

THE N.A.A.C.P. and the STRUGGLE for ANTILYNCHING LEGISLATION, 1897-1917

Author(s): William F. Pinar

Source: *Counterpoints*, Vol. 163, The Gender of Racial Politics and Violence in America: LYNCHING, PRISON RAPE, & THE CRISIS OF MASCULINITY (2001), pp. 623-682

Published by: Peter Lang AG

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42977760>

Accessed: 22-12-2015 12:10 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Peter Lang AG is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Counterpoints*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

10 ♫ THE N.A.A.C.P. *and the STRUGGLE for ANTILYNCHING LEGISLATION, 1897–1917*

I. Du Bois, Washington, and the Niagara Movement

The most persistent, systematic, and organized attack upon lynching has been waged by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

—Walter White, *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (1929)

This movement [the N.A.A.C.P.], which has lasted longer than almost any other movement of its kind in our country, has fallen far short of the expectation of its founders.

—Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (1970)

The conceptual structure of Du Bois's genealogy of race and nation has, at its center, the dilemma of the formation of black manhood.

—Hazel Carby, *Race Men* (1998)

In 1897, W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) first expressed the revolutionary idea that the black experience in America was not only different from that of the white, but that it was inevitably and beautifully different. Du Bois suggested that every people was blessed by God with a distinct genius. Throughout their history each people struggled, often in confusion and at times even in opposition to themselves, to realize their unique essence. Different peoples achieved self-realization to greater or lesser extents at different moments in human history. African Americans, so recently freed, were, Du Bois suggested, at a child's stage, only then awakening to self-understanding and realization. There had been pain and suffering, but in time “the true nature of black soul” would be more and more revealed (Williamson 1984).

Even in 1897, Du Bois declared, while still a "child," it was clear that African Americans were an especially spiritual people, living in the midst of increasingly materialistic European Americans. Blacks were also an artistic people, especially sensitive to music, to colors, and to language. In time, by virtue of their own striving, the genius of black people would become unmistakable, and they would then find themselves in close harmony with God, and, presumably, with nature. The path of progress, therefore, the way to harmony and perfection, lay in the pursuit of blackness not whiteness, in black people seeking communion with black people, not with white. Self-realization would not be achieved one person at a time, but altogether, as a community, or not at all. Consequently, a certain black exclusiveness, a certain voluntary separation from whites, a certain confederation in all-black endeavors: these were key to black self-realization (Williamson 1984).

While Du Bois's racial politics differed fundamentally from Booker T. Washington's (1856–1915), the difference was not at first obvious. The two men agreed that black people must come together as a collective. Washington's agenda emphasized race pride, solidarity and self-help. Du Bois was hardly opposed to these. Du Bois shared Washington's commitment to the economic improvement of African Americans. Du Bois regarded industrial education as legitimate, and he applauded the growth of black businesses not dependent on white patronage, but growing thanks to the support of black patrons. Du Bois agreed with Washington that black people must organize themselves if they were to pursue their interests in a hostile white America. Finally, both wanted full political and civil rights for African Americans, although they quickly disagreed as to how these could be achieved. Early on, Du Bois could accept gradualism. During the last years of the nineteenth century, he, along with nearly every other influential black leader in the South, applauded Washington's program and leadership. Washington recognized Du Bois's talents and acknowledged his support. On three occasions he offered the young Atlanta University professor appointments at Tuskegee Institute. On each occasion Du Bois declined the offer, reluctantly (Williamson 1984).

There is a gendered subtext to Du Bois's understanding of racial politics in America, a subtext Hazel Carby makes explicit: "Du Bois described and challenged the hegemony of the national and racial formations in the United States at the dawn of a new century, but he did so in ways that both assumed and privileged a discourse of black masculinity." That is, the "problem" of being black was, for Du Bois, "an issue of both commonality and exceptionalism; it was not just about learning that he was black but also about learning how to *become* a black man" (Carby 1998, 31). Because he conflated "race" with black masculinity, Du Bois failed to incorporate black women into the sphere of intellectual equality and racial leadership. His failure "is not merely the result of the sexism of Du Bois's historical moment," Carby continues, but it is specific to him, resulting from his "complete failure to imagine black women as intellectuals and race leaders" (1998, quoted passages on 10).

The break between Washington and Du Bois had nothing to do with gender politics. It was a function, Joel Williamson (1984) suggests, of the shift in the racial and political environment in which they lived and worked. In effect,

those white people with whom Washington had negotiated a racial pact in 1895 were, by 1900, rapidly losing power to white people who had very different ideas about the proper state and structure of race relations. In the black belts of the South, whites who had accepted accommodation were being replaced in positions of authority by whites whose racial attitudes rejected any accommodation. These whites were intent on bloody aggression. Whereas conservative whites could tolerate blacks as long as they accepted their subordinate position, the "radical racists" could accept black people only in a position of "supersubordination" (Williamson 1984, 75).

As "radical racists" gained political control, they moved to turn back the clock in American race relations. Washington steadfastly maintained an overt posture of accommodation; perhaps he was psychologically incapable of changing. He would try for what he wanted, but he would take what he could get. Even as his political posture became less appropriate to the changing circumstances, his power with the black community increased. By 1902 his control over black politics in the South was nearly complete. While he used his power to hold white racists at bay, he did so secretly, indirectly, and with only occasional success. Joel Williamson paints the picture vividly: "Under Washington and with accommodation, black resistance began from a kneeling position to face an on-rushing, powerful, and fanatical foe bent upon nothing less than rendering black people prostrate" (1984, 75). The sexualized subtext here is, I trust, clear.

Du Bois was the first black leader to criticize Washington's leadership. According to Du Bois (1901), an increasingly significant group of black intellectuals declined Booker T. Washington's leadership and vision, arguing against a narrow vocationalism and for "self-development and self-realization in all lines of human endeavor which they believe will eventually place the Negro beside other races" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 5). Du Bois extended his critique in *The Souls of Black Folk*, published in April 1903. The book stimulated considerable controversy. In her autobiography Ida B. Wells recalls a discussion of the book at the home of Mrs. Celia Parker Wooley, a Unitarian minister active in racial causes:

Mrs. Wooley had a gathering of the literati at her home near the university to discuss it. Again there were only six colored persons present whom she knew. And we were given the privilege of opening the discussion. Most of it centered around that chapter [chapter 3 is entitled "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others"] which arraigns Mr. Booker T. Washington's methods.

Most of those present, including four of the six colored persons, united in condemning Mr. Du Bois's views. The Barnetts [recall that Wells had married Ferdinand Barnett and sometimes used his name] stood almost alone in approving them and proceeded to show why. We saw, as perhaps never before, that Mr. Washington's views on industrial education had become an obsession with the white people of this country. We thought it was up to us to show them the sophistry of the reasoning that any one system of education could fit the needs of an entire race; that to sneer at and discourage higher education would mean to rob the race of

leaders which it so badly needed; and that all the industrial education in the world could not take the place of manhood. We had a warm session but came away feeling that we had given them an entirely new view of the situation. (Wells 1970, 280–281)

We do not know exactly what was said that night, but from Wells's remembrance the discussion seems to have circulated around education.

Hazel Carby (1998) points to another issue at work in *The Souls of Black Folk* and in Du Bois's critique of Washington specifically. In his conflation of "race" with manhood, Du Bois characterized Washington's racial politics as not only inappropriate but in some way "unmanly." Du Bois accused Washington of being a sycophant, of selling out to commercialism. These positions were blameworthy in practical terms, but they were also, Du Bois argued, evidence of a stunted or deformed manhood: his policies were "bound to sap the manhood of any race" (Du Bois 1903, 88; quoted in Carby 1998, 40). "Because Du Bois makes his narrative of the transition from male adolescence and immaturity to full manhood and maturity so entirely dependent upon being an intellectual," Carby (1998, 38) observes, "Washington's standing as an intellectual and as a race leader is challenged at the same time as his masculinity is undermined."

In 1905 Du Bois organized the so-called Niagara Falls Conference, a meeting which included twenty-nine black leaders, only five of whom were from the South. There, "radical racists" had rendered black people powerless. In the South, any black assertion was met by "galloping violence, rope and faggot, and expatriation." Given this state of affairs, it was clear that any explicit and public struggle for racial equality would have to be made from the North. The Niagara Conference was frank in facing this situation; it asked African Americans to acknowledge the desperation of black people in the South and to meet the white enemy fully "erect and armed." Conferees resolved that black people should protest aggressively against political, civil, and economic inequality, an implicit attack upon Washington's philosophy of accommodationism. In language Washington had to take personally, the conferees denied that "the Negro-American assents to inferiority," or "is submissive under oppression and apologetic before insult." Moreover, for ourselves, "we do not hesitate to complain and to complain loudly and insistently" (quoted in Williamson 1984, 75).

The Niagara Movement convened each year. At its peak, approximately four hundred activists belonged. It sufficiently unnerved Booker T. Washington that he resorted to spying upon the group, denying funds to some of its members, and undermining the movement through the words and actions of his agents. Du Bois and his fellow militants were enraged. Between 1907 and 1910 they sponsored a newspaper in the District of Columbia that attacked "King Booker" and his pretense of absolute authority, charging him with accepting Jim Crow and remaining "dumb as an oyster as to peonage," believing, evidently, "that colored people can better afford to be lynched than the white people can afford to lynch them" (quoted in Williamson 1984, 76). In 1909 the members of the Niagara Movement would come together with northern white racial liberals to form a permanent organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Booker T. Washington would try to

undermine the new organization, but this alliance of black and white leaders would prove both effective and long-lasting (Williamson 1984).

II. The Committee on the Negro

The black man is not a saint, neither can he be reduced to an algebraic formula.

—Anna Julia Cooper quoted in Charles Lemert and Esmé Bhan, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper* (1998)

[T]he [race] problem is becoming a question of mental attitudes toward the Negro rather than of his actual condition.

—James Weldon Johnson, *Along This Way* (1933)

The black male body, hypersexualized and criminalized, has always functioned as a crucial and heavily overdetermined metaphor in an evolving national discourse on the nature of a multiethnic, multiracial American society.

