

Abstract:

The question that will be addressed in this thesis is: what are the theories of African American advancement articulated by W.E.B Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, and A. Philip Randolph? How did their theories on education, politics and economic opportunity create the intellectual milieu which influenced the ideals and activities of the Civil Rights Movement? In response to the questions proposed, I believe that all three aforementioned political theorists, through their life's work and publications, speak to this topic of African-American advancement in context to their time. DuBois, Washington and Randolph lived during an era of two World Wars, the establishment and dismantlement of Jim Crow and most importantly, during this renaissance of Black life within the United States. All of three of these theorists through their work reflected on the relationship that exists between the United States and African-Americans and proposed ways in which African-Americans can further advance in efforts to become as full and active citizens of the United States. Specifically delving into the categories of education, politics and economic opportunity, I plan on discussing theories proposed by DuBois, Washington and Randolph and discuss in which ways their theories influenced the intellectual, socioeconomic and political milieu that influenced the course of the Civil Rights Movement.

Chasing the American Dream:

W.E.B Du Bois, A. Philip Randolph and Booker T. Washington's Impact on the Civil Rights Movement and Citizenship, 1910-1966

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Introduction:

What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? Or fester like a sore—And then run? Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and sugar over—like a syrupy sweet? Maybe it just sags like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

Langston Hughes, *Harlem (Dream Deferred)*, 1951

The American Dream

Suburban living, stable family structure, job and home security are all tenets of ‘the American Dream’. America’s capitalist nature espoused the creation of the American Dream and neoliberal policies kept the ‘dream’ relevant and appealing. Theoretically, the American Dream should be accessible to all citizens. However, America’s legacy of oppressive institutions such as slavery, Black Codes, and Jim Crow undermine the American Dream. Stories from African American writers like Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes confirms this assertion that African Americans were never included in the blueprint of the American Dream.

Neoliberal policies endorsing the American Dream’s individualism made it incredibly difficult for white citizens to realize their socioeconomic privilege over black citizens. White citizens would often attribute African American’s inability to achieve the American Dream to laziness or a lack of motivation. The truth is: African Americans were intentionally omitted from American success narratives. However, longing to be a part of the collective, American fabric inspired African Americans to write their own narratives. Yet, the question remains: why would African Americans want to have a stake in the American Dream if they have been denied so many times before? This project will operate off of the notion that the American Dream as an ideology and tradition is flawed because of its perpetuation of negative stereotypes regarding people of color and its exclusion of people of color, specifically black citizens. To clarify ‘negative stereotypes’, the primary stereotype this project will use as a base of its skepticism of

the American Dream is the notion that minorities have not achieved the American Dream because a lack of motivation and ambition. However, as aforementioned, the American Dream's transformation into an American tradition has maintained its appeal to *all* citizens. All citizens vie for the opportunity to partake in the American Dream because they feel entitled to a more successful future and life.

For African Americans, this narrative extended beyond African Americans wanting socioeconomic and political equality. These narratives recounted struggles but also gave them a sense of humanity and agency over their lives. Being employed, moral, family oriented and a homeowner were requirements and goals of the American Dream. Having these qualities also meant they fully engaged with their citizenship. Being upwardly mobile and having a strong moral foundation served as the prerequisites of a model citizen. In regards to African Americans, having limited access to home ownership, employment, voting and education equated to having limited access to citizenship. In order to understand the importance of African Americans rewriting their own historical narrative, there has to be an understanding of what was at stake. The American Dream was not only an aspiration and end goal for many Americans: it was a confirmation of their citizenship.¹ To not have had any form of citizenship since their arrival on the continent made African Americans more determined to attain what they perceived to be the 'unattainable'. Citizenship represented a concluding chapter to a narrative that culminated of lifelong struggles, exclusions and oppressive institutions. African Americans rewriting their own

¹ In addition to the political thought to be discussed in this paper, another form of black political thought that presented an alternative view to American citizenship is Black Nationalism. Black Nationalism was unique in its style of rejecting American and European values and citizenship and embracing African diasporic citizenship and values such as self-determination. Black Nationalism first appeared in the work of African American abolitionist Martin Delany and was later popularized by Marcus Garvey. Black Nationalism did not influence the Civil Rights Movement, but is a political thought worth noting as it did impact the landscape of race relations and black identity in the project's time frame.

narrative symbolized their desire to reach the concluding chapter of citizenship, no matter what the cost.

The Harlem Renaissance served as a pivotal time in African Americans exploration of the American Dream and desire to attain citizenship. African Americans began to engage in producing different forms of art such as novels, poetry, paintings, and more importantly, political rhetoric. The Renaissance awakened differing political fervors, specifically among theorists such as W.E.B Du Bois, Booker T. Washington and A. Philip Randolph. Du Bois most notably advocated for cultural education while his counterpart Washington was a large proponent of vocational education and Randolph being known for his work with labor unions. What is exceptional about the work of these three political theorists is that their impact did not end with the Harlem Renaissance. Their ideas on African American citizenship and advancement continue to influence black political thought and have had a strong influence on African Americans most visible attempt of attaining citizenship: the Civil Rights Movement. The intellectual milieu that encouraged the historic goals and outcomes of the Civil Rights Movement can be directly traced to the political ideas of Du Bois, Randolph and Washington.

Explanation of Format

This project serves as an exploration into the political ideas of W.E.B Du Bois, Booker T. Washington and A. Philip Randolph. Within this project, I will prove that their political ideas impacted the changing African American narrative and additionally shaped the intellectual milieu of the Civil Rights Movement. The movement is mostly remembered as African Americans protesting for racial equality which would translate into socioeconomic and political advancement. However, it is also important to note that the Civil Rights Movement served as

reclamation of American citizenship and bold declaration that they would no longer be defined by the oppressive institutions that defined them for centuries prior. Du Bois and Randolph and to a lesser extent Washington provided African Americans with the intellectual backdrop necessary for such a fight and emboldened African Americans to demand their right to adequate education and socioeconomic and political opportunities.

My analysis will work within the parameters of 1910-1966 and explore the following questions: what are the theories of African American advancement articulated by W.E.B Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, and A. Philip Randolph? How did their theories on education, politics and economic opportunity create the intellectual milieu which influenced the ideals and activities of the Civil Rights Movement? My analysis of Du Bois, Washington and Randolph's political ideas will also lead to my discussion on the limitations that existed within each of their political thought respectively, especially that of Washington. Washington's ideas could be interpreted as contradictory to those promoted by the movement. However, I will argue that his political thought contributed to the movement's conception of economic mobility and individual human capital.

The first chapter of my paper will delve into the history of the Civil Rights Movement where I will highlight key events essential to African Americans securing citizenship. This chapter will additionally provide context necessary to understanding the influence of the political thought of Du Bois, Randolph and Washington. The following three chapters will discuss Du Bois, Randolph and Washington's political ideas. Specifically, I will discuss the nature of each figure's thought in regards to education, political and economic opportunity and how each of their political ideas were in conversation with each other. The next chapter will discuss Du Bois, Randolph and Washington's impact on the intellectual milieu of the movement while

additionally addressing the contrast between Washington's ideas and the movement. The final chapter will be dedicated to reflecting on our present and how the political ideas of Du Bois, Randolph and Washington can be utilized to shape the perspective of younger citizens who recognize the need for a 'second' Civil Rights Movement.

African Americans Historical Context

Black workers incorporated themselves into the industrial economy for the first time during the World War I era. Although visible in the north, the south especially struggled with Jim Crow policies. As a result, socioeconomic and political prospects were not available to African Americans. During the Great Migration, 40 percent of the black population in the south migrated north during 1910-1960 and found homes and jobs within large, industrial cities such as Chicago and New York City.² However, the climate of the north proved to be similarly problematic as the south. Factories provided African Americans with significantly lower wages than whites and excluded them from unions that would protect them. Not having access to unions or fair wages led to a continuation of poverty that many African Americans thought they escaped during the Great Migration.

In addition to workplace discrimination, their lack of economic prospects and access to social mobility also translated to residential segregation. The Kerner Report, published in 1968, discussed the problems that African Americans faced during industrialization, post war and the late 1950s. The report reflected "Almost all Negro population growth is occurring within metropolitan areas, primarily within central cities. From 1950 to 1966, the U.S. Negro population rose 6.5 million. Over 98 percent of that increase took place in metropolitan areas—86 percent

² Carrington, William J. *Migration with Endogenous Moving Costs*. The American Economic Review (American Economic Association)

within central cities, 12 percent in the urban fringe.”³ Inner cities in the north were plagued with segregation, sparse job opportunities and overcrowded neighborhoods. The reality of the north was not apparent to those relocating from the south. Socioeconomic immobility led to African Americans relocating to these neighborhoods and rarely finding a way out because of low wages and oppressive tactics such as redlining.

While the African American population continued to grow within the inner city, “the vast majority of white population growth is occurring in suburban portions of metropolitan areas. From 1950 to 1966, 77.8 percent of the white population increase of 35.6 million took place in the suburbs. Central cities received only 2.5 percent of this total white increase.”⁴ The suburbs, often perceived as the moral and safe haven for families during this time was largely for white families. Resources and consideration from city government became scarce as white families took their wealth and reestablished themselves within homogenous, suburban communities. Within the inner city, the buildings that most African Americans lived in during the post war period lacked infrastructure and were in desperate need of upkeep. Inner city residents, new to the area and new to northern culture, did not question the lack of resources and opportunities and accepted their fate within the inner city as the only possibility.

Socioeconomic inopportunity in northern and southern cities also led to educational inopportunity. African American families during the Great Migration found promise in the north because of the possibility of having their children attend a quality public school. They thought a holistic and comprehensive education would allow for African Americans to enter into national conversations and also increase their chances of socioeconomic mobility. African Americans

³ Vatter, Harold G. “Kerner Report The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report*” *The Economics of Black America* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972):58

⁴ Vatter, Harold G. “Kerner Report The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report*” *The Economics of Black America* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972):59

who had the opportunity to be educated found that they were able to “climb out of the urban slums and into the American middle class.”⁵ However, during the early and mid-1900s, many African Americans could not attest to the benefits of education because of their segregated and underfunded public schools in northern cities. According to the U.S. Commission on Civil

Rights:

There are differences in the quality of education available to Negro and white students in the Nation’s metropolitan areas. For example schools attended by white children often have more library volumes per student, advanced courses, and fewer pupils per teacher than schools attended by Negro children. Negro students are more likely than whites to have teachers with lower verbal achievement levels, to have substitute teachers, and to have teachers who are dissatisfied with their school assignment.⁶

It is no coincidence that schools attended by white children have a wider selection and availability to resources in comparison to the underfunded schools of their black peers. African American families who migrated north seeking better educational opportunities for their children were met with unequal treatment that reflected in the resources available and the quality of teachers. Having a solid primary school education increases the likelihood of success in the future when it comes to attending colleges and becoming active citizens. Restricting African American children from adequate facilities and instruction overall restricted their access to citizenship.

Conclusion

The American Dream is an essential fiber within the larger, American fabric and tradition. It motivates and inspires others to want to engage with their citizenship, which will benefit both the individual, their family and communities and in a larger sense: the nation’s morale. However, how long does it take for an individual to realize that this ideology does not

⁵ Bennett Harrison “Urban Poverty and Human Capital” *Education Training and the Urban Ghetto* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972): 6

⁶ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights “Results of Segregated Education” *Racial Isolation in the Public Schools: Summary of a Report*, Publication No. 7 (CCR Clearinghouse Publication, 1967): 4

appeal to them? Or that this ideology was not structured to allow them to succeed? To clarify: the American Dream is a broad ideology that was constructed for *all* Americans to believe in. However, the American Dream remains elusive to African Americans. Tools that are vital in accumulating socioeconomic capital were not available to *all* African Americans. It is also important to note that some African Americans were fortunate enough to have access to the American Dream and a rising, educated Black middle class serves as evidence of that. However, as a collective, African Americans have been denied the necessary tools needed in accessing and succeeding within American Dream framework.

As an act of reclamation, organized within their communities and made one of the most visible instances of citizenship occur: the Civil Rights Movement. However, these ideas are not conceived in a vacuum. They are all shaped by eras such as the Harlem Renaissance and conversations happening at the dinner table, on college campuses and in secret meeting spaces of churches and schools. They are shaped by political thinkers such as Du Bois, Randolph and Washington who all contributed to African Americans sense of urgency and perspective on the issue. African Americans found that the broader, American narrative did not consider them; so they created their own narrative that featured their respective voice and declared that they are citizens.

Chapter One:

The Civil Rights Movement: Milestones and Guiding Principles

Introduction

The Civil Rights Movement, because of its tremendous impact, has often been simplified to two key figures and several key events. People such as Martin Luther King Jr, Rosa Parks and events such as the March on Washington and sit-ins dominate conversations regarding the movement. However, the Civil Rights Movement had its foundation in the early portion of the 1950s and started off as grassroots coalition building rather than the large scale, national mobilization we often associated the movement with. In order to understand the magnitude of the Civil Rights Movement and its impact on African American conceptions of citizenship, there must be an understanding of the motivation behind the actions of key actors and coalitions. There must be an acknowledgement of important milestones that shaped the success of the movement.

Guiding Principles

According to Rhoda Lois Blumberg, the Civil Rights Movement was built off of the desire for “integration—the full and equal participation of black people in American institutions...”⁷ Prior to integration policies mandated by *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, much of the country operated off of the sentiments expressed in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) which upheld the decision of institutionalizing “separate but equal” facilities. However, the transition after the *Brown* decision proved to be difficult as those who were in favor of segregation held out for as long as they could in order to avoid integrating their facilities and services. The act of integration can be broadened and included under the principle of freedom. Freedom being a broad term could encompass the freedom to enter into whatever space one pleases, but more

⁷ Rhoda Lois Blumberg *Civil Rights: The 1960s Freedom Struggle* (Twayne Publishers, 1984): 2

importantly in regards to integration, freedom to access institutions that once oppressed African Americans. Freedom can also include freedom to envision a life that is not defined by Jim Crow. Jim Crow policies and the blatant omission of African Americans from American narratives took away African Americans ability to exercise and acknowledge freedom. However, the Civil Rights Movement encouraged and produced individuals who actively engaged in the principle of freedom.

Alongside freedom, another guiding principle of the movement was political tradition. Founding documents such as the Constitution which include the Bill of Rights are regarded as documents that reflect and uphold our democratic nature and tradition. However, institutions such as slavery and Jim Crow reveal that the Constitution and Bill of Rights applied only to white Americans. African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement took “ideological support from the Constitution and the Bill of Rights as well as from the precepts of Christianity” to reconstruct their own reality where they would be fully incorporated into the mission articulated in the founding documents.⁸ Utilizing the same tradition that once oppressed them gave African Americans the language and ideas necessary to demand their citizenship.

