Old-Style Negro" in an unflattering way that called attention to his "Close Ranks" advice.

In the following month, a *Messenger* cartoon referenced the riots in Longview, Texas, in Washington, D.C., and in Chicago, in its presentation of the "New Style Negro" as one who unmistakably defends himself by shooting his attackers. *The Messenger* published a series of

Window in Time

Du Bois on "Whiteness"

The discovery of personal whiteness among the world's peoples is a very modern thing—a nineteenth- and twentieth-century matter, indeed. The ancient world would have laughed at such a distinction. The Middle Ages regarded skin color with mild curiosity; and even up into the eighteenth century we were hammering our national manikins into one, great, Universal Man, with fine frenzy which ignored color and race even more than birth. Today we have changed all that, and the world in a sudden, emotional conversion has discovered that it is white and by that token, wonderful!

Source: W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater, Voices from within the Veil* (New York, 1920), pp. 29–30.

cartoons that year, some of which emphasized class struggle and the commonality of interests (wages and working conditions) between black and white workers. To Randolph and Owen, the "New Negro" identified a new militancy forged in the violent crucible of the war and the Red Summer of 1919. Their attention to internationalism was also evident in such editorial titles as "Manifesto" (March 1919) and "We Want More Bolshevik Patriotism!" (May-June 1919).

By 1923, however, the *Messenger* editors denounced as a "menace" such doctrinaire Communists as Cyril Briggs, and surprisingly Randolph began to grow more sanguine toward business as well as toward traditional labor-union organizing. Perhaps the shift was the result of the government's red-baiting of the magazine. The U.S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, who led numerous raids in the 1920s against suspected communists, described *The Messenger* as the "most able and most dangerous of all the negro publications" and worried, as he put it, that "the Negro is 'seeing red.'" The Red Scare, as well as the dawning realization that most working-class blacks shied away from socialism, persuaded Randolph to accept the offer to be "general organizer" of the newly founded Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids and to push for its affiliation within the American Federation of Labor.

Notwithstanding the various ideological persuasions of black activists, the leader who challenged all of them was the Jamaican Marcus Garvey. Despite the established influence of the NAACP, it had never functioned as a mass movement. The NAACP had succeeded in achieving legal precedents that were beneficial to all African Americans, but the organization failed to capture the imagination and secure the following of the many African Americans on the lower social and economic levels. The working poor particularly regarded integrated civil rights organizations such as the NAACP and the Commission on Interracial Cooperation as agencies of upper-class blacks and liberal whites who failed to join hands with them in their efforts to rise. At the same time, working-class blacks regarded radical leftists as extreme and utopian. Given the racism in organized labor, working-class blacks saw little to affirm the possibility of a class-based interracial coalition intent on ending racial discrimination. This fundamental cynicism in regard to

race relations, regarded his Universal Negro College, the NAACP or the socialist, religious, political, and economic doctrines. With Washington, D.C., he called on African Americans to exalted everything black. He asserted that African Americans were so proud of their ancestry was so much a part of justice and their high-

Garvey's wide appeal in hostile urban centers called on African Americans to exalted everything black. He asserted that African Americans were so proud of their ancestry was so much a part of justice and their high-

With an eye on the European colonialism



Marcus Garvey

Garvey, who had migrated to the United States, became a leading voice for African Americans and served as president of the Universal Negro College.

race relations, regardless of its justification, made possible the rise of Marcus Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Garvey's movement, unlike the NAACP or the socialists, drew a truly mass following that represented a variety of religious, political, and economic convictions.

Garvey founded the organization in his native Jamaica in 1914. Two years later he came to the United States, ironically to meet Booker T. Washington and learn from his self-help doctrines. With Washington deceased, Garvey went to New York, where he founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association. At the end of the war the association grew rapidly, setting up divisions in the northern and southern states, as well as abroad.

Garvey's wide popularity rested on his appeal to race pride. The strain and stress of living in hostile urban communities created a state of mind on which Garvey capitalized. He called on African Americans, especially those of a darker skin color, to follow him. Garvey exalted everything black; he insisted that black stood for strength and beauty, not inferiority. He asserted that Africans had a noble past, and he declared that American blacks should be proud of their ancestry. In his newspaper, *The Negro World*, he told blacks that racial prejudice was so much a part of the civilization of whites that it was futile to appeal to their sense of justice and their high-sounding democratic principles.