—Sandra Gunning, *Race, Rape, and Lynching: The Red Record of American Literature, 1890-1912* (1996)

During the first decade of the twentieth century most white racial progressives were just becoming aware of the rift between Washington and Du Bois; most whites accepted Washington's more visible, and for many more commonsensical, program of vocational education as the medium for social and economic improvement for African Americans. Among those who took seriously Booker T. Washington and his work, but were becoming increasingly interested in Du Bois's point of view, was the Garrison family of Boston. For generations the Garrisons had been racial progressives. They objected to the reactionary racial politics dominant in the North at this time; they were shocked at and discouraged by what they perceived as the retreat from New England "enlightenment." The daughter of the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, Fanny Garrison Villard was stunned by the "wave of passion and hatred toward the race to whom opportunity has been denied." There were, it seemed to her, no white friends of black folk as there had been during the antislavery struggle. Her brother, the second William Lloyd Garrison, was more cynical and less shocked; he felt sure that there had never been a white majority in support of African Americans in the North, except for a brief period at the moment of Emancipation in 1863. From the struggle for abolition to the present day, Garrison saw no basic shift of feeling in the North regarding African Americans. Like the South, the North intended to keep blacks at the lowest social and economic levels, even if the northern agenda was expressed "more by subtle action, and less by war cries" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 5).

The third generation of the Garrison family continued to fight for the civil rights of African Americans. Grandson of the famous abolitionist, son of Fanny

Garrison Villard, and nephew of William Lloyd Garrison, Jr., Oswald Garrison Villard took great pride in his abolitionist ancestry. His first opportunity to speak in public on behalf of civil rights for African Americans came in 1903, although he had remarked, in an earlier address to a conference on education held at the governor's mansion in Richmond, that changed conditions made it possible for him "to speak where [his] grandfather would so cheerfully and happily been hanged" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 5).

Villard was also opposed to the prevailing policy and mood of American imperialism. When the United States declared war in 1898 he had been "utterly miserable mentally" (Kellogg 1967, 5); he had protested the injustice of what he termed the iniquitous war with Spain. He was appreciative that the *New York Evening Post*, which was eventually to come under his management, had not been swept away by the majority mood. He looked forward to the day when he would take over the paper and make it a worthy successor to his grandfather's *The Liberator*. The *Evening Post* was one of the few newspapers that reported the news concerning African Americans, and sympathetically. In 1926 Mary White Ovington was to write: "Long before there was a N.A.A.C.P., there was a Garrison in New York setting forth in his larger *Liberator* the wrongs of the Negro Race" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 6). Ovington was a social worker who would become associated with Villard during the early years of the N.A.A.C.P. She knew from experience how seldom African Americans were reported fairly in the white press. Even the muckraking *McClure's Magazine* had declined to print an article of hers in which African Americans had been depicted honestly and favorably (Kellogg 1967).

Despite the important role Ovington would play in the N.A.A.C.P., Ida B. Wells was not enthusiastic about her. Wells's main criticism of Ovington appeared to be that she never moved outside the circle of middle-class black men in which she found herself. Wells (1970, 327-328) complained:

It is impossible for her [Ovington] to visualize the situation in its entirety and to have the executive ability to seize any of the given situations which have occurred in a truly big way. She has basked in the sunlight of the adoration of the few college-bred Negroes who have surrounded her, but has made little effort to know the soul of the black woman; and to that extent she has fallen far short of helping a race which has suffered as no white woman has ever been called upon to suffer or to understand.

Another Bostonian would also become important during the early phases of the N.A.A.C.P. Moorfield Storey's views on race had been influenced by his early association with the abolitionist Charles Sumner. He was convinced that racial progress was possible only if the solid South could be broken up and the Fifteenth Amendment federally enforced. Certainly he disagreed that "the race problem" should be left to southerners to solve; he insisted that the civil rights of the African Americans had to be protected by concerned whites from other parts of the country. Like Oswald Garrison Villard, Storey was opposed to American imperialism; he served as president of the Anti-Imperialist League. When Du Bois congratulated Storey on his persuasive pamphlet concerning United States policy in the Philippines and on the atrocities committed there by

American soldiers, he learned that Storey was familiar with and appreciative of his own work. In fact, Storey was eager to meet Du Bois so they might discuss their shared concerns over imperialism and racial politics (Kellogg 1967).

Just as the first decade of the twentieth century was ending, these three men—Oswald Garrison Villard, Moorfield Storey, and W. E. B. Du Bois—would join together to form an organization dedicated not only to the abolition of what some called the “new slavery,” but to the securing for African Americans of first-class citizenship. The series of events that was to bring them together was started by two days of bloody racial rioting, not in the Deep South, but in Abraham Lincoln’s Springfield, Illinois. It was on the fourteenth of August 1908 that rioting broke out in Springfield; white mobs raged throughout the black district, burning black homes and then interfering with the efforts of firemen. It took two days before 4,200 militiamen brought the rioting whites under control; by that time two blacks had been lynched, six had been killed, and over fifty wounded. More than 2,000 African Americans fled the city, and hundreds took shelter in the camps of the militia (Kellogg 1967). Ida B. Wells (1970, 299) recalls that she had “such a feeling of impotency through the whole matter.”

Lynchings and race riots in the city where Lincoln had lived and was buried outraged Oswald Garrison Villard. In the *New York Evening Post*, of which he was now president, Villard condemned Springfield whites, calling the riot the climax of a wave of white crime and mobbism that had set back racial progress by decades. The *Post* was not alone in its reaction; the liberal periodical the *Independent* was also shocked that such antiblack violence could occur in the North. “Springfield,” the editor pointed out, “will have to carry a heavier burden of shame than does Atlanta, for Illinois was never a slave state.” Horrified at the possibility that race riots might occur in other cities, the *Independent* urged its black readers, if attacked, first to seek protection from the police and other officials. If that failed, African Americans should defend themselves however they could, making sure rioting whites “would be sorry that they came and be slow to come again.” Booker T. Washington too issued a statement that was sharply critical of lynching, although it did not mention the Springfield riot. A black periodical often critical of Washington, the *Horizon*, praised his statement as the clearest and strongest and most courageous he had ever spoken. In the main, then, northern newspapers had responded satisfactorily, Villard judged, but he remained very much concerned over what he called “the southern attitude in the press” (quoted passages in Kellogg 1967, 9–10).

Neither Villard’s outrage over white mobs nor Washington’s indictment of lynching contained any concrete program to combat intensifying white racism. That was provided by William English Walling in his article “The Race War in the North” (1908), which appeared the following month in the *Independent*. A wealthy southerner from a former slave-owning Kentucky family, Walling was a writer, settlement house worker, and a “renegade socialist” (Westbrook 1991, 190). Once a factory inspector in Illinois, Walling had decided to devote his life to the labor movement. In 1903, he had joined Jane Addams, Lillian Wald, and others in founding the National Women’s Trade Union League (Kellogg 1967).

Even before John Dewey himself fully appreciated this point, Walling linked pragmatism to a socialism that, as Dewey would understand later, was not state socialism. In the second volume of his major study of socialist thought and politics, *The Larger Aspects of Socialism* (1913), Walling argued that "pragmatism is socialism, if taken in what seems to me to be its most able and consistent interpretation, that of Professor John Dewey" (quoted in Westbrook 1991, 190). Walling appreciated the significance of Dewey's educational theory for libertarian socialists like himself, as the "new education," he knew, was intended as schooling for participation in a democratic society. By the eve of World War I, Dewey came to accept that the democratic reconstruction of American society he imagined could not take place by virtue of a revolution in the classroom alone—that, in fact, there would be no revolution in the classroom until the students' parents took up the cause of radical democracy (Westbrook 1991).

Walling was married to Anna Strunsky, a Jew who, in her youth, had been imprisoned in her native Russia for revolutionary activities. The Wallings traveled from New York to Springfield to investigate the riots. There they became convinced that America's treatment of African Americans was even worse than Russia's treatment of Russian Jews. In his article, Walling blamed the local press for inflaming white opinion against African Americans. As would any perceptive observer of the media today, Walling showed how newspapers linked crime with the race. Today imprisonment is proffered as the solution; in 1908 the Springfield press suggested to its readers that the South knew how to deal effectively with such "racial problems." Walling argued that the white public refused to acknowledge that war had been declared on black citizens, and that this war was modeled in all respects on the war against blacks conducted in the South. The small black population in Springfield could mount no real challenge to white supremacy; Walling criticized the belief among many white northerners that there were "mitigating circumstances," perhaps not for mob violence but at least for antiblack prejudice. Equally shocking to Walling was Springfield's lack of shame. In general, white people approved what the mobs had done; they were not timid in saying they hoped all blacks would leave. Prevailing opinion in Springfield, Walling wrote, was expressed by the *Illinois State Journal*, which called the riot inevitable and ascribed responsibility for the event not to white hatred but to blacks' "misconduct, general inferiority, or unfitness for free institutions" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 10).

After the riot, Walling reported, whites had organized a political and business boycott designed to drive out of Springfield those African Americans who had not already fled, a boycott which the local white press had declined to criticize. Walling regarded this action as an even more serious attack upon black citizens than the riot. If this kind of attack, conceived and performed not in moments of passion but in rational deliberation, were permitted, whites would take over black property, jobs, and businesses, thereby rewarding, not punishing, the white rioters. Racists and those who used "race" to their own political advantage would not only dominate Springfield, he warned, but other northern towns and cities as well. Political democracy would disappear, Walling wrote, and American civilization with it. He concluded: "Who realizes the

seriousness of the situation? What large and powerful body of citizens is ready to come to [the Negro's] aid?" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 11).

One of the readers of Walling's article in the *Independent* was Mary White Ovington. A Unitarian, a socialist, the descendant of an abolitionist, and a social worker of independent means, Ovington's life was already dedicated to the socially and racially marginalized. She had spent nearly four years gathering material for a study of black New Yorkers; at the time Walling's article appeared she was living in a black tenement. Walling's questions spoke to her directly; they so moved her that she composed a reply as soon as she had finished reading (Kellogg 1967).

When Walling had asked "what large and powerful body" could fight for civil rights, he had in mind an answer. He had already imagined a national biracial organization of "fair-minded whites and intelligent blacks" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 11) that would fight for the civil rights of African Americans. Upon returning from Springfield he confided his idea to his close friend, Charles Edward Russell, and then to other sympathetic members of the Liberal Club in New York. There was much enthusiasm at that time in the Liberal Club and in other left-wing organizations regarding the cause of the African American, but there was little concrete or firsthand knowledge upon which to construct a course of action. Several weeks later, Mary White Ovington attended a lecture on Russia given by Walling at Cooper Union. In the course of that talk Walling expressed his view that the race situation in America was worse than what Jews suffered in Russia. After the lecture, Ovington spoke to him, proposing that they undertake at once to form an organization like the one he had in mind. But it was not until she wrote him after reading his article that Walling agreed to organize a meeting at his New York apartment for the first week of the year 1909 (Kellogg 1967).