The last principle that shaped the Civil Rights Movement is resistance. Resistance, similarly to freedom and tradition, is dynamic and was interpreted vastly by different racial equality coalitions. However, the unique aspect of resistance is the fact that it is so integrally tied to freedom and tradition. For African Americans, resistance is an essential tradition and aspect of their relationship with the United States. Different forms of resistance could be traced to slavery where “captured Africans [jumping] off slave ships rather than enter a life of servitude or to resist physically while being transported.”⁹ Resistance during the Civil Rights Movement

⁸ Rhoda Lois Blumberg *Civil Rights: The 1960s Freedom Struggle* (Twayne Publishers, 1984): 2

⁹ *Ibid*, 5

appeared in two different forms: strictly non-violent and willingness to use violence. Non-violent action included of sit-ins in segregated, public facilities, bus boycotting, and marches. These forms of resistance are most discussed because they are affiliated with the work and actions of Martin Luther King Jr. and organizations such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). However, the other side of black resistance includes individuals who are willing to use violence as a means of expressing their frustration and want for equality in northern civil rights struggles. “Urban rebellions or ‘riots’ occurred in many American cities in the 1960s...Black citizens responded to vicious police treatment of nonviolent protestors and the bombing of homes of civil rights leaders...”¹⁰ Resistance is such a unique and dynamic principle of the Civil Rights Movement because it incorporates aspects that are starkly different, but neither technique is right or wrong. Although there were individuals within the movement that opposed the usage of violence and condemned those who acted in city wide ‘riots’, it is important to acknowledge that this form of resistance is just as legitimate and essential to the Civil Rights Movement as nonviolent forms.

Freedom, tradition and resistance all are guiding principles that leaders and participants across the nation carried with them during planning and mobilization. More importantly, these guiding principles all had aspects that were directly influenced by the work and thoughts of Du Bois, Randolph and Washington.

¹⁰ Ibid, 10

Milestones

Brown v. Board of Education

Prior to the landmark decision in 1954, African Americans lived under the segregationist decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson* which declared separate but equal adequate. However, as *Brown* makes note that ‘separate but equal’ translated into separate and despairingly unequal.

Particularly in regards to schools, schools that had a majority black student body endured crumbling infrastructure, poor facilities and a lack of books and educational resources. Their white counterparts’ infrastructure, facilities and availability to quality educational resources demonstrated care and money was invested into their education.

The court led Chief Justice Earl Warren in the *Brown* case revealed “segregation had a detrimental effect upon colored children because it generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.”¹¹ The decision to desegregate schools gave black students the opportunity to attend schools that had more resources and would better prepare them. However, it is important to note that *Brown* was not easily implemented. “In 1955, the *Brown II* decision came out, specifying that black plaintiffs would have to be admitted to public schools on a racially nondiscriminatory basis “with all deliberate speed.”¹² Prior to the *Brown II* decision, schools both in the north and south were obstinate towards integration. Integrated schools were met with protest from white parents and conditions around schools became unsafe for black parents and students. However, when integration began to happen in schools, African Americans began to witness the power and effectivity of achieving citizenship through legal and political channels. *Brown* catapulted the

¹¹ Rhoda Lois Blumberg *Civil Rights: The 1960s Freedom Struggle* (Twayne Publishers, 1984): 36

¹² *Ibid*, 54

modern Civil Rights Movement because it represented the first concrete step taken in the direction of attaining full citizenship.

Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

SNCC has its organizing roots in a meeting hosted by then, NAACP field official, Ella Baker.¹³ The committee member base consisted of “dedicated and self-sacrificing youth...unhampered by conservatism of their elders.”¹⁴ SNCC engaged with citizens that were not just black, male Christian ministers, but with adolescents within big cities and on college campuses. SNCC’s engaging with more youthful demographic and orchestrating sit-ins in segregated spaces encouraged their peers to take interest in the Civil Rights Movement and share the responsibility of pushing the movement forward.

Teenagers and college students saw the importance of dismantling oppressive, racist institutions and are largely responsible for the majority of “on the ground” work that took place during the movement. As we have noticed with the Civil Rights Movement, most of the actions of leaders and participants are based off of differing traditions or the establishing of new ones. Youth participation was a vital part of the Civil Rights Movement because it brought new voices into conversation and broadened the spectrum of African Americans who had a stake in the attainment of citizenship.

Civil Unrest: Watts

In addition to organizations that shaped and mobilized African Americans across the country, other important milestones of the Civil Rights Movement include those of civil unrest.

¹³ Ibid, 50

¹⁴ Ibid, 53

The Watts riots of 1965 and the rebellions in Chicago and Cleveland in 1966 all are instances of civil unrest that captured the perspective of the northern civil rights struggles. Specifically in Watts, “rioting lasted six days...Thirty-four persons were killed, thirty-one of them black, and over a thousand persons were injured seriously enough to require treatment. Almost one thousand buildings were damaged, burned, looted, or destroyed.”¹⁵ The result of Watts stands in stark contrast to the peaceful movements such as the March on Washington just two years prior in 1963. The Watts riots not only symbolized the frustration felt by African Americans at the time, but also symbolized an important transition within the Civil Rights Movement. Those who were involved in Watts were described as “younger, are more likely to have grown up in the North, and have more education than their older counterparts. They tend to compare their own achievements with those of whites, unlike blacks who grew up under the segregated southern system.”¹⁶ The Civil Rights Movement is known to have had older members and young, progressive college students being the primary political activators. However, the Watts riot also brings into conversation a new group of citizens who, unlike their older counterparts, are frustrated and are more militant in their approach to attain citizenship.

Additionally, Watts placed the issues of African Americans within urban ghettos on the national stage. Watts brought in a very important demographic: urbanites. Young urbanites and older, southern residents all could unite under the same umbrella goal of wanting to attain full citizenship. However, their struggles were completely different. The beginning portion of the Civil Rights Movement had an intense focus on southern residents who felt disenfranchised and had to deal with Jim Crow segregation. However, a new demographic of young, city dwellers dealt with their own set of issues such as “discrimination and deprivation in jobs, housing,

¹⁵ Ibid, 143

¹⁶ Ibid, 144

education, and welfare, and the institutionalized racism that alienated ghetto residents.”¹⁷

Bringing their plight into national conversations was vital to the Civil Rights Movement because it complicated the country’s notion of who was behind the movement. The movement didn’t culminate of just older, southern residents or progressive college students from the north and south. The Civil Rights Movement also included poor, black urbanites who, just like their counterparts, wanted a stake within the American Dream and citizenship, but continued to be oppressed by the same racist institution but in a different manner.

Conclusion

Being aware of the guiding principles and important milestones that defined the movement is relevant to our understanding of the Civil Rights Movement. Once we challenge the selective memory of our country, we find that the Civil Rights Movement included much more than southern, Christian leaders and participants. The Civil Rights Movement included white and black college students, young, poor urbanites who wanted their struggles to be realized and also strong, female leaders such as Ella Baker who organize and led coalitions. More relevantly, being aware of the history and basis of the Civil Rights Movement makes it easier for us to trace its ideological etymology. Once we begin the process of doing so, our results will lead us to incredible leaders, artists, musicians and more importantly, political theorists such as Du Bois, Randolph and Washington

¹⁷ Ibid, 147

Chapter Two:

W.E.B Du Bois: Cultural Education and Community Rebuilding

Introduction

W.E.B Du Bois was born William Edward Burghardt Du Bois on February 23, 1868 in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Du Bois and his family were landowners and lived a part of a small free black population in Great Barrington. Du Bois' early life and education within an integrated school system prepared him to attend Fisk University in 1885, earning his Bachelor's and then later attending Harvard to earn his second bachelor's, his master's and finally his doctorate in 1895. After completing his education, Du Bois relocated to Ohio where he taught at Wilberforce University. Du Bois' early work conducted at Harvard and Wilberforce allowed for him to establish himself within the realm of African American political thought and social justice during this time.¹⁸

While attending Fisk University, Du Bois frequently encountered Jim Crow. Located in Nashville, Tennessee, Fisk University was unique because it created a haven for African American students while racial tensions increased in Nashville. The creation of this haven made it difficult to transition from being a student at Fisk to a regular civilian being treated with little to no respect off-campus. Although tense race relations found its way onto Fisk's campus between White faculty and administrators and Black students, it was not comparable with the conditions students had to face while traveling in and around Nashville.

Tense race relations within Nashville did not hinder Du Bois or other Fisk students from actively participating within the Black communities of Nashville. Fisk's commitment to students

¹⁸ American National Biography. *W.E.B Du Bois*. Accessed October 2015 <http://www.anb.org/articles/15/15-00191.html>

engaging in community outreach fostered a sense of collective responsibility to uplift others. “Fisk students saw themselves as the vanguard of the race, whose duty it was to go among their people and lead them out of bondage--not physical bondage, of course, but the bonds of poverty and ignorance that they believed were keeping the race from progressing....”¹⁹ Du Bois’ later work and activism was influenced by his undergraduate education. At the end of his education, Fisk gave Du Bois “a sense of pride in his race as well as in himself... It had taught him that he could be more at ease in the company of blacks than whites and had given him an appreciation for the real barriers that blacks faced in their struggle for equality.”²⁰ To be clear, growing up in a small, free Black population, provided Du Bois with a sense of pride in himself and his race. However, Fisk gave Du Bois a new sense of ambition and willingness to change the conditions he noticed other African Americans endured.

Du Bois’ interest in pursuing more education landed him an opportunity to study abroad in Germany. While there, he expanded his political thought and came to the conclusion that racial segregation is not solely attributed to structural flaws, but is borne out of ignorance. “Berlin provided him with a glimpse of what a truly equal society might be. Most people judged him on his intellect and manners rather than on his skin color...”²¹ Du Bois’ travel to Germany served as a pivotal moment within his education and political thought because his experience allowed for him to understand that the limitation of African American success. After returning from Germany, Du Bois experienced “tremendous disillusionment” when it came to returning to the United States. Much of this disillusionment shaped his earlier political thought and work.²²

¹⁹ Moore, Jacqueline M. *Booker T. Washington, W.E.B Du Bois and the Struggle for Racial Uplift*. (Scholarly Resources, 2003), 42

²⁰ Moore, Jacqueline M. *Booker T. Washington, W.E.B Du Bois and the Struggle for Racial Uplift*. (Scholarly Resources, 2003) , 44

²¹ *Ibid*, 49

²² *Ibid*, 51

Du Bois' earlier work in 1897 such as *Strivings of the Negro People* reflect his disillusionment in describing himself being 'veiled' from the world because of his blackness.²³

During the late 1890s, Du Bois began working at Wilberforce University within the classics department where he met other like-minded colleagues. He made an important connection with Reverend Alexander Crummell while in Ohio. "Crummell, the leading U.S. black intellectual before Du Bois became prominent...Like DuBois, Crummell had a fairly elitist attitude. He had little faith in the ability of poor people to help themselves...But he also believed that it was the moral duty of the more fortunate blacks to help raise the rest of the race..."²⁴ Du Bois was indoctrinated with the belief that fortunate African Americans had the responsibility of uplifting unfortunate African Americans. This would later translate into his concept of the 'talented tenth' and his work with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Du Bois and Education

Du Bois understood the value of education as the pathway to an individual's socioeconomic success. He was very critical of the lack of educational opportunities available to African Americans and noticed how racist institutions of his time actively contributed to the suppression of their education. His article published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1902, spoke about the importance and impact of African Americans having access to quality education. In his article, he discussed the: "three vast and partially contradictory streams of thought" which he describes as the ongoing history of African Americans that began with their arrival as slaves, African Americans were depicted as "clownish, simple creature, at times even lovable within its

²³ W.E.B Du Bois "Strivings of the Negro People" *The Atlantic* (1897)

²⁴ *Ibid*, 52

limitations, but straitly foreordained to walk within the Veil” and finally ending with present day individuals that find themselves “confused, half-conscious...”²⁵ Du Bois is famous for creating and exploring the “Veil” metaphor. As popularized in *Strivings of the Negro People* later included in his *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903, Du Bois explored the metaphor of “the veil” which he explained “gifted [an African Americans] with second-sight in this American world,-- a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world.”²⁶ The veil represents the divide that exists between the opportunities available to African Americans and their White counterparts. Due to the ‘veil’, African Americans are not aware of the opportunities that are available to them because they lack a true sense of self. The veil serves an alternative function. In addition to shrouding African Americans from opportunities, the veil also serves as a second insight into the “American world”. Although Du Bois specifies that the veil causes African Americans to not have “true self-consciousness”, he does not articulate whether or not the veil can be beneficial. However, Du Bois does imply through his usage of ‘gifted’ that African Americans having the veil provides them with additional insight into American society that is not available to anyone else.

Education, in Du Bois’ opinion, “will give [African Americans] poise to encourage the prejudices that bulwark society and to stamp out those that in sheer barbarity deafen us to the wail of prisoned souls within the Veil...”²⁷ Education was not just an avenue where African Americans can benefit themselves socially and economically. It was also a way for them to overcome generations of oppression which rendered them ‘half-conscious’ and “not yet sure of their right to demand [freedom]”²⁸ Du Bois’ believed that education was vital towards African

²⁵ W.E.B Du Bois “Of the Training of Black Men” *Atlantic Monthly* (1902), 52-53

²⁶ W.E.B Du Bois *The Souls of Black Folk* (A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 3

²⁷ W.E.B Du Bois “Of the Training of Black Men” *Atlantic Monthly* (1902), 53

²⁸ W.E.B Du Bois “Of the Training of Black Men” *Atlantic Monthly*, (1902), 52

Americans gaining citizenship because it demonstrated that freedom from oppressive institutions is only possible with having a solid foundation in education. Citizenship requires that individuals are fully aware of their position and forces working against their citizenship. His thoughts on education demonstrate his belief that African Americans being educated allows for them to look past the veil and figure out ways to dismantle forces and institutions working against them.

Du Bois was very critical of pre-existing educational opportunities available to African Americans. One of his qualms was that many schools open to African Americans, such as his own alma mater, Fisk University, were “hurriedly founded, inadequately equipped, illogically distributed, and of varying efficiency and grade.”²⁹ Du Bois believed that in order for African Americans to dismantle the veil that exists before them, individuals had to receive a liberal education.