With an eye on the growing sentiment favoring self-determination for colonized peoples, Garvey said that the only hope for African Americans was to redeem Africa from European colonialism. Only with a politically powerful and economically strong (Garvey



Marcus Garvey

Garvey, who had migrated from Jamaica to the United States before the war, had become a major critic of the treatment of blacks by American whites and of black strategies to deal with it. He soon became a leading voice for a new, separatist, back-to-Africa movement. He is shown here in his uniform as president of the Universal Negro Improvement Association.

was procapitalist) African empire, Garvey argued, would persons of African descent be respected throughout the world. On one occasion Garvey cried out: "Wake up Ethiopia! Wake up Africa! Let us work toward the one glorious end of a free, redeemed, and mighty nation. Let Africa be a bright star among the constellations of nations." On other occasions he would shout to his listeners, "Up you mighty race!" Recent scholarship and particularly historian Robert Hill's compilation of the Garvey Papers indicate the extensive formal and informal networks of Garvey's movement in the United States, England, Africa, and the Caribbean.

As a man of action, Garvey developed many facets of his movement—local divisions, officers, auxiliary organizations, economic enterprises, conferences, and a civil religion to which numerous members of the traditional black clergy adhered. In New York and other large cities, members of the UNIA paraded in elaborate uniforms as members of the UNIA's African Legion, Black Cross Nurses, African Motor Corps, and Black Eagle Flying Corps. In 1921 Garvey announced the formal organization of the Empire of Africa and appointed himself provisional president. He ruled with the assistance of one potentate and one supreme deputy potentate. Among the nobility he created were knights of the Nile, knights of the distinguished service order of Ethiopia, and dukes of the Niger and of Uganda.

Garvey and his newspaper, *The Negro World*, had a magnetic effect on the masses of blacks in cities across the nation—New York, Chicago, Detroit, Atlanta, Norfolk, and New Orleans, to name but a few with large UNIA divisions. Garvey's membership in the southern states was equal in size to that in the northern states. The work of such historians as Steven Hahn and Mary G. Rolinson attest to Garvey's broad appeal throughout the South, in urban and rural areas, from Virginia through the Deep South states of Louisiana and Mississippi, where emigration traditions dated back to the nineteenth century. Hahn notes that in the 1920s "Louisiana ranked first with 75 divisions, followed by North Carolina (61), Mississippi (56), Virginia (43), Arkansas (42), Georgia (35), Florida (30), South Carolina (25), and Alabama (14)."

It was the working-poor—the great mass of black urban unskilled laborers, and tenant and sharecrop farmers, who dreamed of one day "building their own country," as the black writer Richard Wright explained it, "of someday living within the boundaries of a culture of their own making." For such people, Marcus Garvey was the true leader of the black race. Although Garvey's claim that he had 4 million followers in 1920 and 6 million three years later can be questioned, even his severest critics admitted that his was by far the largest black movement in American history. Most African American leaders denounced him bitterly as an insincere, selfish imposter, but he countered that they were opportunists, liars, thieves, and traitors. Du Bois and Randolph, despite their differences, united in opposition to Garvey, even to the point of aiding in his arrest. Du Bois called Garvey and the UNIA "bombastic and impracticable." Garvey was equally contemptuous of Du Bois and other leaders of the NAACP. On one occasion he wrote: "The N.A.A.C.P. wants us all to become white by amalgamation, but they are not honest enough to come out with the truth. To be a Negro is no disgrace, but an honor, and we of the U.N.I.A. do not want to become white. . . . We are proud and honorable. We love our race and respect and adore our mothers."