The meeting was to have included Walling's friend Charles Russell, a writer and fellow socialist, whose father had been an abolitionist editor of a small newspaper in Iowa, but Russell was unable to be attend. In his place was Dr. Henry Moskowitz, a social worker among new immigrants to New York; Ovington, Moskowitz, and Walling shared a commitment to civil rights but came from widely varied backgrounds. Ovington would later reminisce that "one was a descendent of an old-time abolitionist, the second a Jew, and the third a southerner." All were white. At this informal gathering in Walling's apartment in January 1909, two "next steps" were agreed upon. First, the group chose Lincoln's birthday to mark the opening of a campaign to secure the support of a large and powerful body of citizens, and second, those present agreed that Oswald Garrison Villard should be invited to become the fifth member of the group. Thirty years later Villard would write that "no greater compliment has ever been paid to me" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 12).

Soon after that first meeting, the group was further expanded and made biracial at Ovington's initiative. Two prominent black clergymen, Bishop Alexander Walters of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and Rev. William Henry Brooks, minister of St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church of New York, were invited to join the five. Walling then invited Lillian Wald (whom we met in chapter 6, section III) and Florence Kelley, one of the first women graduates of Cornell University. On the staff at Hull House in Chicago,

Kelley had become a close friend of Jane Addams and Julia Lathrop. Instrumental in securing the passage of a factory inspection law in Illinois, Kelley had afterward been appointed chief inspector in 1893. It was probably during this time that she met Walling. After becoming general secretary of the National Consumers' League, Kelley took up residence at Lillian Wald's Nurses' Settlement on Henry Street in New York (Kellogg 1967).

Villard joined the group in sending out a call for a conference on the race problem. He had already come to the conclusion that the organization should be focused on the advancement—political and civic more than economic (this prioritizing would set the agenda of the organization for decades to come)—of African Americans. In reply to a letter from Booker T. Washington, suggesting that there should be a test case against peonage in Alabama, Villard wrote: "This is precisely the kind of case for which I want my endowed 'Committee for the Advancement of the Negro Race.' With such a body we could 'instantly handle any similar discrimination against the negro, and carry the case, if necessary, to the higher court. Sooner or later we must get that committee going'" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 13). Years later, Villard recalled that from the start his vision of the new organization was that "it should be aggressive, a watchdog of Negro liberties, and should allow no wrong to take place without a protest and a bringing to bear of all the pressure that it could muster" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 14).

Villard's vision was reflected in the "Call" (for a conference) which was issued by the group on Lincoln's Birthday, and which Villard sometimes referred to as the "manifesto." Signed by sixty prominent African and European Americans, the call acknowledged the disfranchisement of black citizens. The signatories declared that the Supreme Court had sidestepped several opportunities to pass judgment squarely upon this disfranchisement; that taxation without representation was the fate of millions of African Americans; that the Supreme Court in the Berea College case had upheld the right of a state to criminalize any assembly of whites and blacks together for any purpose; that Jim Crow was being practiced in public transportation and elsewhere; that many states were failing to fulfill their basic responsibilities in educating black children; and, finally, that the wave of white mobs attacking African Americans across the country could not be tolerated. The call closed with an appeal to all who believed in democracy to stop their silence, which amounted to complicity; to end the indifference of the North, which had also played a significant role in racially undermining the principles of democracy; to end racial discrimination; and to join in a national conference to discuss present problems, to voice protests, and to renew the historical struggle for full civil and political rights for all Americans (Kellogg 1967).

In spite of his considerable efforts to publicize the "manifesto," Villard failed to interest the New York press. At first, this indifference discouraged him, but not for long. Even the black press, for instance, the *New York Age*, paid little attention. A brief item had appeared in the February 18 issue, reporting that a call had been issued for a conference "for discussion of the present state of the Negro" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 15). During this time, the founders of what was eventually to become known as the National Association for the

Advancement of Colored People continued to meet at Walling's apartment, due to its central location. The number who attended varied. One afternoon in March, five were present. On other occasions there were as many as eight. Rabbi Stephen S. Wise of the Free Synagogue and Miss Leonore O'Reilly, a teacher in the Manhattan Trade School for Girls, joined the original group during these early meetings (Kellogg 1967).

Slowly the group expanded. Walling's apartment became too small to accommodate those who wanted to attend, and the group moved to the Liberal Club at 103 East 19th Street. It was here where the first meeting for which minutes are extant was held. The exact date was not recorded, but Kellogg (1967) suggests it took place in mid-March. Fifteen attended and it was recorded as "the first meeting of all the members of the Committee on the Negro" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 16). At this meeting plans were formulated for the conference, which had been scheduled for May 31 and June 1 at the Charity Organization Hall in New York (Kellogg 1967).

It took three meetings to plan the conference. At one meeting Walling was chair, at another, Charles Russell. Mary White Ovington served as recording secretary and Walling as treasurer. Walling was also to direct the conference with the title of secretary. The members discussed who should lead the organization; they were unclear what its name should be, an issue they would debate for some time. At first, they called themselves the "Committee on the Negro," then the "Committee on the Status of the Negro." Villard made constant references to the "advancement" of the race, and this term would eventually find its way in the name. Over one thousand invitations to attend "A Conference on the Status of the Negro" were mailed, and about 150 persons agreed to sponsor the meeting. One such sponsor was Moorfield Storey of Boston. As noted, a constitutional lawyer, anti-imperialist, and onetime secretary to Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, Storey would be unable to attend the conference, but he was to play a significant role in the early history of the organization (Kellogg 1967).

To link this new abolition movement with the earlier one, Villard asked his uncle, William Lloyd Garrison, Jr., to preside at the conference. Garrison was too ill to attend (he would die a short time later) but he composed a letter to conference registrants, urging them to confront the intensifying racism head-on. The danger today, he suggested, was that (white) social reformers had lost interest in problems of African Americans. Reformers committed to the solution of social problems, while claiming to be friends of black people, had acquiesced in black disenfranchisement; they had also accepted separate schools. Villard was very moved by this "last bugle blast" of his uncle, an echo of the elder Garrison (Kellogg 1967, 17).

Perhaps it was Villard's own movement toward a more aggressive racial politics that precipitated a rift between him and Booker T. Washington. Perhaps there was a more "political" reason as well. Villard's growing involvement in this more "radical" group made him realize that Washington could have little influence with those men and women likely to attend the conference. Although Villard never broke with Washington completely, he came to see that Washington would come to be "simply disregarded as a man who is lost for the righting of any of the spiritual, or civil, or legal wrongs of his people" (quoted

in Kellogg 1967, 18). Despite this perception, Villard was determined that the divisiveness of the two factions among African Americans engaged in racial politics—one headed by Booker T. Washington, the other by Du Bois—would not undermine the conference nor the formation of a permanent organization (Kellogg 1967).

It was during these deliberations that he wrote a candid but cordial letter to Washington, inviting him to the conference, but tactfully hinting that Washington might decline. The conference would not bear the Washington or the Du Bois stamp, he explained. The conference would initiate a movement, formalized by the establishment of an organization, aggressive enough to fight for the civil rights of African Americans. Due to Washington's prominence and influence, Villard was keenly aware of the delicacy of his position. Washington would be invited to attend the conference, but his absence must not be misinterpreted. In declining the invitation, Washington displayed an insight into the situation that apparently he would decide to ignore later: "I fear that my presence might restrict freedom of discussion and might, also, tend to make the conference go in directions which it would not like to go." Four days before the conference opened, Villard's uncle volunteered that he suspected that Washington's influence was diminishing. He expressed relief that he would not attend. "It seems strange to have a Negro conference without B.T.W.," he wrote to his nephew, "but I fear he would be much too politic in his utterance" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 19).

III. "[E]qual justice ... man as man."

—quoted in C. F. Kellogg, *NAACP: A History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (1967)

I saw them [African Americans] hedged for centuries by prejudice, intolerance, and brutality; hobbled by their own ignorance, poverty, and helplessness; yet, notwithstanding, still brave and unvanquished. ... The situation in which they were might have seemed hopeless, but they themselves were not without hope.

—James Weldon Johnson, *Along This Way* (1933)

On Monday and Tuesday, May 31 and June 1, 1909, in New York's Charity Organization Hall, the National Negro Conference was held. The evening mass meetings were held at Cooper Union, attended by some 300 African and European American men and women. William Hayes Ward, editor of the *Independent*, delivered the keynote address. "The purpose of this conference," said Ward, "is to re-emphasize in word, and so far as possible, in act, the principle that equal justice should be done to man as man, and particularly to the Negro, without regard to race, color or previous condition of servitude." After abolition and the legal and nominal granting of suffrage and equal rights, he reminded his listeners, northern interest in the plight of African Americans had waned. The fervor of the original abolitionist generation had

been followed by a "cooling sympathy" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 19). All the while the white elite in the South kept presumably "freedpeople" in servitude, rationalizing this inhumanity on the widely accepted argument that blacks were essentially inferior, not fully human, half beast, incapable of becoming civilized. The theme of the conference, then, involved the refutation of such nonsense, namely that African Americans were physically and mentally inferior (Kellogg 1967).

Leading scientists of the day spoke at the conference, among them anthropologist Livingston Farrand of Columbia University and neurologist and zoologist Burt G. Wilder of Cornell University, both of whom presented detailed scientific evidence disproving the white fantasy that blacks were inherently inferior due to differences in brain structure. They cited studies showing conclusively that while there were significant differences between the brains of humans and apes, there were no significant differences in the brains of black and white people. They characterized "race" as an indeterminate concept used loosely as an umbrella term to designate physical differences in groups. Another Columbia professor, Edwin R. A. Seligman, applied his economic theory of history to the development of the Negro, showing that economic conditions and policies had undermined black advancement, not innate inherited inferiority. John Dewey declared that with democratic social conditions each individual, regardless of color, would be able to realize his potential. Celia Parker Wooley of the Frederick Douglass Center in Chicago linked racial politics with other social problems of the day, such as women's rights, specifically suffrage, and the right of working people to unionize (Kellogg 1967).