Du Bois’ intention in criticizing historically Black colleges and universities served a greater purpose than simply finding them inadequate. He was interested in criticizing the systems which condoned Black colleges being undervalued, poorly funded and inefficient. Du Bois feared that Black colleges being poorly funded would lead to African Americans believing that this is the extent of their citizenship. African American citizenship was severely curtailed by underfunded and inefficient school systems because it conveyed to African Americans that “education that encourages aspirations, that sets the loftiest of ideals, and seeks as an end culture and character rather than bread-winning, is the privilege of white men and the danger and delusion of black.”³⁰ The American Dream emphasized the importance of education and rewarded those who received higher education degrees. African Americans were largely left out of this American Dream narrative, and it was not until they began to construct their own

²⁹ Ibid, 53

³⁰ Ibid, 54

narrative that they began to find and gain their own citizenship. The society in which Du Bois lived in did not see the value in African Americans receiving an education that extended beyond the parameters of industrial education. Du Bois believed that education should serve a dual purpose of lifting this veil that exists between African Americans and White America, but should also instill a sense of culture within the African American community.

Du Bois attributed a lack of citizenship, sparse socioeconomic opportunities and a strained relationship with the United States to African Americans not having a “full national life because they have not reached a sufficiently high grade of culture.”³¹ One of the broader issues Du Bois reflected on was the lack of education and culture within the African American community. He believed that with education, African Americans would have a cultural foundation to build their aspirations and goals and would achieve socioeconomic mobility and freedom because of such. However, African Americans being educated for the sake of being educated “rather than bread-winning” is devalued and viewed as dangerous and “delusional” because the thought of an African American being educated was outside of the realm of feasibility.

The blatant exclusion of African Americans from the American Dream narrative established this precedent that African Americans should expect and want less. White men are privileged enough to expect and want more from their education and reap both the cultural and economic benefits of such. Du Bois’ discussion of the socioeconomic and cultural benefits of education helped further African Americans pursuit of citizenship. He contributed to their understanding of why education past vocational training is much more enriching and valuable in regards to dismantling oppressive institutions. Additionally, Du Bois’ critique of educational

³¹ W.E.B Du Bois “The Study of The Negro Problems” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol I (1898): 7

opportunities available to African Americans advanced their goal of citizenship because it required African Americans to be interested in demanding better educational opportunities and resources.

Du Bois and Politics

The establishment of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909 mobilized African Americans by having them “demand American citizenship with every right that inheres...”³² From its inception, the NAACP actively contributed to African Americans reclaiming their own citizenship during the early 20th century. The NAACP’s purpose was to serve as the public advocate for African Americans and their fight for citizenship. Much of Du Bois’ political activism was grounded in his work with the NAACP. His experiences in Germany impacted his perception of race relations in the United States and those views were imbued in the mission and dynamic of the organization.

Although Du Bois was known for his outspokenness when it came to critiques of White America, his work with the NAACP conveyed his approval of integration. Du Bois believed that “the N.A.A.C.P is a sample of what we aim to accomplish in the nation and the world. We propose, as black folk, to work with white folk and red and yellow in this land, as equal partners in promoting the common good; in the world we will to unite with all races and nations in a world Democracy of Humanity”³³ To Du Bois, African Americans having access to their own citizenship was not an issue that should solely rest with the African American community. Their limited citizenship ideally should have been the collective responsibility and concern of all

³² W.E.B Du Bois “White Co-workers” *The Crisis* (The Crisis, 1920), 120

³³ W.E.B Du Bois “White Co-Workers” *The Crisis* (The Crisis,1920), 119-120

Americans. The idea of collective responsibility in this instance means both White and Black citizens have an interest and stake in African American citizenship.

Du Bois saw the value in being politically involved. He believed that integration should not be the end of African Americans fighting for citizenship. He proposed that African Americans being educated and politically aware would result in them being independent of their white peers for leadership. In Du Bois' 1915 article to *The Crisis*, the official magazine of the NAACP, he argued "The American Negro demands equality--political equality, industrial equality and social equality; and he is never going to rest satisfied with anything less."³⁴ African Americans during the early 20th century were afforded opportunities, such as historically black colleges and universities, which gave the illusion of racial equality. However, on closer inspection, Du Bois found that many of these opportunities were limited and insufficient and did not contribute to racial uplift.

He continues on with this thought of equality and stated:

The equality in political, industrial, and social life which modern men must have in order to live, is not to be confounded with sameness. On the contrary, in our case, it is rather insistence upon the right of diversity;--upon the right of a human being to be a man even if he does not wear the same cut of vest, the same curl of hair or the same color of skin...But there is a more and more clearly recognized minimum of opportunity and maximum of freedom to be, to move and think, which the modern world denies to no being which it recognizes as a real man.³⁵

Du Bois here raised a valid point: equality should not be conflated with sameness. Technically, all Americans live under the same founding principles, laws and policies. Uniform application of the law to all citizens does not represent total equality when there also institutions that generate inequality and misapplications of the law to minority groups. It is known that we all are protected by civil liberties, but it cannot be denied that racist institutions shape the boundaries and the application of the law.

³⁴ W.E.B Du Bois "The Immediate Program of the American Negro" *The Crisis* (The Crisis, 1915), 109

³⁵ W.E.B Du Bois "The Immediate Program of the American Negro" *The Crisis* (The Crisis, 1915), 110

Du Bois in the same article, in regards to political equality stated:

The Negro must have political freedom; taxation without representation is tyranny. American Negroes of today are ruled by tyrants who take what they please in taxes and give what they please in law and administration, in justice and in injustice; and the great mass of black people must stand helpless and voiceless before a condition which has time and time again caused other peoples to fight and die.³⁶

Du Bois' comment shares parallels with other adages that are associated with America's War of Independence from Britain in the 18th century. Specifically, the phrase "taxation without representation" was used by American revolutionaries who opposed the monarchy of England taxing American colonists without offering them representation within the Parliament. Du Bois feels that similarly, African Americans actively participate in the economy, yet are constantly disenfranchised and not provided with any opportunities to participate. African Americans for centuries were forced to be 'helpless' and 'voiceless' when it came to the oppression and injustice they faced. Du Bois found an issue with black people being expected to submit and be 'helpless' in situations of oppression because he is aware that in conditions as such, others have spoken up and fought and died over their right to be free. As the example provided, the Revolutionary War was fought over American colonists wanting to escape their oppression from the British monarchy and hundreds and thousands of colonists fought and died because of this. There is a clear hypocritical divide between the case of black people and American colonists where one group was lauded for their opposition to tyrannical forces, yet the other is encouraged and expected to submit and remain 'helpless and voiceless'.

Internal and external mobilization was essential to DuBois' thoughts on African Americans involvement with politics. Within the African American community, individuals had to understand why it was important to be politically engaged and active within their local and national governments. Du Bois' use of inflammatory slogans such as "taxation without

³⁶ Ibid, 110

representation” signaled to African Americans that in order to achieve political equality, African Americans must be willing to stand up and adamantly demand their right to such. For Du Bois, mobilization and uplift translated to “economic co-operation, a revival of art and literature, political action, education and organization”.³⁷ Pertaining to politics, he believed that members should:

organize the votes of Negroes in such congressional districts as have any number of Negro voters...systematically interrogate candidates on matters vital to Negro freedom and uplift...[and] train colored voters to reject the bribe of office and to accept only decent legal enactments both for their own uplift and for the uplift of laboring classes of all races and both sexes.³⁸

African Americans who wanted political opportunities had to take on the responsibility of engaging candidates and promoting the agenda of the African American community. However, in order to articulate the demands of an entirety community, you have to be unified and in constant communication with one another. Being unified within communities translated into having a strong front when it came to addressing politicians and advancing the goal of uplift. Du Bois’ opinion on achieving unity and a common agenda in order to motivate others to be politically active was crucial to getting African Americans further involved.

Du Bois Thoughts on Economic Mobility

Similarly to his thoughts on education and political engagement, Du Bois observed two obstacles that hindered African Americans from being economically mobile: lack of unity within the African American community and strained relations between African Americans and White America. In order for economic mobility, and in a greater sense citizenship, to be possible, African Americans had to reconcile these two dilemmas.

³⁷ Ibid, 112

³⁸ Ibid, 112

The division between black northern and southern workers hindered economic mobility in his opinion. Du Bois in “The Hosts of Black Labor” estimated that there were “1,725,141 Negroes established either a generation or more ago” in the north, with numbers rising due to the Great Migration. The division between northern and southern workers was exacerbated when “this new Negro laborer is immediately forced upon the established Northern Negro group.”³⁹ Southern workers, new to the northern workplace and community culture, were seen as threats to already established northern workers. Southern workers faced many difficulties up north such as finding a job and union to join.⁴⁰ The lack of access to jobs and trade unions made the process of integration for southern workers incredibly difficult. Northern workers who worked their way through the economic hierarchy found the prospect of economic mobility feasible. However, southern workers entrance into the workforce changed the dynamic within the workplace. This change in the work environment and dynamic is partially attributed to the media portrayal of the Great Migration.

Du Bois continued in the same article:

Its security depends largely upon the non-agitation of the race problem. If racial differences are not emphasized by newspapers or by new facts the Northern Negro becomes gradually a citizen judged by his individual deserts and abilities. If, however, there comes a sudden new migration, the level of intelligence and efficiency in these newcomers is almost inevitably below that of the Negro already established in the North. Public opinion lumps the new with the old without discrimination. New racial irritation, and segregations arise.⁴¹

During this time, northern and southern life differed greatly. The north was dominated by industries and factories while the south’s economy remained agriculturally based. Southern

³⁹ W.E.B Du Bois “The Hosts of Black Labor” *The Nation* (The Nation, 1923): 5

⁴⁰ W.E.B Du Bois “The Hosts of Black Labor” *The Nation* (The Nation, 1923): 5

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 5

Aside: It is important to acknowledge here that Du Bois was incorrect about the divide between northern and southern born workers. Southern-born workers were more prominent in production than northern workers. For the purpose of the argument, this project will analyze Du Bois assumption that northern workers were more present in production than southern workers.

workers traveling up north had to find ways to adjust and learn the dynamics of city life.

However, their unfamiliarity with northern life was mistaken for ignorance. This resulted in factory heads and bosses equating the work and value of northern and southern black workers together. By “lumping” them into one category, whatever negative traits were associated with one group became the identity for the entirety of the group. Du Bois being an advocate of unity saw this as a major obstacle in African Americans achieving economic mobility. He felt that in order to achieve economic mobility and success, northern and southern black workers would have to reconcile their cultural and political differences and unite under the same goal.

In order to reconcile their cultural and political differences, Du Bois appealed to the morals of northern workers and asked them to “develop democracy within as well as without the race”⁴² ‘Democracy’ in this instance, does not solely refer to northern and southern workers having an equal voice when it comes to how to better their community. Democracy also refers to northern workers aiding southern workers with their transition into northern communities and allowing southern workers to become autonomous after they have demonstrated they are able to sustain their own economic success. External forces provoking animosity between northern and southern workers led to the lack of camaraderie amongst these two groups. However, Du Bois believed in order for the black community to be economically successful and mobile, they would have to effectively collaborate and be autonomous at the same time.

In *Black Reconstruction in America*, Du Bois discusses the tension between black and white laborers: “the theory of laboring class unity rests upon the assumption that laborers,

⁴² Ibid, 6

despite internal jealousies, will unite because of their opposition to exploitation by the capitalists.”⁴³ However, Du Bois later reflects:

Most persons do not realize how far this failed to work in the South, and it failed to work because the theory of race was supplemented by carefully planned and slowly evolved method, which drove such a wedge between the white and black workers that there probably are not today in the world two groups of workers with practically identical interests who hate and fear each other so deeply and persistently and who are kept so far apart that neither sees anything of common interest.⁴⁴

Du Bois, being in favor of integration, saw the benefit of black and white workers uniting and working against capitalist exploitation. Black and white workers were conditioned to harbor animosity towards each other because being united under the same goal would threaten the cycle of capitalist exploitation. The economy encouraging competition resulted in animosity because of the fear of replacement at any given moment.

Black and white workers were unable to unify because of the imbalance in their privileges. For white workers, “It must be remembered that the white group of laborers, while they received a low wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage. They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white...”⁴⁵ White blue collar workers shared the same class struggles as their black counterparts, but were privileged enough to have society respect their humanity. In regards to black workers, “the Negro was subject to public insult; was afraid of mobs, was liable to the jibes of children and the unreasoning fears of white women, and was compelled almost continuously to submit to various badges of inferiority.”⁴⁶ The divide between black and white workers appeared because there was an imbalance in whose citizenship and humanity was acknowledged and respected.

Considering both groups experienced similar economic struggles, African Americans began to

⁴³ W.E.B Du Bois “Back toward Slavery” *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (Harcourt Brace and Company, 1935), 51

⁴⁴ W.E.B Du Bois “Back toward Slavery” (Harcourt Brace and Company, 1935), 52

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 52

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 52

recognize the inequality in their treatment within public spaces. Du Bois' belief that unifying these two groups would improve relations and the overall situation of black workers was a valid idea; however, infeasible given the amount of compensation that has to happen on both sides.

Concluding Thoughts on Du Bois

Du Bois in regards to education, political engagement and economic mobility found the importance in rebuilding the African American community. Du Bois' believed that African Americans should not work for white Americans, yet work in tandem. He also believed that education will provide individuals with the cultural breadth and knowledge of systems needed to dismantle oppressive institutions. But overall, his contribution to African American citizenship came in his call for the unification of the African American community. This unity entailed supporting each other in economic endeavors, building up strong and efficient school systems that will support young children and being politically engaged and advancing the agenda of the Black community. His call for African Americans to believe and demand their citizenship and personhood from America is what led him to be such a large influence over the intellectual and political milieu that produced the Civil Rights Movement.

Chapter Three:

A. Philip Randolph: Brotherhood and Socialism's Place in African American Advancement

Introduction

Asa Philip Randolph, known professionally as A. Philip Randolph, was born in 1889 in Crescent City, Florida. Randolph began his career as a crusader for African American labor rights later than Du Bois and Washington. Randolph offers a unique perspective of African American political thought because he did not work within the realm of academics like his counterparts. Randolph is most notably known for his work within the labor movement, especially founding important organizations such as the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and also for his work in laying the foundation for the Civil Rights Movement. Randolph's perspective therefore comes from someone who was on the 'front lines' of African Americans endeavor at advancement and citizenship. In a general sense, Randolph influenced African American advancement through his advocacy of equitable labor practices and ideological alternatives to mainstream, American capitalism.⁴⁷ His work gave African Americans the opportunity to participate in this political shift but also find tangible ways they could better themselves.

It is important to acknowledge where Randolph got his start and how he became the well-known and revered figure he is today. Randolph rose to prominence during 1917 when he collaborated with Chandler Owen and became editors of *The Messenger* which "launched... an independent radical black journal of economics and politics."⁴⁸ *The Messenger* served as a platform for Randolph, Owen and other contributing authors to speak about topics such as

⁴⁷ Aside: Randolph's ideological alternative, namely socialism, was **not** adopted by the Civil Rights Movement, but is mentioned and discussed because of its impact on Randolph's political thought.