Du Bois would later admit that Garvey's schemes conflicted with his own interest, the Pan-African Congresses. When Du Bois's third congress met in 1923, signs of decline were clearly discernible, growing worse by the fourth one in 1927. While the Pan-African Congresses had historically appealed to and convened a select

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Window in Time



Garvey Speaks in Newport News, Virginia

Africa Must Be Restored

I want you to understand that you have an association that is one of the greatest movements in the world. The New Negro, backed by the Universal Negro Improvement Association, is determined to restore Africa to the world, and you scattered children of Africa in Newport News, you children of Ethiopia, I want you to understand that the call is now made to you. What are you going to do? Are you going to remain to yourselves in Newport News and die? Or are you going to link up your strength, morally and financially, with the other Negroes of the world and let us all fight one battle unto victory? If you are prepared to do the latter, the battle is nearly won, because we of the Universal Negro Improvement Association intend within the next twelve months to roll up a sentiment in the United States of America that will be backed up by fifteen million black folks, so that when in the future you touch one Negro in Newport News you shall have touched fifteen million Negroes of the country. And within the next twenty-four months we intend to roll up an organization of nearly four hundred million people, so that when you touch any Negro in Newport News you touch four hundred million of Negroes all over the world at the same time.

Source: From an address by Garvey at a United Negro Improvement Association meeting, October 25, 1919, published in *Negro World*, 25 October 1919.

gathering of educated and elite persons, Garvey's democratized his message—directing it primarily to the black working-class. Yet, Garvey's appeal was not limited to the working-class. For example, Carter G. Woodson, founder in 1915 of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and known today as the “Father of Black,” had been a founding member of A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen's organization Friends of Negro Freedom, an umbrella non-ideological group, but he soon left the FNF because of its strong anti-Garvey stance. Woodson refused to support the “Garvey Must Go” efforts in 1922–1923. Doubtless, the base of the Garvey movement was the working-class. He gave them a newfound sense of power as members of a worldwide population of African people—New Negroes—united and organized through the UNIA.

Garvey's highly publicized meeting and “pact” with a representative of the Ku Klux Klan—both men were committed to racial separatism and denounced miscegenation, or race-mixing—made him persona non grata among such former supporters as Hubert Harrison and Cyril Briggs. The exposé of Garvey's amicable conversation with the Klan's Grand Wizard in 1922 drew the ire of those who would afterward call him a “Black Kluxer.” *The Messenger's* Randolph and Owen, never sympathetic to Garvey, called him the “black imperial wizard.” Garvey's approaches to the KKK hurt his cause, but what finally put an end to Garvey's meteoric rise was the promise of a steamship line. According to his wife, he had

collected \$10 million between 1919 and 1921. More than \$1 million, it was alleged, had been spent in purchasing and equipping ships for the Black Star Line, but no real shipping line existed.

In 1923 Garvey was put on trial before a federal judge on the charge of using the mails to defraud in raising money for his steamship line. He was found guilty, and two years later he entered the Atlanta penitentiary to serve a five-year term. Garvey continued to lead his movement from his cell in Atlanta. In one letter to his followers he said: "My months of forcible removal from among you, being imprisoned as a punishment for advocating the cause of our real emancipation, have not left me hopeless or despondent; but to the contrary, I see a great ray of light and the bursting of a mighty political cloud which will bring you complete freedom. . . ."

Garvey remained in prison until President Coolidge pardoned him in 1927 and ordered his deportation as an undesirable alien. Garvey died in London in 1940. Regardless of how dissatisfied African Americans were with conditions in the United States, they were ultimately unwilling in the 1920s, as their forebears had been a century earlier, either to settle in Africa or to undertake the uncertain task of redeeming Africa. Garvey's movement indicated, however, the extent to which they entertained doubts concerning the hope for first-class citizenship in the only homeland they knew.

The idea of living in racial harmony in the United States found a diverse following—some of whom looked to religion rather than to civil rights or socialism. The followers of

Father Divine George Baker, more commonly called Father Divine, formed part of a movement that began in 1919 with a small group in Sayville, New York. Father Divine built up a large following within the next two decades that amused some observers and perplexed others. The movement became interracial as early as 1926, and within a few years had attracted a considerable number of white followers, some of them wealthy. That such a movement flourished during the period is a testimonial to the extent of the social ills from which the body politic suffered and was one more indication of the tremendous frustration that characterized many blacks and some whites as well. Father Divine's followers had deserted their churches, believing as true his portrayal of himself as God.