No doubt with Washington in mind, W. E. B. Du Bois insisted that the problem of "race" in America was as political as it was economic. Elimination of African-American voters also eliminated African Americans as workers in industry. There would be no solution of the race problem until African Americans in the South could cast a free and intelligent vote. Disfranchisement, restricted access to education (vocational education only), the loss of civil freedoms generally: these were all parts of a systematic effort to institutionalize white racism, to kill black self-respect, and to force black people into a "new slavery." Other speakers proposed solutions to these problems: change white attitudes, work for federal legislation to stop lynching, lobby for reduction of representation of southern states where Negroes were disfranchised, start federal aid to education, and, finally, establish a new organization to work for the realization of these aims (Kellogg 1967).

On this last point all were agreed. Then Villard communicated his vision: he wanted an association national in scope, incorporated, and devoted to raising large amounts of money. He believed that African Americans would support the organization's program as soon as they were persuaded that its founders were sincere, free of factional conflict, efficient, and committed to all forms of education for African Americans. One of its chief functions, Villard suggested, should be a campaign of education to inform the public about the achievements of African Americans. A publicity bureau with a press section headed by a competent journalist should investigate lynchings and other racial outrages and distribute its findings widely. In addition, the organization needed a strong

central legal bureau with the ablest counsel possible to prosecute those white men "who kill and call it law" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 21). A political and civil rights bureau should lobby for the enforcement of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments and to obtain court decisions reversing disfranchisement and other discriminatory legislation (Kellogg 1967).

Villard also envisaged an education department in the new organization which would advise black educational institutions, assisting them in raising standards, in coordinating fund-raising campaigns, and in devising more efficient uses of funds; if resources permitted, the department would make grants. There would also be an industrial bureau to work on labor problems, including the problem of white racism within the labor movement, the problem of housing and land ownership, and the mass migration of southern blacks to the North, which was well under way in 1909. If necessary, Villard continued, the new organization should be empowered to purchase land in large quantities for resale at reasonable prices to interested black buyers. Finally, Villard argued that the association's leadership must find ways to identify and educate exceptional young black people and to place them where they could be of the greatest possible service to the black community. He added that two extant political groups formed to fight for civil rights, the Niagara Movement and the Constitution League, had indicated that they were willing to cooperate with or incorporate within the proposed new organization (Kellogg 1967).

The final sessions of the two-day conference were "stormy" (Kellogg 1967, 21) and lasted until midnight, but next steps were finally taken. By the time the conference adjourned, a Committee of Forty on Permanent Organization had been formed, the incorporation of a National Committee for the Advancement of the Negro Race had been ordered, and a series of resolutions were passed which demanded equal civil and educational rights, the right to work, and protection from violence, murder, and intimidation. As well, a resolution passed criticizing President Taft for his failure to enforce the Fifteenth Amendment. Those who drew up the list of members of the Committee of Forty on Permanent Organization were concerned that without Booker T. Washington's name the organization would have difficulty obtaining grants from white philanthropists. Moreover, Washington's followers would not participate in the new organization unless Washington publicly gave it his seal of approval. But Washington would not be involved: "The whole colored crowd was bitterly anti-Washington," wrote Villard to his uncle (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 22).

The nominating committee took a middle course which left many unhappy. The compromise they reached meant not only Washington and supporters were omitted, but also were his critics, among them William Monroe Trotter, like Du Bois a graduate of Harvard and now editor of the *Boston Guardian* as well as president of the National Independent Political League. Also omitted, unbelievably, was Ida B. Wells (now Wells-Barnett). Neither was pleased at being left out. J. Milton Waldron, president of the National Negro Political League of Washington, D.C., was another prominent African American unhappy at not being appointed. Not content to allow events to take their course, Ida B. Wells complained to Charles Russell after the meeting. Illegally

but wisely (according to Mary White Ovington), her name was quickly added to the committee (Kellogg 1967).

A black weekly controlled by Booker T. Washington, the *New York Age*, was predictably critical of the conference. Whites who had attended were characterized as "able, distinguished, earnest friends of the Negro," but the *Age* had little regard for those African Americans who had been present. Other protest groups populated by the same people had failed in the past, and the *Age* predicted failure for this latest attempt. In Chicago, the Equal Opportunity League had been torn apart by an inability to cooperate. The Niagara Movement, which, according to the *Age*, looked very much like an earlier version of the recent New York conference, had fallen victim to inadequate leadership. The Constitution League and Trotter's National Political League were both fading fast. African Americans must solve their problems by work and thrift, reminded the *Age*, and by solidarity: "as doers, not as talkers" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 23).

Though acidic in tone, the *New York Age* was right about the other organizations dedicated to advance the cause of African Americans. The Equal Opportunity League and the National Political League enjoyed very limited influence and seemed destined to extinction. The Constitution League had been founded and was almost wholly supported and financed by John Milholland, a wealthy New Yorker, an anti-imperialist, a former newspaper man, now active in the Republican Party. The Niagara Movement was an early effort to stop disenfranchisement and the general assault on the political and civil rights for African Americans. Organized in 1905 by Du Bois, it was comprised of those blacks whom he considered the "talented tenth," those with sufficient ability and education to assume leadership. Through "publicized agitation" Du Bois and his colleagues tried to arouse the black population to protest and to enlist the support of sympathetic whites. The platform called for restoration of "manhood suffrage" and condemned the loss of civil rights, the denial of equal opportunities in the economic sphere, the Jim Crow railroad car, the discriminatory treatment of black soldiers, and "recent attitudes of the church." A major theme was that "manly agitation was the way to liberty" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 23-24).

The *New York Age* pointed out that the two black periodicals, the *Moon* and the *Horizon*, both edited and published by Du Bois, had also failed to make a go of it. From 1907 to 1910 Du Bois, together with F. H. M Murray, and L. M. Hershaw, published the *Horizon*, a small periodical which served as the publication for the Niagara Movement. The Niagara Movement had failed to gain momentum, and by 1909 the *Horizon*, as well as the Niagara Movement appeared to be on the verge of collapse. What confidence, therefore, could black readers of the *New York Age* have in the prospects of this latest effort, asked an unsympathetic *Age* (Kellogg 1967).

The *Age*'s pessimism aside, the conference had kindled excitement and optimism, both of which were reflected in an article Du Bois wrote for the *Survey*. He wrote that the conference was the consequence of a long-term deliberation over increasingly serious racial problems. Some participants had worried that the group would prove too radical, that it would provoke a conservative reaction, not to mention intraracial competitiveness and bitterness.

But Du Bois judged that the white leaders had inspired confidence and provided a sense of stability to the group, an interesting acknowledgment in light of his later interest in removing whites from N.A.A.C.P. leadership (Kellogg 1967). At the heart of the race problem was, Du Bois suggested, this (gendered) question: "From the standpoint of modern science, are Negroes men?" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 24). As Hazel Carby's (1998) analysis makes clear, Du Bois conflated manhood and "race." The racial question was, for him, a question of the male gender.

To Du Bois the last session of the conference had been highly significant, as the "black mass moved forward ... to take charge." There was throughout the room a strong commitment to present the problem to the public "without compromise and quibbling." There was at the same time considerable uncertainty as to what practical steps were appropriate and possible. And finally there was profound black suspicion regarding "the white hands stretched out in brotherhood" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 24). Despite this suspicion, Du Bois observed that most African Americans in attendance did have confidence in the grandson of William Lloyd Garrison; they voted to endorse his vision of a national organization devoted to the advancement of black people. Writing in the *Horizon* five months later, Du Bois judged the conference to be the most important event of 1909 (Kellogg 1967).

In the same *Horizon* article, Du Bois identified an important problem, the splitting off of the problems of African Americans from other social problems, and their consequent neglect. The problems African Americans faced were not and could not be segregated from other social problems and reform movements—that is, women's rights, consumer leagues, prison reform, social settlements, world peace. Many white social reformers were uniformly ignorant of the problems blacks faced; many refused to even acknowledge their existence. Most African Americans also regarded their own problems as radically distinct from other social problems, subject to their own specific remedies. The New York Conference on the Negro represented, Du Bois suggested, an "awakening" from this fallacious reasoning. The social workers who organized the conference realized that all social problems in America involved African Americans, and those African Americans who had attended the conference became aware that their problems were also problems of property, ignorance, suffrage, women's rights, distribution of wealth, law and order. A concerted effort to solve these problems demanded close cooperation in parallel spheres. It was not, Du Bois wrote, simply a matter of "millionaires and almsgiving." It was, he said, a "human problem" demanding "human methods" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 25).

The segregation of the "race question" from the other social problems and social reform movements of the time was a post-Civil War phenomenon. In antebellum days the movement for the emancipation of women had been, as we have seen, closely linked with other reform activities, including the temperance (as we saw in chapter 8) and abolition of slavery movements. For many there were parallels between the status of women and the status of African Americans. Women too were held to be inferior to men in most respects, and the so-called scientific arguments used to defend that point bore a striking resemblance to

those used to suggest the inferiority of Negroes. Both blacks and women had a place in society, a subordinate place. By keeping women and Negroes in their “place”—a place in the white male imagination—white men were sure they were acting in the best interests of these “inferior” groups (Kellogg 1967).

The abolition and temperance movements had served as training grounds for leaders of the feminist movement in the twentieth century. Feminists had been supported by such abolitionists as William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips. The Civil War and the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments (which pertained only to males) ended the alliance between the feminist movement and the black civil rights movement. By 1903, the two movements had drifted so far apart that only a few progressives, black and white, thought to link the two causes. Villard associated the two, as had his father and grandfather before him. His mother, Fanny Garrison Villard, was active both in the suffrage movement and in the struggle for black civil rights (Kellogg 1967).

Along with his plans for the Committee for the Advancement of the Negro, Villard had for some time envisioned a men’s club to support the cause of woman suffrage. Perhaps, he thought, it should be a “paper organization for use on special occasions.” By the end of 1909, as we saw in chapter 6 (section V), his “Men’s League for Woman Suffrage” had been launched, and in 1911 he was one of eighty-four men who had been booed and hissed as they marched in a suffragist parade down Fifth Avenue. Intimidated not at all, Villard regarded the incident as a “thrilling and inspiring experience” (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 26).

Most white suffragists were indifferent, even hostile, to the cause of black people in America. A single event will illustrate. In 1916, a bitter dispute occurred at the funeral of Mrs. Inez Milholland Boissevain, daughter of John E. Milholland, attorney, suffragist leader, and champion of black civil rights. On this occasion suffragists snubbed black women delegates and even tried to prevent them from speaking at the service. In spite of Du Bois’s prophecy that the 1909 Conference on the Negro would signal a turning point in American race relations, any realization that “race” was not a separate question but interrelated with other social problems and social reform movements was still decades off. Even now, a relative few discern the link between feminism and racial politics. This is in sharp contrast to the founding moment of the N.A.A.C.P., when women played a conspicuous role. Approximately one-third of the signers of the “Call” were women, including two prominent black feminists, Mrs. Mary Church Terrell and Ida B. Wells-Barnett. Both women were appointed to the Committee of Forty that was established after the 1909 Conference (Kellogg 1967). That Committee would face opposition on several fronts.