⁴⁸ Wintz, Carol D. *African-American Political Thought 1890-1930*. (M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 15.

socialism, racial equality, industrial unionism and criticisms of entities such as the NAACP and their leaders, like Du Bois.⁴⁹ Having this platform to share these issues and beliefs allowed Randolph to cultivate his position on the status of African-Americans and how as a race, advancement and full citizenship could be achieved. Randolph believed and actively advocated for African-Americans to turn to socialism in order to free themselves of capitalist-sponsored racism.

Randolph and Politics

Randolph's early ideas were articulated in his active contributions to *The Messenger*. In an essay titled "The Negro in Politics", originally published in *The Messenger* in the July 1918 edition, Randolph reflected on the status of African-Americans during the Reconstruction era until 1918 and how there needed to be a shift in their political affiliation. Within his essay, he appealed to African-Americans to choose their political affiliations wisely because of the social, political and economic implications these choices can have. Before declaring his approval of socialism, Randolph prefaces by breaking down the essentials of political parties and how each "political program...strive to gain control of the government in order to secure its adoption. Its campaigns are made possible by a fund created by those persons who desire the adoption of its program. It is natural and plain then that those who supply the funds will control and direct the party."⁵⁰ Considering *The Messenger* was a widely circulated magazine amongst working class African-Americans, it is crucial that Randolph in this moment broke down the major components of American politics because it gives readers a deeper insight into the inequities that exist within politics and also gives them the opportunity to gain ownership over this major component of

⁴⁹ Wintz, Carol D. *African-American Political Thought 1890-1930*. (M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 15.

⁵⁰ Randolph, Phillip A. "The Negro in Politics". *The Messenger*, (The Messenger, 1917): 252

their life. Civic engagement, through acts of voting and actively engaging in politics is one way in which people exercise their “full citizenship” and Randolph providing this information for African-Americans to learn the process and assess their options.

Another way in which African Americans can access full citizenship, according to Randolph, was through their becoming a member of a specific political party. Randolph in the same piece states:

I maintain that since the Socialist Party is supported financially by working men and working women...since the Socialist Party has always, both in the United States and Europe, opposed all forms of race prejudice, that the Negro should no longer look upon voting the Republican ticket, as accepting the lesser of two evils; but that it is politically, economically, historically, socially logical and sound for him to reject both evils, the Republican and Democratic parties and select a positive good—Socialism.”⁵¹

By establishing the context within which political parties operate and also providing African American enough information about political parties so they can make a sound and informed decision about their political affiliation, Randolph is opening up the opportunity for African Americans to be politically educated and to have full control over their citizenship.

One of the more important points that Randolph makes in the previous quotation is the point that socialism is an ideology that largely operates with the best intentions for African Americans. Through his advocacy of socialism Randolph gave them the option to explore a political affiliation that extends beyond the borders of the two party systems. Also, it gives African Americans the opportunity to be autonomous in choosing their own political affiliations, but also reminds them that keeping in mind the intentions and actions of particular political parties and ideologies is crucial when choosing a party to join. Randolph’s advocacy for socialism allowed for African Americans to access citizenship in regards to politics because it gave them the opportunity to make informed decisions about their political affiliations and also

⁵¹ Randolph, Phillip A. “The Negro in Politics”. *The Messenger*, (The Messenger, 1917): 253

gave them the opportunity to be stakeholders in important conversations concerning politics, politicians and their platform pertaining to African Americans. His advocacy for socialism also gave African Americans the opportunity to invest in political parties that were interested in protecting the needs and interests of working class African Americans. Even though African Americans largely reject socialism and it has little influence over the Civil Rights Movement, Randolph's advocacy engaged in broad political education and asserted the value of independent politics which did set the stage for a grassroots movement.

Randolph and Education

Randolph's political values helped to shape his approach to education. One of the more pressing matters during Randolph's time was the issue of segregation and how segregation adversely impacted the lives of African Americans. While he called for the immediate eradication of segregation within public schools, he also called for improvements within African American education. Having established himself as socialist labor activist, Randolph had an understanding of educational inequity that differed from his counterparts. While Du Bois and Washington believed that much of the failures with African American education could be attributed to a lack of resources and opportunity within the Black community, Randolph believed differently.

Before the landmark Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board*, segregation within public schools became evident. Randolph often spoke out against segregation and described it as a "sinister monster [rearing] its menacing head, in many cases securing our acquiescence, in others pressing us to yield through murder and threat."⁵² Segregation within public schools had not been a topic actively explored by Du Bois and Washington. To clarify, both have in some

⁵² A Philip Randolph "The State of the Race" *The Messenger* (The Messenger, 1923): 289

capacity discussed the effects of segregation in regards to education, but their primary solutions to these inequalities have always been for educational reform within the Black community which included prioritizing and focusing on historically Black colleges and universities.

Randolph, finding fault in segregation, saw that focusing on historically Black colleges and universities was counterproductive. In fact, Randolph heavily criticized schools such as Tuskegee and Hampton because of the kind of citizen they produced:

conservative, or right wing...acquiring property, knowledge of trades and professions, and of being law-abiding, thrifty, home-buying “cast-down-your-bucket-where-you-are” citizen, rather than of the protesting, insurgent variety, is stressed. The Negro leaders of this group are largely satellites of their white benefactors, reflecting views of conservative, imperial America.⁵³

Randolph strongly opposed the values purported by Washington and schools such as Hampton and Tuskegee. Washington rarely spoke out against segregation and through his belief in compromise and fostering relationships with White Americans, graduates from universities such as Tuskegee and Hampton shared similar beliefs. Randolph, as indicated by his later thoughts, believed that protesting and actively fighting against oppressive institutions such as segregation was the only way true educational reform could occur. *Brown v. Board of Education* offered Randolph the solution he long advocated for.

In 1954, the court decision for *Brown v. Board of Education* overturned the decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) which called for ‘separate but equal’ public facilities. In education, African Americans now had access to better schools and resources that were originally intended for White students and the prospect of advancement and citizenship seemed more realistic. Randolph being an activist that largely spoke out against segregation found the court decision to be a success, yet he bemoaned the lack of implementation across public schools which provided

⁵³ A Philip Randolph “The State of the Race” *The Messenger* (The Messenger, 1923): 289

an additional roadblock for African American advancement. Under the leadership of Randolph, the Youth March for Integrated Schools marched on Washington in 1958 demanding each state to uphold the decision of Brown. While many found this coalition and Randolph's actions to be too troublesome, if not revolutionary, Randolph understood that "the Supreme Court has reversed itself on great social issues before...Because of the change and pressure of public opinion."⁵⁴ For Randolph, education was more than finding ways to build up the Black community from within. According to him, not acknowledging the damage of segregation allows for its perpetuation. Randolph believed that abolishing segregation was imperative in order for real change and progress to occur. Randolph contributed to African American advancement because his willingness to acknowledge racist institutions and actively combat them inspired young people to do the same. Randolph through his activism and leadership demonstrated that it is not enough to generate social change within the Black community, but it must extend into mainstream society because that is where primary perpetrators have influence.

Randolph, Unionization and Economic Mobility

Randolph is best known for his ardent work within the labor movement that sought to improve conditions for Black industrial workers. Randolph's success as a labor leader came from the fact that he fundamentally understood the problems facing Black industrial workers and strongly encouraged organization and union forming amongst workers. Specifically, Randolph is best known for his involvement with the Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters which he founded with the help of other Pullman Porters in the late 1920s after *The Messenger* began to dissipate in influence. One of the many tasks Randolph took on when establishing the

⁵⁴ A Philip Randolph "Why the Interracial Youth March for Integrated Schools?" *Statement Released to Press* (1958)

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters is advocating for African American porters to other unions within the American Federation of Labor (AFL). When writing an article concerning the status of the Brotherhood, Randolph states:

For it may be that the Negro workers have a distinct spiritual contribution to make to the American labor movement. More than any other group of wage earners they have drunk deep of the bitter dregs of economic exploitation; more than any other group of wage earners, they have borne the poignant pain of social misery. Only they, of all American wage earners, have sat in the silent shadows singing songs of sorrow. Thus it may be that out of the tragic depths of their sufferings they may bring forth a new, vital, stirring message for industrial peace with justice which will enrich, ennoble and inspire the life of labor, thereby advancing the cause of humanity.⁵⁵

Randolph advocating for African American porters during this time advanced their goal of gaining civil and labor rights. Randolph states in this excerpt, African Americans, more than any other wage earners are used to dealing with multifaceted forms of discrimination, that being discrimination within public spaces and labor exploitation. Instead of speaking out about these injustices and finding ways in which to change them according to Randolph, African American wage earners are forced to endure this ‘social misery’ and continue to operate within this labor. Randolph argued that creating this union places them one step closer to full citizenship. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters brings them out of these “silent shadows” and allows for them to exit this cycle of economic exploitation.

Randolph helps advance the movement toward full citizenship by not only making African American porters to represent themselves in the collective bargaining process over wages and work conditions, but also giving them the opportunity to engage with other unions and labor causes.⁵⁶ He mentions how African American members a part of the Brotherhood

⁵⁵ A. Philip Randolph “The Case of the Pullman Porters” *American Federationist* (American Federationist, 1925): 47

⁵⁶ An important distinction to be made is that the process of collective bargaining does not guarantee workers more control in the situation where they are **guaranteed** better wages and work conditions, but places them in a better position where they have more leverage in advocating for higher wages and better work conditions.

would be able to make contribution to the American labor movement because of their deep connection with discrimination and being taken advantage of by capitalistic firms. Black porters being stakeholders within the American labor movement gave them the opportunity to engage with their citizenship. Additionally, being a part of the Brotherhood gives them opportunity to remain aware of the issues that affect them and other wage earners.

Randolph's work with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters gave him the opportunity to fully demonstrate his depth of knowledge about labor issues and advocate for reasonable and equitable requests from Pullman Company owners. While discussing the future of the Brotherhood to the American Federation of Labor, Randolph states:

Withal the total income, including wages and tips, is far below a wage sufficient to maintain a family according to a decent American standard of living. But besides tips being uncertain, inadequate and irregular, they are morally and spiritually indefensible, un-American and undemocratic. Moreover, the system of rewarding labor with charity demoralizes and compromises the manhood of the wage earners. In fact, the public is not tipping the porter. It is tipping the Pullman Company, which made a net income, according to its fiscal report, July 1, 1925 of seventeen million dollars. The company has relied upon the public to pay part of the wages of the porter in tips.⁵⁷

Randolph here, while addressing the AFL, a labor federation he often called on for support of his union explains how the inadequate tips that Pullman Porters received adversely affect their wages. Randolph was concerned not just with the wages earned by the porters but also with their humanity. Porters are usually those who assist passengers with their luggage onto trains. However, their service labor often reduces them into a background role that renders them invisible when it comes to tipping or simple acknowledgement of their humanity. Randolph fully recognizes the fact that these porters are unable to live off of their tips. The public did not adequately tip the porters due to racial and class bias, or disregard for their work. With all of the money that is made by the Pullman Company, Randolph pressured the Pullman Company to

⁵⁷ Randolph, Phillip A. "The Case of the Pullman Porters" *American Federationist* (1925): 43

either establish a more effective way in which they compensate porters or for porters to take matters into their own hands and unionize and demand adequate treatment and wages. The latter happened and with the leadership of Randolph, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters became a successful organization for many porters who felt dissatisfied with previous failed attempts of grassroots unionizing.

As Randolph continues in his article to the American Federation of Labor, he states that the Brotherhood:

is a service organization as well as an organization to protect and advance the interests of its members. Its policy is to develop and employ the initiative, intelligence and a sense of responsibility with a view to maintaining helpful and constructive cooperation with the Pullman Company...The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters will also fulfill the high mission of creating out of the Pullman porters better man and more useful citizens; to develop a higher measure of independence and manhood; to appreciate the dignity of social work of service; to recognize the common aim and brotherhood of wage earners regardless of race, creed, color, sex or nationality.⁵⁸

His description of the Brotherhood reflects his belief in working class rights and workers' ability to shape society. Randolph's primary intention in creating the Brotherhood was to address the grievances of wage earners and also to ensure that porters felt that their voices were being heard by the Pullman Company. Another important component of Randolph's description comes when he states that the Brotherhood seeks to make porters better men and 'more useful citizens'. As previously stated, due to discriminatory practices during this time, African Americans across industries were underpaid and unacknowledged as respectable wage earners and because of that, this hindered them from going to company officials and voicing their grievances and concerns. Through the establishment of the Brotherhood, porters now had a collection of people who they resonated with, demographically and morally and now had the confidence to go and speak with their bosses.

⁵⁸ A. Philip Randolph "The Case of the Pullman Porters" *American Federationist* (1925): 47

Lastly, the other important element that Randolph effectively does as a labor leader is restoring the humanity within service work. Randolph's work with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters gave black porters the opportunity to exercise their citizenship through union building and articulating their grievances. His work with *The Messenger* and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters helped African Americans gain access to their full citizenship and also allowed for them to access the humanity and autonomy that they lacked during the postwar and early Civil Rights era period.

Concluding Thoughts on Randolph

Randolph, being the youngest of all three thinkers, demonstrates that he was a product of his time, just as much as Washington and Du Bois were. Randolph's adoption of socialist values, persistence on mobilizing the youth and marginalized groups and finally providing a voice to unacknowledged laborers all contributed to his larger goal of empowering African Americans. One of the primary exceptions that distinguish Randolph from Du Bois and Washington was intersectional focus on both class and race. To clarify, Randolph frequently took a stand against public segregation and spoke out against the unfair treatment of African American porters. However, his concern also transcended race lines where he also advocated for the rights of marginalized White workers who were underpaid and underappreciated for their labor. Randolph promoted African American advancement because he, like Washington and Du Bois attempted to do, expand the borders of solidarity and accountability. By signaling to White workers that Black workers endured similar conditions, Randolph created this camaraderie amongst workers. He contributed to the intellectual and social milieu that inspired the Civil Rights Movement,

where White and Black activists would stand together and work under this common, collective goal of citizenship and advancement for African Americans.