More than a religious cult, Father Divine's movement addressed his followers' social and economic needs as well. By 1930 he was holding open house and feeding thousands in places that came to be known as heavens. When people wondered where he secured the money for the elaborate feasts, he merely answered in an almost unintelligible torrent of words, "I have harnessed your consciousness as Franklin did electricity and it is for you to use your emotions as Edison handled the electricity uncovered by Franklin." His following grew enormously in the 1930s, and heavens or peace missions were founded in many eastern cities as well as in some midwestern communities.

New Women

African American women played important roles in the various organizations of black protest. Since the late nineteenth century, black church women and club women had advocated a woman-centered racial politics. Fannie Barrier Williams wrote about black women's activism in the anthology *New Negro for a New Century* (1902), which she co-edited with Booker T. Washington. Even more explicitly in her essay "Club Movement among Colored Women," in H. Croghan's *Progress of a Race* (1902), Williams wrote, "The Negro woman's

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club of today represents the New Negro with new powers of self-help.” The New Negro leaders to which she referred were such women as Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mary Church Terrell, Mary B. Talbert, and Maria Baldwin—all leaders in forming the National Association of Colored Women, but also counted among the “Founding Forty” members of the NAACP. The assistance of organized black women facilitated the growth of NAACP branches and contributed mightily to the NAACP’s antilynching campaign.

Even before the founding of the NAACP, organized black womanhood had stood boldly in the forefront of the antilynching crusade, underwriting Ida B. Wells’s crusade in the 1890s and continuing their protest into the twentieth century. The Northeastern Federation of Women’s Clubs (part of the NACW) worked jointly together with the NAACP in rallies against lynch law. It was not uncommon to find black clubwomen as active members and organizers in the NAACP. For example, Addie Hunton, who served black troops in France during World War I, was actively involved in the NACW, the women’s Brooklyn Suffrage League, the NAACP, and the YWCA. Multiple affiliations were true of the majority of the NACW leaders.

Involved in the larger African American protest movement, black women did not look blindly at racism in the larger woman’s movement with which they also identified. If black men, more than black women, pondered the racial inclusiveness of socialism, black women pondered the racial inclusiveness of **Black Feminism** feminism. For most black women, a truly interracial feminism, like interracial socialism, languished to die on the cross of racism. It was certainly not because black women lacked sufficient gender consciousness or failed to demand as vociferously women’s rights and particularly women’s right to vote. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, their feminist consciousness could be heard in the black newspapers, in the proceedings of numerous secular and religious black women’s organizations, and in the NAACP’s *The Crisis*, which published two “Votes for Women” issues—in September 1912 and in August 1915, in which leading black clubwomen—Adella Hunt Logan, Alice Dunbar Nelson, Mary Church Terrell, Mary B. Talbert, and others—voiced their own defense of women’s right to the ballot. W. E. B. Du Bois, a supporter of women’s suffrage, applauded the women’s articles, describing them as “one of the strongest cumulative attacks on sex and race discrimination in politics ever written.”

Black women’s enthusiasm to be an integral and equal part of the larger women’s rights movement proved problematic, however. In the early twentieth century, black women understood, often painfully, that their own ardent suffragism and demand for women’s rights was inseparably linked to the fundamental challenge to black disenfranchisement and segregation. Black women worked better, although with varying degrees of success, with white women’s clubs at the local level than they did with the racially stifling politics of the national women’s rights organizations.

To ensure southern congressional endorsement of a suffrage amendment, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and the National Woman’s Party had both capitulated to southern racism. The NAWSA requested that the highly respected black suffragists Elizabeth Carter and Mary Church Terrell suspend their application for membership and wait to apply after the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. Not wanting to jeopardize the success of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, white suffragists followed the more expedient course of “separate but equal” feminism. Some suffragists went so far as to emphasize that the addition of white women to the southern electorate would help



Black suffragists Josephine Ruffin, Anna Julia Cooper, Mary Church Terrell, and Nannie Burroughs
 Four leading black women who worked for a women's suffrage amendment.

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to preserve white supremacy. Such arguments obviously precluded any support of black women's suffrage rights.