IV. Oppositions

Can the subject ... ever evade the dominant discourse?

—Roger Célestin, *From Cannibals to Radicals: Figures and Limits of Exoticism*
(1996)

Nothing tempers the fact of black-on-black violence.

—Charles Johnson and John McCluskey,
Jr., *Black Men Speaking* (1997)

Among those who neither responded to the “Call” nor participated in the first conference was Charles Waddell Chesnutt, one of the best-known black intellectuals of the day. He declined the invitation to speak at the Cooper Union mass meeting, but privately gave approval to the principles which were elaborated there. He made no public statement nor endorsed nor disapproved the resolutions passed at the conference, including the proposal to form a permanent organization. Although he disagreed with much of Booker T. Washington’s view of racial politics, Chesnutt remained on good terms with him. Chesnutt did take exception to Washington’s subordination of civil and political rights to economic gradualism, and to his failure to endorse higher education for the mass of African Americans. But he made it clear to the radicals, specifically Monroe Trotter and Du Bois, that he did not share their hostility to Washington. He had stated this view to Trotter as early as 1901, declining to be drawn into the acrimonious personal quarrels in which Trotter (James Weldon Johnson would later characterize Trotter as “zealous to the point of fanaticism” [1933, 314]) had engaged in the *Guardian* (Kellogg 1967).

Villard realized that Washington probably could not support the new movement, but he hoped he could prevent Washington’s open opposition. Two days after the close of the conference, Villard wrote Washington, thanking him for his “friendly spirit” and sending copies of his own address, the resolutions, and the names of those appointed to the Committee of Forty. He was hopeful, even confident, Washington would not oppose the new organization. But Washington was not mollified. A week later Villard learned from his uncle Francis Garrison that Washington had criticized the conference in a public address, arguing that the vote was less important than earning and accumulating wealth. Garrison wrote his nephew that he worried that Washington might “chill and prevent the interest of a good many people who ought to be with us” (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 28).

William E. Walling had no interest, evidently, in trying to appease Washington. Walling attacked Washington’s views in the *Independent* one week later. Washington’s policies in the North, he argued, only functioned to postpone the day when African Americans would experience that political and social equality consistently denied them by southern whites. The battle was on. T. Thomas Fortune, editor of the *New York Age*, answered for Washington. Fortune said Walling was merely a southerner expressing the usual southern prejudices. Walling had confused social privileges with civil rights, a mistake that would only mislead African Americans, a time-honored practice among southern whites “with whom the madness is method designed.” Fortune further discredited Walling by observing that he was a socialist, “whatever that may be” (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 28). These exchanges marked phase one of a long period of antagonism between Washington, his allies, and the new movement (Kellogg 1967).

Washington could not slow the growing momentum for the new organization. On May 5, 1910, the Preliminary Committee's report recommended that the new organization be called "The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; its object to be equal rights and opportunities for all" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 41). The last word "all" was taken quite seriously; from the very beginning, the Association aligned itself with other oppressed minority groups. For instance, in the so-called Russian Resolution of the 1910 conference N.A.A.C.P. members protested and condemned the expulsion of Jews from Kiev (Kellogg 1967).

Around this time the new organization persuaded Du Bois to leave Atlanta University to become director of publicity and research. He would become as well the editor the N.A.A.C.P.'s monthly magazine, the *Crisis*. Ida B. Wells (1970, 327) recalls the meeting at which the periodical was born:

At the meeting of the executive committee the discussion came up as to whether we should try to have articles representing our cause appear in periodicals already established, since to attempt a publication would be expensive, to say the least. Miss Addams was very much in favor of the opinion that the former was the better plan. When asked for my views I said that by all means I favored establishing our own organ, for then we could publish whatever we chose whenever we wished; whereas if we sent articles to other magazines we should have to depend upon their good will to say nothing of the disposition to change our views to suit their own ideas. This view prevailed, and the *Crisis* was born almost immediately.

Recall that the first conference had concerned itself with the scientific refutation of racist beliefs and stereotypes. The theme of the second was disfranchisement. Delegates advocated the use of the black vote only for those candidates who would champion the cause; no longer would there be blind devotion to one party, the Republicans. Delegates also endorsed: (1) making aggressive efforts to reduce southern representation in Congress in retaliation for violations of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, (2) systematic study of the consequences of disfranchisement on segregated schooling in the South, and (3) study of the relationship between disfranchisement and lynching (Kellogg 1967).

The N.A.A.C.P. had been founded in response to the Springfield, Illinois, riots of 1908. The crusade against mob violence, specifically lynching, continued to be a primary motive behind the Association's work. The *Crisis* published the lynching toll annually, although accurate statistics were difficult to obtain, as recent research indicates (Tolnay and Beck 1995). Even the conservative Booker T. Washington would work quietly against lynching until his death in 1915. He was more outspoken on this subject than on any other aspect of American racial politics (Kellogg 1967).

As we have seen, lynching and white mob violence continued in the North, witness the August 1911 lynching of Zachariah Walker in Coatesville, Pennsylvania. Northern lynchings were even less tolerable than those that occurred in the South, and as we have seen, the N.A.A.C.P. Executive Committee at once began a prolonged and costly investigation of the lynching,

including the use, for the first time, of professional detectives in the hope of providing evidence for a conviction. A conviction was never achieved in the lynching of Zachariah Walker, but the Association kept a close watch over the investigation and legal proceedings. Recall that on the first anniversary of the Coatesville lynching, John Jay Chapman, grandson of an abolitionist, and himself a civil rights advocate, held a prayer meeting of three in a vacant store in Coatesville. When Francis Garrison learned that no resident of Coatesville had attended the prayer meeting, he exclaimed that "the earth should yawn and swallow the whole community" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 213).

Conditions that contributed to heightened racial tensions were also on the N.A.A.C.P. agenda. On June 11, 1917, for instance, the director of publications and research, W. E. B. Du Bois, reported to the Board that he planned to go to East St. Louis, Illinois, to study conditions in a city typical of those to which many southern blacks were migrating in large numbers. Not quite a month later, a riot occurred in that "typical" city, during which hundreds of African Americans were shot or burned alive in their homes. Much property was destroyed, and nearly 6,000 were left homeless. Politicians and the white press blamed blacks for the outbreak; a number of black residents were even charged with inciting to riot and with murder (Kellogg 1967).

Booker T. Washington had long urged southern blacks to remain in the country and on the farm. True, white southern businessmen were hurt by the mass migration. But they were hardly the only southerners to suffer; black professionals and black business, such as insurance companies, were also hurt. Nothing, however, not even the advice of the influential Booker T. Washington, could stop the flood, which peaked in 1916. The *Crisis* took issue with Washington and other black leaders who were urging Negroes to remain in the South. Du Bois and others urged southern blacks to flee their homes as a protest against lynching and disfranchisement in a "devilish country" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 222).

To provide the N.A.A.C.P. with reliable information regarding the migration, Du Bois visited six southern states. Additionally, he obtained additional information through N.A.A.C.P. associates throughout the South. To the surprise of the N.A.A.C.P. Board, the data showed the migration to be much larger than they had imagined. Du Bois estimated that 250,000 black southerners had moved North, and prophesied, correctly, that the United States would undergo a significant social change as a result. Du Bois was right, but much of this change was not positive, at least not initially. Those who moved north found no "promised land" but yet another site of white resistance and racism. Many industries would hire Africans Americans only when they could not find other labor. Frequently white employers used newly arrived blacks as strikebreakers, which earned them the enmity of white workers who saw in the new arrivals scabs as well as competitors for jobs. Finally, the number of jobs available did not begin to equal the number of migrants flooding the cities. Unemployed African Americans began to concentrate in impoverished areas neglected by municipal governments; these areas soon became slums. All these developments functioned to intensify white racism and create "powderkeg"

situations in the overcrowded and often impoverished northern black ghettos (Kellogg 1967).

The violence that erupted in East St. Louis on July 2, 1917, did not come as a complete surprise to N.A.A.C.P. officials. Southern in its racial attitudes, the city was heavily industrialized, serving as a major railroad junction as well as the home of stockyards and meatpacking plants. Most workers lived in slums near the factories. During 1916, the owners had waged war against unionization, using black labor to undermine efforts to unionize workers. Public opinion became inflamed by tales of black crime and by specific allegations made by the local Democratic machine that the Republicans had imported southern blacks to vote in the 1916 election (Kellogg 1967).

After learning of the riot, Ida B. Wells called a meeting of her Negro Fellowship League to protest against this "outrage." Reporters for the Chicago newspapers were present and published "our speeches of condemnation and our resolutions" (Wells 1970, 383). At the meeting "it was moved that a representative from the meeting be sent to deliver the resolutions to Governor Lowden in person, and I was asked to be that person. I told them that I had no objection to going, but it seemed to me that someone ought to go to East Saint Louis and get the facts, and that then we would have something to present to the governor" (Wells 1970, 384). The next day Wells left for East Saint Louis.

As her train arrived in the city on the morning of July 5, Wells was warned by the conductor that she would be in "great danger" should she get off the train. In fact, he continued, train personnel had been locking the porters in the coaches as the train ran through East Saint Louis, for their protection, given how riotous whites had been. The conductor begged her to travel on to Saint Louis, just across the river. "But," Wells told the worried conductor, "the papers say that Governor Lowden made a patriotic speech in East Saint Louis yesterday, and that there are eleven companies of militia there, and that all the workers who had been driven out by the mob two days ago have been invited to return and have been assured of their safety" (Wells 1970, 384). Wells got off the train. In her autobiography she remembers that:

It was seven o'clock in the morning, and as I walked up to the front of the train where the train conductor was standing ready to signal the engineer, I seemed to be the only person getting off. The conductor gave a second look at me and yelled, "Get back on that train!" I said, "Why should I? This is the station where I wanted to get off." "Have you been reading the paper?" I said, "Oh, yes. They tell me that the governor and the militia are here, and I want to see him." The conductor shrugged his shoulders, turned and waved to the engineer and hopped on the train. It pulled out and left me standing there. (Wells 1970, 384)

Undaunted, as usual, Wells "walked over to a khaki-clad youth who was standing there with a gun and asked him what the situation was." He replied, "'Bad'—a Negro had killed two white men the night before. I didn't believe him and I suppose my look showed as much. So I asked him if the governor was in town and he said, 'No, he left last night'" (Wells 1970, 384–385). Still undaunted, and even though "I saw not another colored person, I sauntered up

the main street as if everything was all right." Upon reaching city hall where the militia was encamped, she discovered that Adjutant General Frank S. Dickson was not present. Determined to speak with him about the situation, "I talked with him on the phone and went over to see him" (Wells 1970, 385).