Chapter Four:

Booker T. Washington: Industrial Education and the Necessity of Compromise

Introduction

Booker Taliaferro Washington was born into slavery in April 1856 in Hale's Ford, Virginia.⁵⁹ Ten years later, Washington and his family were granted freedom with the Emancipation Proclamation and relocated to West Virginia with his mother, siblings and stepfather. Washington's stepfather worked as a salt packer. Washington and his brother worked alongside their stepfather and "received wages for their work, [although] their stepfather kept it all for the family."⁶⁰ Working with his stepfather and not necessarily owning and having access to his own wage made Washington "long for an education..."⁶¹ Early on in his childhood, Washington understood the value of physical labor as a means of survival. Working within the salt packing industry did not require a background in higher education. Yet, Washington's desire for an education brought him to Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute.

Hampton Institute was originally "established in 1868 on the site where runaway slaves had congregated" and was led by The Congregationalists' American Missionary Association (AMA) with the intention to:

civilize the freed people, an undertaking interpreted first to mean the promotion of Christianity consistent with Congregationalist values and morality...Slavery had encouraged wastefulness, unreliability, hedonism, and lack of foresight, all of which had to be unlearned and the Protestant ethic embraced before the freed people could become good Americans and good Christians.⁶²

⁵⁹ Robert J. Norrell, *Up From Slavery: The Life of Booker T. Washington* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009): 17

⁶⁰ Jacqueline M. Moore, *Booker T. Washington, W.E.B Du Bois, and the Struggle for Racial Uplift* (Scholarly Resources, 2003): 18

⁶¹ Jacqueline M. Moore, *Booker T. Washington, W.E.B Du Bois, and the Struggle for Racial Uplift* (Scholarly Resources, 2003): 18

⁶² Robert J. Norrell, *Up From Slavery: The Life of Booker T. Washington* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009): 30

Hampton's Protestant mission promoted ideals such as hard work and practicality. Hampton being an "industrial education school...would prepare students not necessarily for the university but for a practical role in life and would also instill good habits and enforce proper discipline."⁶³ Examples such as his Atlanta Exposition address demonstrate his belief in practicality. His transformation of Tuskegee Normal School conveyed his belief in physical labor, vocational skill and practicality. Washington's early life and education at Hampton led to the formation of his political thought and his eventual success at Tuskegee.

When he originally arrived at Tuskegee, he found that "there was no established school, no state appropriation until October, and no designated campus."⁶⁴ Washington sprang into action and began to reform Tuskegee and make it beneficial to students and the community. Washington hosted classes out of the "local AME Zion church... [and] began to look for suitable property for a permanent location."⁶⁵ Additionally, Washington made Tuskegee affordable for many Blacks. "Washington had seen the impoverished conditions in which most blacks in the area lived, he realized that tuition was not an option...he proposed a manual training system on the Hampton model: students were to work off their tuition by helping clean up the farm, repair the buildings, and plant crops that the school could both sell and consume."⁶⁶ Giving students the opportunity to work meant they could afford school and also build up the appearance of Tuskegee. Washington opened up opportunities for local students to become competitive agents in the workforce. However, his intention behind educating Tuskegee students in tandem with utilizing their manual labor served a dual purpose. Industrial education with practical applications allowed students to develop marketable skills in a Jim Crow economy.

⁶³ Jacqueline M. Moore, *Booker T. Washington, W.E.B Du Bois, and the Struggle for Racial Uplift* (2003): 20

⁶⁴ Jacqueline M. Moore *Booker T. Washington, W.E.B Du Bois and the Struggle for Racial Uplift*, 26

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 26

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 26

Washington's idea was if students could learn a trade they had the basis to aspire to be the owners of their own business and not have to remain workers for the rest of their life.

However, his attempt at transforming Tuskegee into an industrial institute similar to Hampton was not well received. Teachers at Tuskegee "...turned up their noses at the idea of manual labor, particularly growing cotton. The black community had strong faith that education was the key to success and believed it would allow them to escape the cotton fields and sharecropping."⁶⁷ During Reconstruction, African Americans sought to redefine the Black community. Teachers at Tuskegee and similar institutions saw the value of 'liberal' education that capitalized on cultural knowledge. The idea of improving the African American community in regards to providing a cultural education is reminiscent to the ideals promoted by Du Bois. Both Du Bois and Washington's background influenced their perspective on education. Du Bois prioritized cultural capital and education over vocational skill, while Washington believed the converse.⁶⁸ Washington found much success at Tuskegee and became the face of industrial education for African American s throughout the United States.

Washington and Education

Washington is mostly known for his advocacy of industrial education. Washington, having had the experience of building up Tuskegee and bearing witness to its success understood that industrial education was an option that should be considered by all African Americans. However, his advocacy for industrial education however sometimes placed him in a position to denigrate higher education. In a letter recounting his experiences while traveling around

⁶⁷ Ibid, 26

⁶⁸ An important distinction to be made is Du Bois still saw the importance of vocational training, but did not feel as if it should overshadow a holistic, liberal education. The same goes for Washington, who similarly recognized the importance of a liberal education, but saw vocational training as a necessity.

Mississippi, Washington stated “I wanted to make fathers and mothers of our pupils realize and thoroughly understand that a real education, whether it is “high” or “low”, whether it was education in the book or in the field, must somewhere touch the earth and change the conduct, the character, and the condition of the people.”⁶⁹ While others may refer to industrial education as “low”, Washington makes it a point to state that both forms of liberal and vocational education would be meaningless if it did not have an impact on the world, the character of someone or the condition of people. In his opinion, he believes that our conception of education should shift to where its value is determined by its ability to impact the individual and support their personal growth.

In response to a letter sent to him by George Augustus Gates, Washington when referring to industrial education stated:

Most people who have not had such experience fail entirely to see and recognize the purely educational value of hand training...For example, while you say in effect that it requires a certain number of years for a graduate of Hampton or Tuskegee to prepare to enter Fisk or complete the course at Fisk, one might reply that it would require at least two or three years for a graduate of Annapolis to complete the course at West Point...no one would, I think, argue that the Annapolis man had not received an education.⁷⁰

Washington’s analogy to West Point and Annapolis (also known as the United States Naval Academy) furthers his point of ending the hierarchy between industrial schools and higher education. It is assumed that someone who graduates from an industrial school such as Hampton or Tuskegee did not receive a ‘legitimate’ education and would not be adequately prepared for the academic rigor at Fisk. However, Washington makes the point that just because the schools are offering two different sets of skills does not mean that one skill is more valuable than the other. He also makes the point that just because the skills differ does not mean that learning is

⁶⁹ Booker T. Washington “A Cheerful Journey Through Mississippi Which Showed The Rapid Progress Of The Negro Race In Education, In Acquiring Land, In Building Up Business And In Becoming Financially Independent And Thrifty” *World’s Work* (Doubleday, Page & Company, 1909)

⁷⁰ Booker T. Washington “Letter to George Augustus Gates” (1910) found in Louis R. Harlan and Raymond W. Smock *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, Vol. 10 (University of Illinois Press, 1981)

not happening. Washington's stance on the education hierarchy is worth noting because he argues both liberal and vocational educations are valuable in their own right, while still maintaining his adamancy with industrial education.

Washington wrote about the importance of education, not just at the higher level, but also during childhood. In his letter to the *Montgomery Advertiser*, he states:

So far as the negro race is concerned, I am quite sure that Macon County has gained in population because the County Board of Education has been wise enough to encourage and help the colored people have good public schools in the country districts of the county. The average white man does not realize that no matter what else the average negro will do without, he wants education for his children...⁷¹

Washington continued and stated:

In Macon County there are good school houses and reasonably good teachers. This is true, I think I am safe in saying, for both races. Ask any white man in Macon County, and he will tell you, I think, that since Macon County has had good public schools it has a more orderly and law-abiding negro population; that labor is much easier to secure and that the colored people work better than they did before.⁷²

Washington's insight is reflective of his overall opinion of education within the Black community. Southern African Americans sought out communities that provided quality educational opportunities for their children. These parents desired for their children to be educated early so they would become productive, law abiding citizens. Washington acknowledged the important correlation between education and work opportunities. The fact that African Americans had a multitude of talents and skills made gaining employment easier to secure and allowed for a high level of flexibility. Additionally, Washington's insight reveals a major contribution he made to the socioeconomic milieu of the Civil Rights Movement: the notion of capitalizing on one's individual human capital and value as a worker. Having

⁷¹ Booker T. Washington *Letter to the Editor, Montgomery Advertiser, December 30, 1910* (Montgomery Advertiser, 1910): 68

⁷² Booker T. Washington *Letter to the Editor, Montgomery Advertiser, December 30, 1910* (Montgomery Advertiser, 1910): 70

knowledge of different trades automatically serves as a benefit, but learning how to market to employers oneself was even more important.

Washington, through his tone and audience, made another point regarding education. In the same editorial he stated “Macon County is in such good condition because the negroes have good sense enough to realize that they have certain duties to perform themselves--that all the responsibility does not have to rest with white people...We have no race problem in Macon County.”⁷³ He believes that white residents should be at ease because of the lack of racial friction and crime. It can be implied that his writing did not address African Americans, but white residents. His writing transformed him into an ambassador for southern blacks. The same is applicable in an open letter written to the Louisiana Constitutional Convention in 1898:

The Negroes are not unmindful of the fact that the white people of your State pay the greater proportion of the school taxes, and that the poverty of the State prevents it from doing all that it desires for public education; yet I believe you will agree with me, that ignorance is more costly to the State than education; that it will cost Louisiana more not to educate her negroes than it will cost to educate them⁷⁴

Washington’s tone shares several parallels with his editorial. His tone indicates that he was appealing to southern, white Americans. His editorial encouraged white Americans to preserve public school education because the cost of providing African Americans with an education is safer than the converse.

The tone and audience of his writings reveals a major element of Washington’s political thought: the act of compromise. Du Bois and Washington greatly disagreed on what constitutes as compromise. Du Bois believed that Washington’s notion of compromise was not productive, but accommodating. As proposed by Du Bois, he believed that the first priority should always be rebuilding the black community and then working with white Americans as their equals.

⁷³ Ibid, 70

⁷⁴ Booker T. Washington *Open Letter to the Louisiana Constitutional Convention, February 19, 1898* (1898): 30

Washington went about compromise in a slightly different way by including white workers and elites into the conversation of race relations earlier on in the process. What is important to note about both of the processes proposed by Du Bois and Washington is that they have the same end goal: integration. The NAACP was founded not only by Du Bois, but a white ally, Mary White Ovington. Washington often spoke in front of white crowds and appealed to their moral compass in regards to race relations and treating black people as their equals. Both Du Bois and Washington's conceptions of compromise was pivotal in shaping the social and intellectual milieu of the Civil Rights Movement. Integration, being one of the bigger goals of the movement, could not have happened without the idea of compromise. Compromise, not in the sense of abandoning one's principles for the sake of moving something forward. Rather, using your principles as your starting point and coming to the decision that an endeavor as big as race relations and integration cannot happen without the cooperation of all citizens.

Washington and Politics

Washington was equally active in politics as he was in education. Washington's political platform had its foundation in compromise. Within his Atlanta Exposition address, Washington paralleled the experiences and plight of African Americans to being stranded on a ship. The phrase "cast down" appears as "A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal "Water, water; we die of thirst!" The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, "Cast down your bucket where you are."⁷⁵ Washington continues on:

To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man, who is their next door

⁷⁵ Booker T. Washington *Atlanta Exposition Address* (1895): 24

neighbour, I would say: “Cast down your bucket where you are”--cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded.⁷⁶

Many found Washington’s ‘casting down’ ideal to be controversial. He believed he was advancing the agenda of the black community by encouraging them to use resources and opportunities where they found themselves. However, many felt that Washington was too accommodating of white Americans. Washington’s casting down analogy did advocate for accommodation and is indicated by his encouraging African Americans to foster “friendly relations” with “Southern white men”. The context of this speech, post Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, white and black Americans relations were tense due to Jim Crow segregation ravaging large parts of the south. The Northern black community found fault with Washington’s accommodation of southern, White men. Rich, southern, white men were largely responsible for constructing and benefitting from Jim Crow, a system where African Americans constantly had to prove their citizenship and humanity. Working in tandem with this group indicated regression rather than progress.

However, to simply say that Washington’s ideas of compromise and accommodation were more detrimental than beneficial disregards his original intentions. In the same address, Washington stated “Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions...It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top. Nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities.”⁷⁷ Washington’s tone and audience indicate that his primary interest was in repairing tense race relations. Yet, that was not his end goal. Washington believed that having a foundation in agriculture, mechanics, commerce, etc. were staples of citizenship. His options were limited and he had to decide between working

⁷⁶ Booker T. Washington *Atlanta Exposition Address* (1895): 24

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 24-25

cooperatively with those in power or risk losing it all by not doing so. Washington, serving as an ambassador for the common black southern citizen was restricted in his language. Thousands depended on Washington's language and approach to southern race relations. Deviating from this already established position of "ambassador" could have jeopardize their efforts of uplift and citizenship.

Washington's ideas of accommodation and compromise were controversial and largely disputed by the Black community, yet he made advancement the priority of all citizens, not just African Americans. His counterpart Du Bois believed in community reformation for external results. Washington, similar to his counterpart Du Bois, saw the benefit of shared responsibility amongst both Black and White communities. Much of his political involvement was dedicated to persuading White Americans to be interested or aware of the dilemmas facing African Americans.

Washington corresponded with political leaders, including Presidents. In a letter written to William Howard Taft, 27th President of the United States, Washington advised "The Republican party has been for more than fifty years the consistent friend of the American Negro...We demand equal justice for all men, without regard to race or color...to secure equal accommodations on railroads and other public carriers for all citizens, whether white or black."⁷⁸ Washington's method of accommodation was viewed as regressive. One of the things he did effectively was place the issues of African Americans at the forefront of his correspondence with President Taft. Segregation of public spaces continued on for decades after Washington's correspondence. However, his correspondence and stating the issues and made integration the

⁷⁸ Booker T. Washington "Letter to William Howard Taft" (1908): 66

responsibility of white Americans to care.⁷⁹ Washington's political involvement, prioritization of African American needs and pushing for shared responsibility of the issues amongst Black and White communities precipitated African American advancement.