However, some African American women in the North voted before 1920. Ida B. Wells mobilized black women voters in Chicago, soon after the state of Illinois granted the right to vote to women in 1913, founding the Alpha Suffrage Club. With its membership of African-American women, the club played a decisive role in black voter turnout in the Chicago election year of 1915. The black vote helped to seal the mayoral victory for William Hale "Big Bill" Thompson, who was considered a friend of blacks. More important, Wells credited her organization for the victory that year of the city's first black alderman—Republican Oscar DePriest.

Black Women Voters

With the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, black women in the southern states took registrars by surprise as they sought to fulfill their recently won right. They would soon realize that they, like black men, were unwelcome at the polls. Black women were routinely humiliated at voting booths and disqualified on technicalities. Discontented black feminists, as Rosalind Terborg-Penn calls them, turned to a number of organizations—the Garvey movement, religious movements, and the International Association of Women of the Darker Races. However, black women leaders, particularly those in the urban North, also sought to garner the women's vote at the time of their people's great migration.

They recognized the potential power of their votes in augmenting the black electorate and attaining black political clout in such destination-cities as Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, New York, and Philadelphia. The black press called attention to both men's and women's political activities. In 1924, the Republican National Committee enlisted outgoing NACW president Hallie Q. Brown to lead a voter drive among black women. Brown used the NACW organ *National Notes* to campaign for the Republican Party, and the larger network of clubs throughout the various states helped to mobilize black voters.

State organizers in Rhode Island and upstate New York reported meetings in churches, fraternal lodges, schools, homes, and on the streets. West Virginia's black women's clubs appealed to churches as well as to individual women; Minnesota's clubs distributed informational pamphlets about registration and voting; Chicago women discussed women's issues in their house-to-house canvassing. After the adjournment of the NACW annual convention in August 1924, some of the attendees reconvened to form the National League of Republican Colored Women, and by 1926 the NACW had relinquished its political work to the new black Republican women's group. The black women who championed the role of electoral politics as a vehicle for racial amelioration represented many of the same women who worked as members and supporters of the NAACP. Daisy Lampkin, a member of both the NACW and the NLRCW, was chosen by the Republican National Committee to direct the mobilization of black women voters in the eastern states in 1928. She had joined the staff of the NAACP in the previous year, and in the 1930s Lampkin would be appointed the national field-secretary of the NAACP.

In some states, black women worked in separate units of the predominantly white League of Women Voters, because the constituent state organizations of the LWV were segregated into black and white units. But black people's political involvement was growing, despite its seeming small gains in the 1920s. Indeed blacks were often insulted by the very politicians for whom they cast their votes. One black woman, Nannie Helen Burroughs, a religious leader, NACW member, and president of the National League of Republican Colored Women, registered her subtle

Growing Political Involvement



The Awakening of Ethiopia, Meta Warlick Fuller, c. 1921

This bronze sculpture captures the greatness of African women in world civilization.

protest sheer by her presence at the meeting of the Women's Division of the Republican National Committee in 1925. Burroughs was one of eighty-five women from thirty-three states. She was also the only African American among the women delegates invited to the White House in 1927. In her brief remarks of introduction, her protest was a bit more explicit when she asserted: "No political party in America is 100 percent American without this touch of color."

Working within the electoral system, black women sought to make their voices heard at election time. Perhaps more moderate black women, like black men who migrated from the South and voted for the first time in northern cities, considered their hard-won right of suffrage an instrument of protest. Black women took the ballot seriously—mobilizing their people and casting their votes in affirmation of those who supported black interests and causes, while campaigning against those who did not. The slogan of the National League of Republican Colored Women said forcefully what millions of southern black men and women continued to be unable to say: "We are in politics to stay and we shall be a stay in politics."

Historian Deborah Gray White has noted that the shifting racial politics of the immediate postwar era and throughout the 1920s had a profound effect on the middle-class National Association for Colored Women. As a vibrant and competing array of ideas and organizations emerged, the power of the NACW's public voice began to diminish, along with its presumptive claim to speak for all black women. Its genteel feminism was barely audible beside the New Negro's virile protest. In the post-suffrage years, the New Negro, despite the diverse, even opposing interpretations of the concept, was, generally speaking, identified as masculine—the returning soldier, the militant worker, the proponent of self-defense, the defender of black womanhood and black nation, and the artist as racial arbiter. *The Messenger's* version of the New Woman in 1923 emphasized her exalted position as man's helpmate, announcing: "Like her white sister she is the product of profound and vital changes in our economic mechanism . . . the New Negro Man has affected a revolutionary orientation. . . . Upon her shoulder rests the big task to create and keep alive, in the breast of black men, a holy and consuming passion to break with the slave traditions of the past . . . the insidious inferiority complex of the present which . . . bobs up . . . to arrest the progress of the New Manhood movement."