Over the telephone Dickson was "courteous," and assured Wells that he would do all he could to help her "to find out conditions first-hand." Unlike the train personnel, he felt certain that the danger was over and those who were responsible for "the slaughter" would be apprehended and punished. Wells returned to city hall to wait for General Dickson to arrive. She had left her bag there with the only African American "I had seen up to that time." Employed as a janitor at the City Hall building, the man told Wells that his wife was coming with breakfast and she might share it with them. She had refused to sleep in East Saint Louis since the riot, but traveled here each morning "to see that he was safe and to do what she could for him" (all passages in Wells 1970, 385). When Wells returned to the city hall she saw "numbers of colored women all making for the same point. Each of them was accompanied by a soldier carrying a gun and many rounds of ammunition. These women had on the clothes in which they were when they had run out of their homes two days before, and they had come back on the assurances of the morning papers that it would be safe for them to return to see what, if anything, was left of their belongings" (Wells 1970, 385-386). Wells (1970) continues: "We went to the homes of these women and found many of them looted. The things that had not been stolen and carried away had been demolished—pianos, furniture, and bedding. Windows were broken, doors torn from their hinges, and several places had been burned" (386).

Wells returned to Chicago the next day where she learned that "a delegation of our leading citizens" had already visited Governor Lowden and advised him to disregard the resolutions of the Negro Fellowship League which had been published in the daily papers, "that the Barnetts were radicals, and that they knew that Governor Lowden had done all he could do for the citizens" (Wells 1970, 388). Wells made her report on conditions in East St. Louis "to a crowded meeting at Bethel A.M.E. Church, at which the names of these gentlemen were hissed. Another delegation was appointed to wait on Governor Lowden with my report and to urge that something be done. We went to Springfield that night, but the governor had early been made to feel that we were a lot of sensation hunters and therefore little attention was paid to our report" (Wells 1970, 388-389).

The governor was evidently rather selective in the information to which he chose to attend, as Wells learned that a delegation from East Saint Louis itself had met with him a month before, informing him of the labor troubles brewing. The group was sure that efforts would be made by whites to terrorize black workers, who were being hired by local industries. The group ended by pleading with him to act in advance in order to protect black lives. Governor Lowden declined to do so. At Wells's meeting with Governor Lowden she spoke plainly:

[W]hen we told him of the soldier standing by and permitting the men to attack and murder helpless Negroes, he said that if we could get him facts upon which to work and could find people who were willing to appear and

testify, he would see what might be done; that a sweeping investigation was to be made into the whole matter. Accompanied by Mrs. Fallow, we returned to Saint Louis and tried our best to find persons who could and would so testify. (Wells 1970, 389)

But Wells and her colleagues soon learned that the black residents of East St. Louis had fled the city; "hundreds of thousands of Negroes left by every train going in other directions." Nor did she find that the citizens of Saint Louis seemed very curious to investigate the riot: "there seemed a strange disinclination to hold any meeting by which we could get the facts. There seemed a feeling present that we wanted to start something" (Wells 1970, 389). Wells's presence in St. Louis evidently sparked the local N.A.A.C.P. representative to contact the national office: "Dr. Du Bois ... was sent for. An investigation was set on foot, the result of which centered strangely on the colored men who had organized for their own protection. It was a delegation from their group which had gone to see the governor a month before the riot and urged him to throw the power of the state in an effort to prevent the outbreak which they feared" (Wells 1970, 389-390). Realizing that no protection was forthcoming, it had been this group that had stored ammunition with which to defend themselves in case of attack. "On Sunday evening July 1, at about eleven o'clock, a large touring car drove through the Negro district out in the suburbs. The inmates of the car shot right and left into the homes of the colored residents. ... When the men responded and this same big black touring car came rushing by, firing as it went, that handful of colored men fired in return" (Wells 1970, 390).

The riot originated, it was now being claimed, with the self-protective firing of local black residents: "When the investigation was held afterward it centered mostly on tracing the movements of the colored men who were trying to protect themselves and their neighborhood. The result was that fifteen men were arrested and jailed and these fifteen men afterward bore the brunt of all the investigation about that terrible riot. ... [They] each received sentences of fifteen years" (Wells 1970, 390). Wells reports that approximately seventy-five white men and women were also tried, receiving much lighter sentences, ranging from a few days in jail up to five years. Wells continues:

Only ten of the sixty-five white persons convicted received as long a sentence as five years. ... It will thus be seen that the Negroes, who acted in self-defense and tried to protect their homes and their lives when refused protection elsewhere, received the brunt of the punishment. The white rioters and labor union agitators who murdered over 150 Negroes and destroyed a million dollars worth of property received a very light punishment comparatively. (Wells 1970, 391)

Wells could not have been surprised.

V. John R. Shillady

Lynching is, of course, a relic of slavery.

—James Weldon Johnson, “The Practice of Lynching: A Picture, the Problem and What Shall Be Done About It” (1927)

The legal protection that N.A.A.C.P. branches attempted to provide for black criminals also posed a direct challenge to mob violence. By exposing the trumped-up charges that blacks routinely faced, the N.A.A.C.P. called into question the justifications of lynching that stressed the pervasiveness of serious black crime.

—W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880–1930* (1993)

Racisms are never pure and unencumbered.

—Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (1995)

John R. Shillady was a handsome young white social worker who worked in the Department of Charities and Corrections in Westchester County, New York. On January 7, 1918, the Board voted to hire Shillady as secretary. (At that same meeting it hired as assistant secretary Walter White, an active member of the Atlanta branch who had worked for an insurance company.) Shillady's job involved raising money for the association. At the first board meeting he attended he brought plans for a membership drive—the Moorfield Storey drive—which turned out to be very effective. James Weldon Johnson (1933) would later write of Shillady's great ability as an organizer (329), and Mary White Ovington would commend his contribution as well (Kellogg 1967).

Johnson (1933) also credits Shillady with conducting the “first adequate statistical study” of lynching (329). Shillady sent two research workers to the Congressional Library at Washington; there they studied newspaper accounts of every lynching for a period of thirty years. They recorded the names, sex, and age of the victims; the place, date, and manner of each lynching; and the charge upon which each victim was lynched. Shillady compiled, tabulated, and published these data in a monograph of over a hundred pages, entitled *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States*. “The most startling fact revealed,” writes Johnson in his autobiography, “was that the common opinion that Negroes were lynched only for rape was without foundation.” The evidence indicated that of the more than three thousand African Americans lynched in the thirty-year period, not quite 17 percent had even been charged with rape (Johnson 1933, 329).

Lynchings continued. Shillady worked to make sure the federal government knew when lynchings occurred. When Jim McIllheron was tortured with red-hot irons and burned alive on Lincoln's birthday in 1918 at Estill Springs, Tennessee, Shillady sent a telegram to President Wilson. The president's

secretary referred the telegram to the attorney general, who told the N.A.A.C.P. that the federal government had no jurisdiction given that the crime had nothing to do with the war effort. Frustrated but not finished, Shillady wrote Wilson again, asking him to make a public statement condemning the lynching. He suggested that while not directly related to the war effort, such a public statement by the president would help the morale of those African Americans fighting to make the world “safe for democracy” (Kellogg 1967).

Despite Shillady’s messages, those around Wilson had chosen not to inform him of the Estill Springs lynching. He did not learn of it until James Weldon Johnson mentioned it during a conversation with the president at the White House. Earlier, the association had failed to persuade Wilson to mention lynching in his second inaugural address, but when Johnson pressed the point during their meeting, Wilson relented, promising that he would “seek an opportunity” to say something on the subject (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 227). Wilson was no friend of African Americans (Friedman 1970).

Shillady also worked to bring the harsh glare of publicity upon Governor Hugh M. Dorsey and the state of Georgia following a five-day “orgy” of violence in Brooks and Lowndes Counties during which eight African Americans were lynched. The white reign of terror began with the fatal shooting of a white landlord and the wounding of his wife by a black man they had held in peonage and whose (very minimal) wages they had declined to pay. Whites rioted, resulting in the deaths of several innocent African Americans, one of whom was Haynes Turner. Walter White describes the scene in his 1929 study of lynching entitled *Rope and Faggot* (see chapter 1). In terms close to White’s, Mary White Ovington also described the scene: “His wife Mary, after her husband’s death, mourned and loudly proclaimed his innocence. For this she was slowly burned to death, watched by a crowd of men and women. She was pregnant, and as she burned, the infant fell to the ground and was trampled under a white man’s heel” (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 229).

James Weldon Johnson and Walter White carried out separate investigations for the association, the findings from which Shillady sent to Governor Dorsey. The N.A.A.C.P. had discovered the identities of the two ringleaders and fifteen other participants in the murders. Dorsey had risen to the governorship of Georgia as the result of his prosecution of Leo Frank, whose trial had been marked by anti-Semitism and a white mob (Dinnerstein 1968). Dorsey replied to Shillady perfunctorily, informing him and the association the state of Georgia had been unable to apprehend the guilty parties. Nor, it appeared, had they tried (Kellogg 1967).

Other N.A.A.C.P. efforts to force public officials to perform their duties responsibly were more effective. Governor Stanley of Kentucky personally defied a mob at Murray, Kentucky, and saved from lynching a black man who was later legally tried and condemned to death—what George C. Wright (1990), in his study of mob violence in Kentucky, terms “legal lynchings” (see chapter 2, section V). The N.A.A.C.P. Anti-Lynching Committee hired a writer from the *Louisville Courier-Journal* to write a detailed report of the incident, which was later published in the *Independent*. The constitution of Kentucky was later amended to permit the removal from office of any sheriff, jailer, constable or peace officer who neglected his duty to protect prisoners. Of course, border and

southern states were not the only targets of N.A.A.C.P. vigilance and protest. The lynching of Edward Woodson at Green River, Wyoming, in December 1918 prompted publicized N.A.A.C.P. protests to the governor against the lynching and the subsequent driving from their homes of black residents of the community. The protest paid off; in 1919, Wyoming enacted a law against mob violence (Kellogg 1967).