Washington including white politicians and citizens into the conversation regarding black uplift seemed to be the most logical and feasible to some, but seemed contradictory and out of place to others. Washington's counterpart, Du Bois within *The Souls of Black Folk* adamantly condemned Washington's stance. Du Bois stated "the attitude of the Southern whites toward the blacks is not, as so many assume, in all cases the same; the ignorant Southerner hates the Negro, the workingmen fear his competition, the money-makers wish to sue him as a laborer, some of the educated see a menace in his upward development..."⁸⁰ In all of the relationships outlined by Du Bois, white people either exploited or discriminated against black citizens. Defining these negative interactions is vital to Du Bois' argument against Washington's accommodation because he calls attention to the contradictory nature of Washington's strategy. Including white residents into conversations about black uplift is not effective if all of their relationships with black workers and residents are negative and demeaning.⁸¹

However, to be clear, Du Bois similarly to Washington felt that the issue of discrimination and racism should not be a problem of the black community alone, but that of the nation. Du Bois comments on Washington: "his doctrine has tended to make the whites, North

⁷⁹ It is important to note that Washington's counterpart Du Bois also met with key leaders and advanced his ideas on integration and black advancement. Similarly, Martin Luther King Jr. during the Civil Rights Movement was known for his conversations with President John F. Kennedy and other important politicians of that time. Mentioning Washington's political involvement and distinguishing it from Du Bois and King is important to understanding Washington because this was an essential part of his outreach and method of ensuring black advancement. Du Bois used his connections with politicians in addition to his political thought and bodies of work. King met with politicians as a means of advancing his work with organizations such as the SCLC. However, Washington used his political connections as his primary vehicle of arguing for citizenship in addition to arguing for industrial education.

⁸⁰ W.E.B Du Bois "Of Mr. Washington and Others" *The Souls of Black Folk* (A.E. McClurg & Co. 1903): 56

⁸¹ Du Bois was critical of southern black leaders, but actively sought out the support of northern, white liberals especially for the NAACP.

and South, shift the burden of the Negro problem to the Negro's shoulders and stand aside as critical and rather pessimistic spectators; when in fact the burden belongs to the nation, and the hands of none of us are clean if we bend not our energies to righting the great wrongs."⁸² Du Bois strongly resonated with Washington's sentiments that the nation should collectively share the burden of oppressive and racist institutions. Yet, Washington and Du Bois' ideas differ significantly considering Du Bois does not believe in absolving white Americans for their actions and contribution to these oppressive institutions. Du Bois wants for there to be a collective recognition of their wrong doing and then white Americans could be a part of the solution.

Washington and Economics

Washington's education and involvement in politics influenced his thoughts on Black economics. He attributed African American socioeconomic immobility to two issues: racist institutions that exploited African American labor and the changing educational landscape within the African American community. Being an educator, he believed African American economic issues were amendable through educational reform. However, as time progressed, he recognized the complexity of the issues and advocated for social reform.

Washington noticed that many students attending historically Black college or universities were attending school to learn "Latin and Greek, but they seemed to know less about life and its conditions as they would meet it in their homes."⁸³ Black colleges and universities served as hubs where students and professors alike were interested in expanding cultural education. Washington noticed that students trained in fields such as "Latin and Greek" would

⁸² W.E.B Du Bois "Of Mr. Washington and Others" *The Souls of Black Folk* (A.E. McClurg & Co. 1903): 58

⁸³ Booker T. Washington, "The Reconstruction Period" *Up From Slavery* (Doubleday, Page & Co, 1901): 36

have this cultural foundation, but would go on to become “hotel waiters and Pullman-car porters”.⁸⁴ To be clear, Washington was not opposed to African Americans having a cultural foundation. Nor was Washington opposed to African Americans working within the service industry as porters or waiters. His qualm with cultural education was that it was not enough and it did not provide African Americans with a strong enough foundation to become self-sufficient.

As a student at Hampton, he noticed that “The students at the other schools seemed to be less self-dependent. They seemed to give more attention to mere outward appearances. In a word, they did not appear to me to be beginning at the bottom, on a real, solid foundation, to the extent that they were at Hampton.”⁸⁵ For Washington, only having a cultural education led to a lack of independence, a weakened moral foundation, and propensity to not work hard. He believed that graduates who were only educated in a singular, cultural education fail to see the value of hard work and are driven to working within industries that would bring them to larger, more industrious northern cities.

Additionally, his concern with African American socioeconomic immobility included issues with racist institutions that exploited African American labor and limited laborers potential. Washington, a lifelong resident and advocate of the south, noticed that an alarming number of African American sharecroppers and laborers were leaving the south and relocating north because of southern labor conditions. Southern laborers reported to have had “poor dwelling houses, loss of earnings each year, because of unscrupulous employers, poor schoolhouses, short school terms, poor school teachers, bad treatment generally, lynchings, a general lack of police protection and want of encouragement.”⁸⁶ The south grappled with Jim Crow segregation and conditions that rendered African Americans to poor, unamendable labor

⁸⁴ Booker T. Washington, “The Reconstruction Period” *Up From Slavery* (Doubleday, Page & Co, 1901): 36

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 36

⁸⁶ Booker T. Washington “The Negro and the Labor Problem of the South” *The Atlanta Constitution* (1904): 55

conditions. African Americans also had to deal with segregated public spaces. An example would be trains where “the seats in the coach given to colored people are always greatly inferior to those given the whites. The car is usually very filthy.”⁸⁷ Washington noticed that the opinion and treatment of African Americans amongst White Americans was the driving force behind their immobility and lack of citizenship. His solution: “good schoolhouses provided on or near their plantations, open six or eight months in a year, and a good teacher regularly employed.”⁸⁸ Improving educational opportunities in quality and accessibility proved to be beneficial for both White and Black southerners. Black southerners would not have to move up north and White employers would not have to continue to exploit African Americans for their labor because of a shortage with workers. However, Washington’s solution fell short of improving conditions for Black laborers who continued to struggle to survive under exploitative practices.

Washington, already aware of the exploitative, Jim Crow practices worked to address the root causes towards the end of his career. He condemned Jim Crow as being “unjust, inviting of other unjust measures, not productive of good, because every thoughtful negro resents its injustice and doubts its sincerity.”⁸⁹ He also adds that African Americans “object to being segregated because it usually means that he will receive inferior accommodations in return for the taxes he pays...will probably mean that the sewerage in his part of the city will be inferior; that the streets and sidewalks will be neglected...that his section of the city will not be kept in order by the police and other authorities...”⁹⁰ Washington being a well-regarded speaker and educator had the influence to reach out to a large audience of citizens, both White and Black. Washington directly stating that segregation was wrong, curtailed the potential of African

⁸⁷ Booker T. Washington “Letter to the Editor” *Montgomery Advertiser* (1885): 22

⁸⁸ Booker T. Washington “The Negro and the Labor Problem of the South” *The Atlanta Constitution* (1904): 53

⁸⁹ Booker T. Washington “My View of Segregation Laws” *The New Republic* 5 (The New Republic, 1915): 80

⁹⁰ Booker T. Washington “My View of Segregation Laws” *The New Republic* 5 (The New Republic, 1915): 80

Americans and rendered them to live in inferior conditions did not lead to instantaneous change. In comparison to his counterpart, Du Bois who founded the NAACP which directly tackled these issues head on, Washington's personality and desire to approach issues in a calculated, mild manner led him to not having an active role like Du Bois. However, this does not make Washington's attempts any less valuable than Du Bois organization building. His approach to raising awareness about segregation and oppressive institutions worked for the realm in which he existed in.

Washington's ideas also had an active role in shaping black economics. As conveyed in his ideas on education and politics, Washington strongly believed that advancement comes from capitalizing on one's individual skill and abilities. Washington famously quoted in his Atlanta Exposition speech to "cast down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service and in the professions" that he assumed African Americans were well versed in.⁹¹ Washington, unlike Du Bois, saw there being more value in rooting one's self in their already known skills and talents and growing up from that one position rather than branching out and going into fields such as academia. Washington continues with this idea and stated:

In the United States there is no hope for us, except in an increasing degree we teach our young people to apply their education to develop the natural resources and to promote human activities in the communities where we live. Mere abstract, unused education means little for a race or individual...If someone else endures the hardships, does the thinking, and pays the salaries, someone else will reap the harvest and enjoy the reward.⁹²

Washington believed that receiving concrete education and reinvesting into community is more valuable than being educated in 'abstract concepts'. An idea central to Washington's political thought is increasing one's individual capital through industrial education. A sizeable population

⁹¹ Booker T. Washington "Atlanta Exposition Address" (1895)

⁹² Booker T. Washington "Speech to the National Negro Business League" (1915)

of southern blacks, similar to Washington, had to decide whether or not they would achieve their own form of citizenship through formal or industrial education.

Washington in most of his political thought proposed that in order to achieve economic mobility and success, you have to invest in your own, individual strengths and then use those talents to reinvest into one's community. This was especially important to the socioeconomic milieu of the Civil Rights Movement. The goal of integration was shared by both Du Bois, Washington and Randolph. However, there was a question of what would it take to make integration happen and what would happen afterwards. Convincing northern, white liberals that integration was necessary for black advancement would not have taken as much as it would for southern whites. To be clear, southern whites were opposed to integration because of their own racist beliefs and for some, being educated and presenting a well thought out argument would not have swayed them. However, Washington's idea of emphasizing on one's individual human capital and what they could contribute was a starting point for black citizens who wanted integration within the workplace and more general society to happen. Washington's concept of emphasizing on individual human capital enabled him and other African Americans of that time to seek alternative routes of acquiring wealth and achieving citizenship through hard work.

Concluding Thoughts on Washington

Booker T. Washington leaves behind an extensive legacy that includes achievements such as being a respected educator and orator. One of the more notable details about Washington is the influence his own narrative had on his political thought. Being a former slave, working his way through Hampton Institute and going on to transform a failing school into a premier African American institution was all influenced by his belief in hard work and having a strong moral

basis. In regards to education, Washington's advocacy for adequate, accessible and public education starting at childhood seemed to have been the solution to many of the problems African Americans endured during the height of Jim Crow segregation. By receiving a comprehensive vocational education, African Americans freed themselves from limiting and exploitative labor and had the ability to be self-dependent. However, as the issues of segregation began to weigh down even more on African Americans, Washington realized that these socioeconomic and political issues required a more complex approach. Although he never fully articulated what this approach would entail, in order to have African Americans free themselves from the exploitative labor force, it would require some of what Du Bois argued and some of his own ideas. Du Bois in many situations compared to Washington had the upper hand in regards to having extra insight into the injustice and oppressive institutions because he had the opportunity to study and investigate the finer mechanics of these institutions. However, Washington was only aware of how to make the best of a terrible situation and found ways in which he could properly navigate oppressive institutions while still advancing his own agenda. Having a combination of the additional insight and the will to navigate the 'system' without any issues could have been a preliminary solution to the socioeconomic and political issues Washington encountered.

Washington furthered conversations concerning African Americans access to socioeconomic and political mobility because his comments placed the issues within the reach and influence of White citizens. Having a fundamental understanding of the way in which systems of power operates aided Washington in his endeavors and allowed for him to be more palatable to White Americans as opposed to his counterpart Du Bois. To clarify, Du Bois found success in this technique of collective responsibility as well. However, Washington's persuasive tone did not come off as aggressive as Du Bois'. As for African Americans, Washington's

thoughts and work required them to look outside of the scope of segregation and encouraged them to forge these important relationships with White American

Chapter Five:

Propelling the Movement Forward: Du Bois, Randolph and Washington's Impact on the Civil Rights Movement

Introduction

Du Bois, Randolph and Washington's impact reverberated through their lifetimes and more importantly, the Civil Rights Movement. All three of their thoughts on education, political and economic opportunities influenced the guiding principles and goals of the movement. To revisit chapter one, I propose that the guiding principles of the Civil Rights Movement are freedom, tradition and resistance. In this section, I will analyze each of the political thinkers' influence on the intellectual milieu that influenced principles such as freedom, tradition and resistance within the movement through the scope of education, politics and economic opportunity.

Du Bois on Freedom

Du Bois on Freedom: Education and "Freedom from"

Du Bois' conception of freedom could be divided into two different categories: freedom from oppressive institutions and freedom to create alternative avenues of citizenship. Du Bois believed strong, educated leaders were the solution to attaining freedom from oppressive institutions. Du Bois wrote:

...there must surely be among Negro leaders the philanthropic impulse, the uprightness of character and strength of purpose, but there must be more than these...knowledge of the forces of civilization that make survival, ability to organize and guide those forces, and realization of the true meaning of those broader ideals of human betterment...⁹³

⁹³ W.E.B Du Bois "The Training of Negroes for Social Power" *Outlook Magazine* (1903)

Besides having strong guiding principles, Du Bois also saw the necessity of having even stronger leaders in regards to building a movement. For Du Bois, strong leaders have a solid moral foundation, purpose, and even more importantly: are educated and aware of the intricacies of oppressive institutions. Du Bois continued in the same article “this is social power—it is gotten in many ways by experience, by social contact, by what we loosely call the chances of life. But the systematic method of acquiring and imparting it is by the training of youth to thought, power, and knowledge in the school and college.”⁹⁴ Du Bois here makes an even more important point relevant to his mainstream political thought. Educating and mobilizing the youth was an important asset to the Civil Rights Movement. While their elders had the patience to utilize more thoughtful, non-confrontational forms of protest, school trained youth were emboldened to take more confrontational, grassroots steps towards advancing the movement. Occupying segregated public spaces allowed for students to have an active role within the movement and cultivate their own leadership skills.

Moments such as the Greensboro, North Carolina incident in 1960 demonstrated the power of youth participation. “Four black college students... [sat] at the lunch counter, ask for service, but are refused. They read their books, and after an hour the store closes. That night their campus is alive with word of the sit-in, and twenty more students are recruited to return with them the next day.”⁹⁵ The events that unfolded in Greensboro are often referred to as “the real turning point” of the Civil Rights Movement considering the events in “Montgomery was a reaction; Greensboro was an act...The students knew what they were about: they did not stumble

⁹⁴ W.E.B Du Bois “The Training of Negroes for Social Power” *Outlook Magazine* (1903)

⁹⁵ Rhoda Lois Blumberg “Sit-Ins and Freedom Rides” *Civil Rights: The 1960s Freedom Struggle* (Twayne Publishers, 1984): 66

about it.”⁹⁶ Du Bois’ thoughts on education are reflected through the actions of these North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College students. The four students that initiated the sit-in at the Woolworth were aware of the sociopolitical and economic forces that stood in opposition to their cause. However, this did not deter their ambition and desire for integrated public spaces. Sit-ins, initiated by students like the college students in Greensboro, North Carolina served as a key source of grassroots leadership that was essential to the movement. Their actions “created a region-wide ‘movement’ from what had been scattered and sporadic protests...they managed to commit this movement to the use of direct highly provocative tactics in its struggle for freedom and equality.”⁹⁷ Sit-ins are also phenomenal because of their widespread impact and ability to capture the public’s attention in a non-violent way while also making a bold assertion of one’s citizenship.