Likewise, Marcus Garvey proudly flaunted the image of the black man as the protector of black womanhood. "Let us go back to the days of true manhood when women truly revered us" an article in *The Negro World* waxed nostalgically, continuing, "we would have many more mothers, many more virtuous wives, many more amiable and lovable daughters." Garvey's gender perspective was premised on the idea of black women's purity and the manly defense of it. Indeed, Garvey discussed the redemption of Africa in the same gender-laden rhetoric.

The conflated imagery of Africa and black womanhood was not unique to Garvey. It appears in the artwork of Meta Fuller (1877–1968), who actually credited Du Bois's influence (she had met him in 1900 in Paris at the Universal Exposition) for instilling in her the interest in black images. Fuller was among the growing number of women in the late nineteenth century to receive formal arts training, first in Philadelphia and later abroad, where she reportedly was encouraged to pursue her sculpting career by (among others) the famous French sculptor Auguste Rodin. Upon her marriage to African-American psychiatrist

Solomon Carter Fuller, Jr., in 1909, she settled in the Boston area, where she continued her artistic career. Meta Fuller's life-sized bronze sculpture *Ethiopia Awakening* was unveiled in 1922. The face is alert and dynamic in contrast to prevalent artistic renderings of Africa as a "sleeping continent." Fuller's understanding of Africa was shaped by the rising pan-Africanist consciousness. Indeed, "Ethiopia" as synonymous with Africa had occupied a significant place in the African American popular imagination. Fuller had read J. E. Casely Hayford's novel *Ethiopia Unbound* (1911) and Freeman Murray's *Emancipation and the Freed in American Sculpture* (1916). Such works conveyed notions of African greatness associated with ancient Ethiopian and Egyptian kingdoms. Ethiopia, too, had become a powerful symbol of contemporary resistance, since it was the only African nation to thwart European colonial advances, defeating the Italian army in 1896.

If the genie was out of the bottle, neither the New Negro nor the New Woman movements appeared to give due credence to the New Negro Woman. Black women had never been merely silent partners. Important roles in the UNIA were played by Henrietta Vinton Davis, by Garvey's first wife Amy Ashwood Garvey and his second wife Amy Jacques Garvey, and by a number of other women. In a meeting in 1922, women in the Garvey movement expressed their desire for more numerous and prominent positions. Garvey dismissed the idea. After his arrest and imprisonment, UNIA women became considerably more vocal about women's rights. Jacques Garvey published the column "Our Women and What They Think" in *The Negro World* between 1924 and 1928. In her 1926 pamphlet "Black Women's Resolve," she affirmed: "If the United States and Congress can open their doors to white women, we serve notice on our men that Negro women will demand equal opportunity to fill any position in the United Negro Improvement Association or anywhere else without discrimination because of sex. We are very sorry if it hurts your old fashioned tyrannical feelings, and we not only make the demand but we intend to enforce it."

Times were changing, as was the New Negro. According to literary scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the New Negro was merely a metaphor. "The paradox of this claim is inherent in the trope [New Negro] . . . combining as it does a concern with time, antecedents, and heritage, on the one hand," Gates argues, "with a concern for a cleared space, the public face of the race, on the other." Was the New Negro simply a metaphor for change itself? By the mid-1920s, an artistic movement was underway that would lead once again to the reconceptualization of the New Negro. Black artists especially—musicians, writers, visual artists—began to claim the attention of an ever-increasing number of readers, listeners, and observers of all races and in many parts of the world. This newly minted "New Negro"—the African American artist—had something significant to say about life in this country, something to express in myriad artistic forms. The flowering of the arts in the 1920s developed from an earlier generation's legacy of expression, and from that legacy artists marched forward with talent and creativity to make a powerful, relevant statement that would greatly influence succeeding generations.