The Anti-Lynching Committee tried to organize a conference of southern leaders on lynching but failed. At the end of 1918 the committee changed tactics and decided to work for a national conference, calling upon "the most substantial and influential leaders of public opinion" to endorse it (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 232). They hoped to persuade a number of state governors, including governors of southern states, to attend the conference, as the number of lynchings was increasing. But the call fell on deaf ears in the South, where the organization was at this time called the Advancement Association, or Negro Advancement Society. In response to an inquiry by the association concerning the lynching of Eugene Green at Belzoni, Mississippi, Governor Bilbo's indifference was evident in his inappropriately playful response: "He was 'advanced' alright from the end of a rope, and in order to save burial expenses his body was thrown into the Yazoo River" (quoted Kellogg 1967, 233).

Despite such resistance in the South, the Anti-Lynching Conference found support elsewhere. The conference convened at Carnegie Hall with an attendance of 2,500. Charles Evans Hughes, Governor Emmet O'Neal, Anna Howard Shaw of the woman's suffrage movement, Brigadier General John H. Sherburne of the 92nd (black) Division, and James Weldon Johnson were among the speakers. Later Walter White would describe the astonishment that rippled across the faces of several white liberals seated on the platform when Johnson expressed his conviction that "the race question involves the saving of black America's body and white America's soul" (Johnson 1933, 318; Kellogg 1967).

Astonishment aside, the conference participants agreed on three points: (1) lynching must be made a federal crime, (2) the N.A.A.C.P. should organize state committees to create a climate inhospitable to lynching and work for antilynching legislation at the state level, and (3) the Anti-Lynching Committee should initiate a systematic fund-raising and ad campaign against lynching. Even though N.A.A.C.P. officials were disappointed that few New York lawyers attended the session conducted by Storey on the legal aspect of lynching, the session bore fruit, as the New York City Bar Association soon adopted resolutions calling for a congressional investigation of lynching and federal legislation to criminalize the practice (Kellogg 1967).

Following the Anti-Lynching Conference, Shillady and the Anti-Lynching Committee composed "An Address to the Nation on Lynching," signed by 130 prominent citizens including those who had signed the call and several prominent new sponsors, among them former President William Howard Taft, novelist William Dean Howells, President John Grier Hibben of Princeton University, Theodore D. Bratton, Episcopal bishop of Mississippi, and the governor of Tennessee. The manifesto drew public attention to the problem and

helped the N.A.A.C.P. exert additional pressure for a congressional action (Kellogg 1967).

In 1919, the N.A.A.C.P. sent Herbert Seligmann to Tennessee and Mississippi to investigate intensified racial tension. From these talks with leading blacks and whites, Seligmann learned that the shortage of cheap labor in rural regions of the South, caused by massive black migration north (in part to escape lynching), was deeply resented by the white plantation owners. Southern whites were also resentful that the drafting of African Americans into the army had tended to equalize relations with white men. An additional resentment was the widespread white male fantasy that black soldiers were "recognized on equal terms by white women in France." There was some basis for this, of course, but white southern males, as always, tended to transpose fact into fantasy, and then become obsessed with it. Du Bois called this "the sex motive, the brutal sadism into which race hate always falls" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 235).

After the war, blacks soldiers were lynched in Georgia and Mississippi for appearing on the streets in uniform. One politician, a candidate for the Louisiana State Legislature, told Seligmann that lynching was very necessary, and that no black should ever be allowed to vote or acquire an education. Why, asked the N.A.A.C.P. representative? The Louisianian snorted back (as if everybody knew): because education made confidence men of the males and prostitutes of the females (Kellogg 1967).

"The Red Summer of 1919 broke in fury," remembers James Weldon Johnson (1933, 341). There were several violent race riots during the summer and fall of 1919. The war was a factor; many African Americans were now inclined to fight not flee when rampaging white men came their way. Johnson tells us: "The colored people throughout the country were disheartened and dismayed. The great majority had trustingly felt that, because they had cheerfully done their bit in the war, conditions for them would be better. The reverse seemed to be true. There was one case, at least, in which a returned Negro soldier was *lynch[ed]* because of the fact that he wore the uniform of a United States soldier" (341). But "in the popular mind of the white South in the decades after World War I," Joel Williamson (1984, 7) notes, "there was no race problem, no black history, and no history of race relations if the Yankees and Communists, Catholics and Jews, outsiders and aliens would simply leave black people alone."

The intransigence of whites, the fighting spirit of the new abolitionism, plus black men's wartime experiences with European allies: all were probably factors in the explosions that occurred in Washington, Chicago, Omaha, Knoxville, Indianapolis, and in Phillips County, Arkansas. The riot at Longview, Texas, in June, between whites and returning black soldiers cost a number of lives, black and white. The clash suggested that African Americans were in no mood to submit to white supremacy. "Negroes are not planning anything," reported an Associated Press report in a Longview newspaper, "but will defend themselves if attacked" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 236).

The N.A.A.C.P.'s investigations and the more aggressive mood among many African Americans intensified white reaction, which was sometimes focused on the association. Early in August 1919, the Austin, Texas, branch informed the national office that the state attorney general had subpoenaed the

branch president to bring all N.A.A.C.P. records to court. The state of Texas was acting to shut down all branches operating in the state on the grounds that the N.A.A.C.P. was not chartered to do business in Texas. The national office reminded the Austin branch that the N.A.A.C.P. was not a business but a membership corporation, whose purposes were not economic but civic and educational. If Texas succeeded in shutting down the N.A.A.C.P. within its borders, other southern states would no doubt follow its lead. In 1919 there were 31 branches and 7,046 members in Texas. According to Mary White Ovington, the subpoena had been issued because copies of the *Crisis*, reporting resolutions adopted at the 1919 annual conference demanding the end of segregation in public transportation, had come to the attention of Texas officials (Kellogg 1967).

John Shillady wired Governor Hobby and the Texas attorney general asking for a meeting so that he might explain to them the aims and purposes of the association. In Austin, both the governor and the attorney general refused to see him. He did manage to speak with the acting attorney general and tried to explain, in response to questions, that the N.A.A.C.P. was in no way working to provoke black attacks on whites. When Shillady left the attorney general's office, he was hauled before a secret session of what was purported to be a court of inquiry. There the county attorney asked Shillady insulting questions regarding his private life. The following morning Shillady was attacked and beaten unconscious by a group of men who had been seen loitering about the building the night before. Six to eight men took part in the assault, while "an auto full of tough-looking men" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 239) stood by. Among the assailants were a judge and a constable, both of whom later bragged about their part in the attack, claiming that Shillady was inciting blacks against whites and had been warned to leave Austin (Kellogg 1967).

N.A.A.C.P. officials in the national office in New York learned through an Associated Press dispatch that Shillady had been attacked. Immediately, officials fired off a telegram to Governor Hobby demanding that the assailants be punished. Hobby replied that the only offender had been Shillady and that he had already been punished. When Mary White Ovington wrote to police officials at Austin, the deputy sheriff answered that Shillady had been "received by red-blooded white men," who would not tolerate "Negro-loving white men" in Texas. They were returning him to New York: "We attend to our own affairs down here, and suggest that you do the same up there" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 240).

In the face of such intransigence, the N.A.A.C.P. conducted its own investigation. James Weldon Johnson learned that a prominent black clergyman in Austin had been involved in the attack on Shillady; he had told a Texas ranger that the N.A.A.C.P. was coming to town in order to excite sedition and start race riots. Johnson exposed the clergyman in the black press and demanded the severest, most complete ostracism possible as punishment. At about the same time Richard Carroll, a black lecturer from Columbia, South Carolina, complained in the *New York Age* that "fully half the outrages and lynchings and brutality were caused by 'Judas Iscariots' among Negroes" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 240). There may well have been "Judas Iscariots" at work in lynchings.

and other acts of mob violence, but there were Romans—whites—as well. Whites, not frightened disloyal blacks, merit our scorn today.

At a special meeting of the board, an appeal was sent to President Wilson asking him to appoint a “responsible commission” to investigate the attack on Shillady. Resolutions were drafted demanding a congressional investigation, given that the governor of Texas had approved and defended a criminal assault by public officials. The board demanded that Governor Hobby remove from office the judge who participated in the assault, and the governor of New York was urged to demand protection for citizens of New York who might visit Texas. Mass meetings were held across the country, including one in New York, to protest the attack on Shillady. A team of lawyers—Moorfield Storey, Arthur B. Spingarn, Charles Studin, George Crawford, Butler Wilson—looked into the legal aspects of the case. They agreed that if Shillady were to return to Austin to testify, he must first be given guarantees by the governor of protection from physical violence (Kellogg 1967).

Shillady suffered serious physical and psychological effects from the assault. Johnson met him when he returned to New York: “I met Mr. Shillady when he arrived at Pennsylvania Station. His face and body were badly bruised; moreover, he was broken in spirit. I don’t think he was ever able to realize how such a thing could happen in the United States to an American, free, white, and twenty-one. He never fully recovered spiritually from the experience” (Johnson 1933, 343). He would soon resign his post at the N.A.A.C.P.

Johnson may have been understanding of Shillady’s condition, but others were not. Arthur B. Spingarn suggested that the secretary lacked courage and left the association out of fear of returning to Austin. Like Johnson, Walter White was more sympathetic. Mary White Ovington likened Shillady to a shell-shocked soldier. By November the secretary’s health was so obviously broken that he was given a vacation with full pay for six weeks in order to recuperate. The board agreed to reimburse him for medical and other expenses related to the attack. Shillady returned to his duties as executive secretary of the association for a time, but he resigned in August 1920, an act which erased the possibility of a trial in Austin. It is unlikely that there would ever have been a trial, as the N.A.A.C.P. was unable to secure a local lawyer willing to argue the case. In his letter of resignation, Shillady wrote: “I am less confident than heretofore of the speedy success of the Association’s full program, and of the probability of overcoming, within a reasonable period, the forces opposed to Negro equality by the means and methods which are within the Association’s power to employ” (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 241).

W. E. B. Du Bois found Shillady’s disillusionment “old news.” African Americans had known for a long time that racial hatred would disappear no time soon, that many whites were either vehemently opposed or indifferent to racial equality, and that the legal means available to the N.A.A.C.P. for changing the situation were quite limited. But white people, warned Du Bois, especially white social workers, must accept the fact that white racism cannot be sidestepped. The 90,000 members of the association had banded together to confront it. Shillady had tried to speak quietly and reasonably to Texas officials but “the haters of black folk beat him and maltreated him and scarred him like a dog” (Kellogg 1967, 241). If peaceful, legal, and reasonable means were inadequate

to the task, what, asked Du Bois, did whites propose? (Kellogg 1967) The question would reverberate for decades.