Du Bois argued that “Education is that whole system of human training within and without the school house walls, which molds and develops men.”⁹⁸ Sit-ins served as a primary application and component of a college student’s education. Du Bois, being a strong proponent of cultural and traditional education has argued for the importance of students attending college. However, his point here can largely be tied to the actions of college student sit-ins. During these sit-ins, college students had the opportunity to learn more about their own personal dedication and resilience while also learning more about the dark and ugly intricacies of institutional racism. Du Bois’ opinion on education largely influenced young, black students achieving freedom from oppressive institutions. By being acutely aware of segregation and actively working in opposition of segregated spaces, students were able to achieve freedom from these

⁹⁶ Rhoda Lois Blumberg “Sit-Ins and Freedom Rides” *Civil Rights: The 1960s Freedom Struggle* (Twayne Publishers, 1984): 66

⁹⁷ Ibid, 67

⁹⁸ W.E.B Du Bois “The Talented Tenth” *The Negro Problem* (1903)

oppressive institutions. They sat at segregated public counters, they endured the taunting and physical assault often associated with such bold action, and through that, they were able to free themselves of all inhibitions and standards that previously told them that their actions were prohibited. Du Bois' conception of education contributed to the larger intellectual milieu that influenced students to be bold and free from institutions that previously shaped their own conception of citizenship.

Du Bois on Freedom: Education and "Freedom to"

In addition to having freedom from oppressive institutions, Du Bois' educational thought also encouraged students to have the freedom to create their own reality and narrative. Du Bois discussed creating and reconstructing the black narrative. He argued:

freedom, too, the long-sought, we still seek,--the freedom of life and limb, the freedom to work and think. Work, culture and liberty,--all these we need, not singly, but together; for to-day these ideals among the Negro people are gradually coalescing, and finding a higher meaning in the unifying of a race,--the ideal of fostering the traits and talents of the Negro, not in opposition to, but in conformity with, the greater ideals of the American republic, in order that someday, on American soil, two world races may give each to each those characteristics the world so sadly lack."⁹⁹

Du Bois recognized the importance of unity and eventually working towards having a culture and people that are united and can symbiotically benefit from each other. However, he also understood and prioritized the need for African Americans to unite within their own communities in order to redefine African American history and narratives. His thought on having the freedom to do so was influenced by his opinion on education. Education provided these freedoms and allowed for unification of races to occur. More relevantly, the creation of the Civil

⁹⁹ W.E.B Du Bois "Strivings of the Negro People" *Atlantic Monthly: A Magazine of Literature, Science, Art and Politics* 80 (1897)

Rights Movement exemplifies Du Bois' desire to rewrite the African American narrative in the interest of black communities.

The Black Power Movement, originally led by Stokely Carmichael (later known as Kwame Touré), sought to address what they thought were the shortcomings of their elder leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr. who wanted to achieve citizenship through non-violent actions. Black Power provided African Americans with the opportunity to “assert the validity of their own Afro-American culture and their right to create and develop their own institutions.”¹⁰⁰ The Black Power Movement was influenced by Du Bois because of his belief in “strengthening the black community” which influenced other youth and stakeholders to want to reinvest in their own communities.¹⁰¹ The movement also encouraged African Americans to engage in their own freedom to deviate from the traditional notions of protest and activism. The Black Power Movement operated off of the principle of self-defense or “every person’s right to protect himself or herself against attack... [the movement] did not call for unprovoked aggression against whites.”¹⁰² The self-defense tenet was unprecedented at that time considering their main form of protest included non-violent measures. Encouraging self-defense allowed for them to have more autonomy over their physical selves and citizenship.

Additionally, the Black Power Movement engaged in a “conscious furtherance of pride in self and community...”¹⁰³ Outside of encouraging black activists and citizens to have autonomy over their physical selves, the movement also encouraged communities to invest in teaching and understanding black history. Along with understanding black history, black individuals will also gain a sense of pride in their own history. This was crucial to the Black Power Movement

¹⁰⁰ Rhoda Lois Blumberg “The Transition to Black Power” *Civil Rights: The 1960s Freedom Struggle* (Twayne Publishers, 1984): 119

¹⁰¹ Rhoda Lois Blumberg “The Transition to Black Power” *Civil Rights: The 1960s Freedom Struggle* (Twayne Publishers, 1984): 120

¹⁰² Ibid, 121

¹⁰³ Ibid, 128

because leaders and members of this movement noticed how American history contributed to the white-washing of black history and subsequent lack of pride in one's culture and history. However, the movement "demanding curricula more relevant to African Americans..." and engaging in the "black is beautiful" theme motivated this transition from being free from oppressive institutions to having the freedom to construct one's own reality where they have citizenship. Investing in black education and teaching black history is directly related to Du Bois' educational thought and his desire to see more black teachers within public schools. Du Bois influenced the Black Power Movement because he taught African Americans that being unabashedly proud of one's own culture and history is the key to freeing oneself from oppressive institutions and giving oneself the freedom to cultivate their own reality.

Du Bois' educational thought largely influenced African American's conception of their ability to free themselves from oppressive institutions and their freedom to create their own reality outside of the mainstream. Du Bois' political thought helped to establish the intellectual and political milieu that allowed for African Americans to take direct action in the form of sit ins and forming alternative movements such as Black Power. Sit-ins and the Black Power Movement symbolize Du Bois' insistence on prioritizing black education. College students served as the primary motivators behind using sit-ins as a resistance tactic and the creation of the Black Power Movement. Their knowledge on how systems functioned and oppressed the black community transformed African American citizenship into a need rather than a want. Du Bois' educational thought made individuals realize the importance of being educated and then using that education to confront oppressive institutions.

Randolph on Resistance

Introduction

The entirety of Randolph's life was dedicated to working and empowering marginalized groups. His involvement with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and work alongside early Civil Rights leaders demonstrated his commitment to African Americans achieving citizenship and ultimately influenced black resistance within the movement. His lifelong approach to grassroots outreach and activism inspired others to go within their own communities and mobilize citizens.

Randolph, Class Politics and Grassroots Activism

Randolph's belief in socialism transformed his thoughts on activism and mobilization. Randolph regularly argued the benefits of socialism and how it seeks to empower the common man. In a piece on lynching, he stated "Socialism would arm every man and woman with the ballot. Education would be compulsory and universal...And every worker would receive the full product of his toil...black and white workers unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains, you have the world to gain."¹⁰⁴ Similar to his counterpart Du Bois, Randolph largely believed in the principle of unity. He saw value in black and white workers unifying in order to address and correct the wrongs of capitalism.

His principle of unity and rallying the 'common man' was also conveyed in another article published in *The Messenger*. Socialism, for Randolph, represented an ideology that not only kept working individuals' opinions in mind, but also based its founding principles on the needs and wants of the working individual. He felt that socialism not only had the ability to adequately represent African Americans and help them in their mission of rejecting racism, but

¹⁰⁴ A. Philip Randolph "Lynching: Capitalism Its Cause; Socialism Its Cure" *The Messenger* (The Messenger, 1919)

also had the ability to unify all individuals under one, productive purpose. His belief in socialism established an alternative political milieu during the Civil Rights Movement considering towards the end of the movement, African Americans began to shift their focal point from race to intersectional politics which included conversations on class and race.¹⁰⁵

Grassroots Activism

In addition to his labor union work, the March on Washington Movement was Randolph's legacy. The "March on Washington Movement (MOWM), threatened a mass protest demonstration of 100,000 black people in Washington on the first of July 1941...the aims of which were to secure the admission of blacks into defense industries on a nondiscriminatory basis and to end segregation in the armed forces."¹⁰⁶ Rallying and organizing individuals under the March on Washington Movement was essential to the success of the Civil Rights Movement because it initiated the desire to want to collectively organize and fight for citizenship. Although Randolph's original purpose in forming the group was to advance his own thoughts on equitable work conditions and ending segregation within public institutions, the MOWM added up to so much more. The MOWM encouraged "mass participation and recognized the importance of black consciousness in the development of racial protest movement."¹⁰⁷ Mass participation within the Civil Rights Movement was essential to its success because having a small minority of people advocate for citizenship is not as profound as having an entire portion of the American demographic demand better socioeconomic and political conditions for African Americans.

¹⁰⁵ As earlier mentioned, socialism did **not** appear as a viable political alternative during the Civil Rights Movement. However, it is mentioned and discussed because of the impact it had on Randolph's political thought and bringing the element of class into conversations of race.

¹⁰⁶ Rhoda Lois Blumberg "From Accommodation to Protest" *Civil Rights: The 1960s Freedom Struggle* (Twayne Publishers, 1984): 32

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 33

In addition to mass participation and grassroots activism, Randolph's political ideology and belief in socialism set the stage for the forms of resistance that were employed during the Civil Rights Movement. His founding of the MOWM inspired the historic 'March on Washington' which took place on August 28, 1963. About a quarter of a million people participated in the march.¹⁰⁸ "A main objective was to demonstrate to Congress that public opinion was on the side of desegregation and voting rights and that a considerable number of whites strongly supported these goals..."¹⁰⁹ Randolph's early work with the MOWM and his influencing of the historic March on Washington demonstrated African Americans engaging in active forms of resistance. As Du Bois supported all forms of agitation and actively influenced youth involvement which resulted in sit-ins being used as a viable resistance tactic, Randolph influenced everyone collectively unifying and mobilizing.

Resistance and the March on Washington was a pivotal moment of the Civil Rights Movement because it conveyed to the national government that citizenship was worth risking everything for. The majority of participants in the march happened to be common, working individuals who did not have the language to articulate their want for citizenship, but certainly had the ambition and drive to make it happen. Collectively organizing and resisting oppressive institutions allowed for them to become active, political agents. Additionally, it encouraged others who were not yet motivated to join the mobilization of the Civil Rights Movement to do so because they would not be alone in their effort. Randolph's politics and his want for African Americans to embrace socialism led to his influencing the movement because he encouraged common, working individuals to have a stake in a collective reclaiming of citizenship that would not have been otherwise available.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 108

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 108

Class Politics

In addition to emphasizing the need for grassroots activism, Randolph contributed to the intellectual milieu of the Civil Rights Movement because he added class into conversations regarding race. As an outspoken socialist, Randolph believed “the Socialist party is supported financially by working men and working women and since its platform is a demand for the abolition of this class struggle between the employer and the worker...”¹¹⁰ Socialism, according to Randolph, was the only political ideology that kept the interests of working class women and men in mind. And as political agents, Randolph believed black voters and citizens should be more invested in a political ideology that sets them up to succeed rather than fail. Just as grassroots activism had been an important portion of the Civil Rights Movement, embracing alternative political ideologies also became popular.

Two years before his assassination in 1966, Martin Luther King Jr. along with A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin published a document titled “A Freedom Budget for All Americans”. The Freedom Budget was described as “essential if the Negro people are to make further progress...a political necessity...a moral commitment to the fundamental principles on which this nation was founded.”¹¹¹ Within the Freedom Budget, King, Randolph and Rustin all made strong claims against America’s capitalist tradition and stated that “the tragedy is that the workings of our economy so often pit the white poor and the black poor against each other at the bottom of society...and the tragedy is that not only the poor, the nearly poor, and the once poor, but all Americans are the victims of our failure as a nation to distribute democratically the fruits of our abundance.”¹¹² In regards to distribution of wealth, one claim that socialists such as

¹¹⁰ A. Philip Randolph “The Negro in Politics” (The Messenger, 1918)

¹¹¹ Martin Luther King Jr., A Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin “A Freedom Budget for All” (A. Philip Randolph Institute, 1966)

¹¹² King, Randolph and Rustin “A Freedom Budget for All” (A. Philip Randolph Institute, 1966): 2

Randolph claim to make is that the distribution of wealth in a capitalist society is unequal and benefits the rich rather than the poor. In his earlier political thought, Randolph spoke at length about the inequities he sees within capitalism and how African Americans cannot truly free themselves from racism and oppression until they free themselves from capitalism. Drafting a document such as the Freedom Budget demonstrates how the Civil Rights Movement at its height began to switch direction and discuss the intersecting points that exist between race and class.

The Freedom Budget proposed seven basic objectives to be achieved in 10 years. The budget proposed “full employment, decent and adequate wages, decent living standard, wipe out slum ghettos, decent medical care and adequate educational opportunities, purify our air and water, and full production and high economic growth.”¹¹³ The objectives provided by the budget symbolize the shift in priorities for the Civil Rights Movement. While the goal of gaining full citizenship and advancement was still on the table, leaders such as King and Rustin were influenced by the ideas of Randolph and began to broaden their scope and demands. To Randolph, before the Civil Rights Movement gained prominence in the late 50s, his work with the Pullman Porters demonstrates that Randolph has always been concerned with the notion of class and the quality of life associated with one’s class. Objectives such as “full employment and decent and adequate wages” are reminiscent of Randolph’s earlier political thought. Randolph influenced the intellectual milieu of the Civil Rights Movement by proposing alternative forms to capitalism and calling all African Americans attention to demanding more than just citizenship. Randolph’s political thought made the politics of the Civil Rights Movement more intersectional in its approach to race relations.

¹¹³ Ibid, 7

In conclusion, Randolph's socialist ideals and encouraging of collective action led to great feats such as the March on Washington. The March on Washington served as a pivotal moment within the Civil Rights Movement and additionally served as a motivating factor for many indecisive and uninspired black constituents. His belief in collective action contributed to the principle of resistance because he encouraged African Americans to seek alternative ways of reclaiming their citizenship. Additionally, Randolph's political thought changed the intellectual backdrop for the Civil Rights Movement. As opposed to being a movement solely focused on race politics, Randolph added the element of class into conversations. Including class was essential to the Civil Rights Movement because it broadened the conversations to include more African Americans and led to the movement shifting their focus from race to the intersectional points between race and class.

Washington Economic Belief Shaping Tradition

Introduction

Washington, besides being well known for his involvement in founding Tuskegee and building up what we know as industrial education within the African American community also largely influenced conceptions on black economics. His conception of black economics included reinvesting into one's community and capitalizing on individual skill in order to accumulate success and wealth. His political thought is often viewed in contrast to that of Du Bois and Randolph because of its conservative nature. However, Washington's thoughts on economics largely influenced traditions prevalent within the Civil Rights Movement.

Washington Influencing Tradition

Washington, as reflected in famous addresses such as the Atlanta Exposition Address, believed in utilizing one's innate talents to garner wealth and success. Washington argued:

let the Negro begin right where he is, by putting the greatest amount of intelligence, of skill and dignity into occupations by which he is surrounded. Let him learn to do common things in an uncommon manner...This black carpenter should strive in every way possible to keep himself abreast of the best wood work done in the world...When this carpenter's son is educated in college or elsewhere, he should see that his son studies mechanical and architectural drawing...In a word, he should see that his son knows so much about wood it should be.¹¹⁴

Washington makes several important points in the excerpt: having a sense of pride and dignity in one's work, learning to excel in every category, and passing on the legacy of hard work and dedication to the next generation. Washington's ideas on 'sticking to what you know' may have been viewed as regressive, however in regards to the Civil Rights Movement, it carried great value.

Washington influenced the backdrop for black economic tradition because he encouraged black workers to focus on their own individual strengths in order to achieve mobility. Some working African Americans during the movement found this to be effective. By focusing on their trade, many African Americans saw improvements within their conditions both inside and outside of the workplace. As one black woman puts it in an anecdote provided by Jack M. Bloom in *Class, Race and the Civil Rights Movement*, she was sick and in need of medical attention, but because of her race, was denied access to the hospital. When her white employer accompanied her to the hospital and advocated for her, she was able to gain entrance and was able to receive the proper medical treatment.¹¹⁵ Although Bloom does not go into why her boss decided to

¹¹⁴ Booker T. Washington "The Negro and the Signs of Civilization" *Tuskegee Student* (1901)

¹¹⁵ Jack M. Bloom "The Emergence of the New Negro in the South" *Class, Race and the Civil Rights Movement* (Indiana University Press, 1987): 124

advocate for her to receive medical treatment, one can only assume it was because of her being a valuable worker that he decided to help her.

Washington, in his political thought, often spoke of cultivating one's skill in order to reinvest into their communities and build up their own individual wealth. Within the context of the Civil Rights Movement where black workers were both in the workforce and actively involved in protests and mobilizing, those who were unable to participate directly in the movement had to find other ways of engaging with the movement's principles while also finding ways to survive. At times, this meant "adjusting" one's behavior and taking on this trait of accommodation. Investing into one's own individual human capital became a means of survival during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. Scholarly analyses of the movement will often include the grassroots activism of Randolph and the youth involvement of Du Bois, but seldom would they include the narrative of every day working class African Americans that could not be a part of the mobilization that happened during the movement.

To be clear, Randolph's work with the March on Washington included a demographic of working class people that would not have been otherwise included in conversations had it not been for Randolph's political thought providing the impetus to start conversations regarding class. More importantly, Randolph's political thought and rallying appealed to the black, northern working class. Within the scope of Randolph's political thought black, southern workers who did not have as much flexibility in the workplace could not travel to places such as Washington. Instead, black southern workers had to focus on cultivating their own means of survival and that meant marketing themselves to employers as trustworthy in order to gain small 'luxuries'.

Washington in this instance directly influences the intellectual milieu of the movement because he appeals to an important demographic of African Americans that are at times omitted from conversations regarding the Civil Rights Movement: poor and working class southern workers. For the southern domestic worker or sharecropper, the idea of spending time and money to travel to Washington to march seemed unfeasible. However, the idea of cultivating one's craft and capitalizing on their own individual worth as a worker was the avenue in which they could make their mark. Washington's political thought may be seen as 'out of context' for the Civil Rights Movement considering it directly counters the progressivity of the movement. However, it is our own bias that causes for us to not recognize that Washington's political ideas speaks directly to poor black, southern workers, a demographic that he closely related to.¹¹⁶ Poor, black southern workers found truth in what Washington argued only because of their belief in an aforementioned idea. The American Dream, although exclusive, convinced southern, black workers that working hard enough would lead to them being successful. Thinkers such as Washington, heavily bought into the idea of focusing on the individual and emphasizing on one's human capital in order to be successful. Although his political thought did not directly address this forgotten demographic of black, southern workers, they still believed in what Washington said because they believed in this hope that their working hard would pay off in the end.

However, it is appropriate to be critical of Washington's approach. Although one can argue that Washington definitely impacted the way in which African Americans viewed their own individual capital as workers, his approach could also be seen as regressive. Having access to medical treatment for the woman mentioned in the anecdote should not be a luxury afforded to

¹¹⁶ Washington's appeal to the poor, black southern worker is debatable. Washington through his text more-so catered to the black working middle class, many of which were business owners. Within much of his political thought, Washington clearly advocates for more black owned businesses and the black community being more invested into being business owners than workers.

her by her employer. Having to accommodate white oppressive institutions should not be a means of attaining citizenship and advancement. Yet, the reality of the Civil Rights Movement is that not everyone had the opportunity to rally with leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and for those who did not, finding small ways to achieve socioeconomic mobility was their own personal way of engaging with the principles and goals of the movement.

Washington similar to Du Bois and Randolph also engages in an important part of African American history and tradition that is often erased. Being a former slave and lifelong southern resident, Washington was well aware of the conditions of slavery and sharecropping that appeared in Reconstructive America. However, as movements during the earlier parts of the 1900s began to appear, there was an erasure of our history that included slavery because of the insistence to build off of that dark history. Thinkers such as Du Bois labeled Washington as an accommodationist and regressive while Randolph felt as if Washington was not radical enough. However, Washington's keeping to tradition influenced the Civil Rights Movement because it kept individuals grounded in what they were originally fighting for. As this project proves, theorists such as Du Bois and Randolph were actively involved in rewriting the narratives of African Americans and making it include stories that were not just of slavery but of other successes. However, to gloss over the history of slavery and not count it as a pivotal moment within the long struggle of gaining citizenship undermines the fight for citizenship during the Civil Rights Movement. Washington's insistence on sticking to what was familiar and building off from there kept black communities grounded in the reality of their situation but also aware of their own history. Washington's influence over tradition allowed for participants to be reflective of their motivation behind joining the Civil Right Movement but also reflective of what new traditions could be established.

Du Bois, Randolph and Washington all had an integral role in establishing the milieu that would go on to influence the guiding principles and events of the Civil Rights Movement. Principles such as freedom, tradition and resistance were all essential to the success and growth of the movement. Additionally, conversations regarding class and individual human capital diversified the movement. Acknowledging the contributions of these political thinkers is important to understanding the history, struggles and successes of the movement. It shows that the movement was not solely conceived out of the work of activists and communities members over the span of a decade. The Civil Rights Movement had been a work in progress since resistance during slavery, to struggling to survive in post-Emancipatory America and living with Jim Crow all the way to the Harlem Renaissance and redefining the African American narrative. Having a connection to these past political thinkers allows for us contemporarily to be reflective of how far we have come and how long the struggle for citizenship truly takes. And as evidenced by the work of Du Bois, Randolph and Washington along with the countless other Civil Rights giants such as Ella Baker, Martin Luther King Jr. and Stokely Carmichael, the act of reclaiming citizenship cannot happen immediately

Conclusion:

A New Civil Rights Movement?

On February 26, 2012, 17 year old Trayvon Martin of Sanford, Florida was murdered by 28 year old, George Zimmerman. What began as an isolated event in Florida amassed into a larger, nationwide conversation on gun violence and justice for an unarmed, African American teenager. However, what is most shocking are the parallels drawn between the Trayvon Martin incident and that of Emmett Till, a 14 year old African American teenager murdered in 1955. Both were unarmed, young black males that were “caught in the wrong place at the wrong time” and did not receive any justice. Zimmerman’s acquittal in 2013 launched the Black Lives Matter Movement into the national spotlight, similarly to how the not guilty verdict in the Till murder case launched the Civil Rights Movement. The Martin case does not stand alone considering recently, the deaths of Eric Garner, Mike Brown, and Freddie Gray all conclude in the same question: is this now the time for a new Civil Rights Movement?

As this project sought to prove, the ‘modern’ Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s was motivated by the desire for citizenship. Citizenship referred to access to socioeconomic mobility and political agency. Jim Crow once inhibited African Americans from fully engaging in their citizenship. Yet, the Civil Rights Movement served as an outright form of protest against this institution and as their first, most visible sign of African Americans engaging with their own citizenship. Leaders and participants of the movement were not alone in their mobilizing; the goals and language of the movement were already established and articulated by political theorists such as Du Bois, Randolph and Washington. Although their ideas existed decades ago, the question of whether or not Du Bois, Randolph and Washington’s political thought can offer clarity is a question worth asking.

Du Bois' and Black Lives Matter

The Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM) is known for its online presence and presence within cities across the country. Those who identify as members and supporters of the BLM organization and movement have hosted rallies, protests and other forms of public agitation in order to advance their beliefs. Du Bois wrote and spoke about the importance of agitation and stated “we do not hesitate to complain, and to complain loudly and insistently. To ignore, overlook, or apologize for these wrongs is to prove ourselves unworthy of freedom. Persistent agitation is the way to liberty...”¹¹⁷ Du Bois' prior political thought on agitation and organizations proves that he would be strongly in favor of Black Lives Matter. Du Bois' entire premise revolved around African Americans being free of oppressive institutions, through the means of educating oneself, and the BLM movement and organization does just that. Through their agitation and public rallies and protest across the country, they are educating others on the importance of protecting and valuing black lives and allyship. Du Bois, being a co-founder of an organization that had interracial leadership would agree with their being a strong ally presence within the BLM movement.

However, it is important to keep some of his concerns in mind as well. Du Bois' political approach was intersectional considering he concerned himself with the educational, political and economic opportunities available to African Americans. From what is publicized and capitalized on in regards to the BLM movement, their sole premise is based on advocating for those who are victims of police violence, gun violence, etc. Du Bois would more than likely suggest that BLM broaden their scope and capitalize more on the intersectional aspects of black identity, which would include the lack of educational opportunities available and the continual growth of ghettos happening within urban centers.

¹¹⁷ W.E.B Du Bois “Declaration of Principles” *Niagara Movement Pamphlet* (Niagara Movement, 1905)

Randolph and Black Lives Matter

Known more so for his activating and mobilizing black workers, Randolph is one of the political thinkers that I believe would unequivocally support Black Lives Matter. Black Lives Matter was founded by three women of color: Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi.¹¹⁸ In comparison to the Civil Rights Movement, the prominent leaders who are credited for leading the movement and advancing grassroots work are all older, black males from the south. Strong, women leaders such as Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer are often erased from our collective memory of the movement and it is only after further research we come across these names. Garza, Cullors and Tometi have undeniably set a precedent for young women of color to step into major leadership roles and this is something Randolph spoke of frequently. Randolph, in his piece *The Negro in Politics* stated “will the entrance of Negro women into politics change the general tenor of things? My answer is no. The histories of women in public affairs, black and white, warrant me in taking this position. Their traditions, education and environment are similar to those of the men and they may be expected to follow the same course of political thinking...”¹¹⁹ Randolph being a strong advocate of black women in leadership roles without a doubt serves as a positive indicator of his support for the Black Lives Matter Movement.

Additionally, BLM grassroots approach would be favored by Randolph. Randolph in his years supporting the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters shows that he was interested in calling in a different demographic to national conversation regarding race and opportunity. Working class men were hardly relied on when it came to issues regarding race and politics because it was assumed that their level of knowledge regarding the topic would be minimal. However, Randolph organizing black porters and encouraging them to look into other political systems

¹¹⁸ “Herstory”, BlackLivesMatter.com

¹¹⁹ A. Philip Randolph “The Growth of the Movement for Negro Elective Representation” *The Negro in Politics* (The Messenger, 1918)

such as socialism shows that he was interested in bringing as many diverse voices and opinions as possible. BLM does the exact same thing by having chapters in different cities, mostly college towns, where a new demographic of students from across the country and internationally, get to engage with the politics of BLM.

Washington and Black Lives Matter

Washington, because of his prioritizing of economic success over matters such as racial equality and justice would be weary and hesitant about Black Lives Matter. Washington was often criticized for being an ‘accommodationist’ which in some capacity was the aim of his political thought. However, it is important to acknowledge that Washington was speaking and theorized from his own experiences and worldview. That being said, the world in which we live in with more educational, economic and social opportunities independent of our ‘loyalty’ to white Americans may not have been the world that Washington thought imaginable. Washington in his address to the National Afro-American Council stated:

In this connection we should bear in mind that our ability and our progress will be measured largely by evidences of tangible, visible worth. We have a right in a conservative and sensible manner to enter our complaints, but we shall make a fatal error if we yield to the temptation of believing that mere opposition to our wrongs, and the simple utterance of a complaint, will take the place of progressive, constructive action...¹²⁰

The BLM movement operates off of principles such as “diversity, restorative justice, being unapologetically black*, collective value, etc.”¹²¹ BLM displays these guiding principles throughout outright, visible protest, a technique that Washington would have boldly opposed because of his conservative disposition. As Washington conveyed in his address, he finds making bold declaration of one’s disapproval to be dangerous and risky for a cause. Similar to

¹²⁰ Booker T. Washington “Speech to the National Afro-American Council” (1903)

¹²¹ “Guiding Principles” Black Lives Matter, blacklivesmatter.com/guiding-principles/

his life and his work, Washington operated within the parameters of conservatism and would rather a calculated, subtle response rather than physical mobilization. For that reason, Washington would have reservations regarding the approach of BLM, but would find their guiding principles reasonable.

Concluding Thoughts

The American Dream continues to be an ideology that inspires others with its feasibility and confuses others with elusiveness. In 2016, to ask the question “how far have African Americans come?” would seem pointless. With incredible feats such as the double election of President Barack Obama, many would believe that the journey is over and we have “arrived”. That the fight for citizenship and access to the American Dream is no longer necessary because African Americans now can enjoy the same liberties as their white counterparts. However, with events such as the Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Mike Brown, Freddie Gray and countless other incidents, the thought of African Americans having access to the safety of the American Dream seems unreasonable. While this project initial purpose was to set out and prove that the work of W.E.B Du Bois, A. Philip Randolph and Booker T. Washington all positively impacted the course of the Civil Rights Movement, another question that comes to mind is: are their ideas applicable today? And through asking and answering this question of whether or not their ideas would still be relevant today, one would come to the conclusion that not only is political thought timeless, but the issues that their political thought addresses also are. Du Bois, Randolph and Washington all preoccupied themselves with the status of African Americans in regards to educational, political and economic opportunities and these are all still relevant topics that adversely affect the African American community.

With organizations like Black Lives Matter, it is very possible to conclude that we are currently in the midst of the rising of a second Civil Rights Movement, one that does not deviate from the ‘modern’ Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s, but builds on where it left off at. While the movement trailed off around the early 70s, African Americans seemed to be satisfied with their success. More than ever before, we saw African Americans engaging with the arts, politics, economics and academia. We saw a rise in black owned businesses and entrepreneurs. However, it is important to acknowledge that those who lived in the ghettos of Watts, California, Newark, New Jersey and Cleveland, Ohio still felt angered and disillusioned by the movement and its successes because they could not identify it within their own communities. While Du Bois, Randolph, and Washington’s political thought spoke to a time that reflected their experiences and worldview, it is still possible that their thoughts can provide clarity for us. For those of us within large cities, who now struggle with believing and achieving the American Dream like so many of our counterparts have, the implications of their words, actions and thoughts can serve as a model for what is yet to come.

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