VI. The Great War

National culture, never just a point of fixed identity allegiance, reflected changing relations of power.

—Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary, “Blood Brotherhood’: The Racialization of Patriotism, 1865–1918” (1996)

It is the white man’s civilization and the white man’s government which are on trial.

—Ida B. Wells, quoted in Gail Bederman, “‘Civilization,’ the Decline of Middle-Class Manliness, and Ida B. Wells’ Antilynching Campaign (1892–94)” (1995b)

Not quite fifty years after the bloodiest civil war of the nineteenth century, white Union and Confederate veterans declared themselves “brothers” once again. The unification of the nation came at the cost of abandoning Reconstruction and “forgetting” the link between the Civil War and the struggle for racial equality. Organized veterans also seemed to “forget” the republic’s early definition of patriotism, with its focus on citizen virtue and moral behavior. In the second decade of the twentieth century, American patriotism meant the celebration of male warrior heroism. Although the discourse of patriotism continued to allude to democracy and equality, the glorification of battlefield heroism facilitated the reincorporation of the treasonous Confederates. By the 1913 anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg and the Emancipation Proclamation, Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary (1996, 54) observes, “the racist terms of reconciliation were complete.”

The racist terms of the reconciliation were made explicit on July 4. When Woodrow Wilson arrived to give the keynote address that commemorative year, a Confederate veteran carrying the Stars and Bars and a Union veteran carrying the Stars and Stripes formed his honor guard. In his Gettysburg address, President Wilson congratulated “the Blue and the Gray” on having “found one another again as brothers and comrades, in arms, enemies no longer.” Without any mention of sedition or slavery or the Emancipation Proclamation, Wilson praised the “blood and sacrifice of multitudes of unknown men” in their battle “to make a nation” (quoted in O’Leary 1996, 54). The celebration of Confederate veterans as patriots in the “national brotherhood,” however, had not always been assumed. As long as Reconstruction held, freed black people were the primary participants in patriotic celebrations in the South. During that brief moment of opportunity, those white and black patriots committed to racial justice had secured a significant voice in debates over the moral character of postbellum America (O’Leary 1996).

In World War I northern and southern white men were to fight side by side in a racialized alliance. African-American men would be expected to risk their lives in Europe even while they continued to face inequality and racial violence in the United States. While black brothers continued to be lynched back home, black soldiers faced racism from their fellow Americans on the battlefields of France. African Americans, O'Leary points out, fought World War I on two fronts: proving their loyalty in Europe while on the home front linking the Wilson administration's demand "to make the world safe for democracy" with black citizens' demand "to make America safe for the Negro." Reflecting intensifying black indignation, the *Chicago Defender* featured a graphic of the Statue of Liberty that offered "Liberty, Protection, Opportunity, Happiness, For all White Men" and "Humiliation, Segregation, Lynching, For all Black Men" (quoted in O'Leary 1996, 79).

When Congress had declared war on the German Empire in April 1917, American public opinion had been split. Recall that Randolph Bourne broke with John Dewey over Dewey's support for American intervention. Prowar advocates used the opportunity to suspend civil liberties, even at universities. Columbia University president Nicholas Murray Butler declared that Columbia would not tolerate those "who are not with whole heart and mind and strength committed to fight with us to make the world safe for democracy." He told the faculty that "what had been tolerated before becomes intolerable now. What had been wrongheadedness was now sedition. What had been folly was now treason" (quoted in Westbrook 1991, 210). An old friend and colleague of Dewey's who had been instrumental in bringing him to Columbia, James McKeen Cattell, was fired for sending a letter to Congress asking support for an antiwar bill. The faculty committee designed to deal with such matters, on which Dewey sat, was bypassed, resulting in Dewey's resignation from the committee and his condemnation of the Trustees' action: "For the time being the conservative upholders of the Constitution are on the side of moral mob rule and psychological lynch law" (quoted in Westbrook 1991, 211).

The board of the N.A.A.C.P. was also split, although the majority opposed American intervention. Association attorney George Crawford warned Joel Spingarn that he should, if possible, prevent the board from taking any public stand on the war due to the strong pacifist opinions of important board members and their "violent adherence to peace" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 249). He feared that bitter dissension would cripple the board and draw public retribution. Among the influential board members who were adamantly opposed to American participation in the war were Villard, Lillian Wald, Jane Addams, Unitarian minister John Haynes Holmes, and Mary White Ovington (Kellogg 1967).

Not only university faculty suffered as a consequence of wartime hysteria. Such groups as the Non-Partisan League, the Industrial Workers of the World, German Americans, socialists, pacifists, aliens, and African Americans were considered by the right-wing majority as potentially seditious. Under the espionage acts, the Department of Justice was authorized to deport anyone judged a traitor or subversive. Rumors were rampant that there was "widespread sedition" among blacks. The *New York Tribune* reported that German agents were persuading African Americans to slip into Mexico to join the Germans

there in preparation for an invasion of the United States. The N.A.A.C.P. protested to the managing editor of the *Tribune*, and urged black editors to challenge publicly all such nonsense (Kellogg 1967).

The *Crisis* came under the scrutiny of the Department of Justice, which said that the "tone" of some of its articles was questionable, potentially "un-American." When passage of the Sedition Act appeared inevitable, Du Bois emphasized to the board that caution would be required when discussing the war. The board asked attorney Charles Studin to join the *Crisis* committee so that he could monitor, from a legal point of view, all *Crisis* material before publication. The committee agreed to restrict the *Crisis* to facts and constructive criticism for the duration of the war (Kellogg 1967).

A conference of black editors was called by the War Department to discuss how African Americans could contribute to winning the war. Representing the *Crisis*, Du Bois took the lead in drafting resolutions which were then adopted unanimously by the thirty-one editors in attendance. Resolutions pointed to such problems as lynching, mob violence, and the refusal to employ African Americans as Red Cross nurses and as war correspondents. The War Department was not able (or inclined) to solve these, but at least the conference succeeded in uniting the black press in support of the war. Du Bois came out in favor of the war in an editorial in the July *Crisis*, urging African Americans to suspend their skepticism and "close ranks" with their fellow white citizens and the nation's allies in the war effort (Kellogg 1967).

The Second Universal Races Congress, scheduled to meet in Paris in 1915, was canceled due to the war. The N.A.A.C.P. had been represented by four delegates to the first Congress held in London in 1911. When the war broke out in Europe, Du Bois tried to have the second meeting relocated to New York to avoid its cancellation, but he was not successful. Toward the end of the war, the League of Small and Subject Nationalities invited the N.A.A.C.P. to take a seat on its council, which was to look after the interests of Africa and black people worldwide. Du Bois was eager for the N.A.A.C.P. Board to align itself with the league and to contribute toward its expenses, but the board hesitated. Two months later Du Bois announced that he had, without authorization, been sitting on the league's council as the representative of the N.A.A.C.P. The board voted not to become affiliated with other organizations. It did, however, vote to allow staff members, such as Du Bois, to accept appointments or take part in other movements on their own. Du Bois was not satisfied, and in September 1918, he urged the board to take action concerning the future of Africa. He himself was seeking ways to persuade the Wilson administration to ensure that the rights of colonized African peoples would be recognized at the coming Peace Conference (Kellogg 1967).

Representatives of other black protest organizations announced plans to lobby at the Peace Conference, competing with the N.A.A.C.P. to represent African Americans. W. H. Jernagin of Washington planned to lobby for the National Race Congress, the largest of the new organizations, and William Monroe Trotter of Boston would represent the older National Equal Rights League. Their purpose, they said, was not only to represent African Americans, but the interests of blacks throughout the world. These moves and

pronouncements by rival leaders and organizations strengthened Du Bois's resolve to go to France to appeal to the Peace Conference on behalf of the blacks peoples of Africa and the world (Kellogg 1967).

The Pan-African Movement

At the December 1918 meeting of the board, Mary White Ovington explained to the other members that, although Du Bois's primary reason for going to Europe was to collect material for a history of black soldiers in the war, he would also take part in a Pan-African Congress in Paris. This meeting had been called to discuss the internationalization of Africa and promote self-determination for the former German colonies. Du Bois's prior interest in and growing preoccupation with a Pan-African Congress soon pushed the black soldier project into the background. The indirectness with which he presented his interest in attending the Congress perhaps prompted him to write years later that the association "did not adopt the Pan-African movement on its official program, but it allowed me on my own initiative to promote the effort." However, the N.A.A.C.P. Annual Report for 1918, published shortly after that meeting, reports that Du Bois was sent to France in a three-fold capacity: (1) as special representative of the *Crisis* to report on the Peace Conference, (2) as historian to collect material for a history of black soldiers' participation in the war, and (3) "as representative of the N.A.A.C.P. to summon a Pan-African Congress" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 279).

The idea of a Pan-African Congress originated at the turn of the century in London. A young black barrister from the West Indies practicing in London, H. Sylvester-Williams, is generally credited with the idea. Several years later, when Booker T. Washington proposed holding a conference on Africa, T. Thomas Fortune claimed he had been the originator of the idea. Fortune claimed that Williams had stolen his proposal and issued as his own the call for the first Pan-African Congress, held in Westminster Hall, London, in July 1900 to coincide with the Methodist Ecumenical Congress and the Paris Exposition. Approximately thirty delegates attended that meeting, including Du Bois, who was elected a vice-president. Kellogg tells us that Du Bois's later assertion that the movement went dormant for a generation is not completely accurate. In 1906, Kellogg points out, the Pan-African Association was still extant, with Bishop Alexander Walters serving as president. Additionally, J. Max Barber, head of the Pan-African League Department of the Du Bois-led Niagara Movement, was in touch with at least one prominent African, A. K. Soga, concerning the prospects of a Pan-African movement (Kellogg 1967).

Booker T. Washington convened an "International Conference on the Negro," in April 1912, at Tuskegee Institute. This was a far larger and more representative gathering than the 1919 Pan-African Congress in Paris. Those in attendance at Tuskegee studied how the methods employed by the Tuskegee and Hampton Institutes might be employed in Africa, the West Indies, and South America. Some claimed that the Tuskegee conference had for the first time brought together blacks from all parts of the world and that it gave new impetus to the idea of an African nationality or "personality," anticipating later conceptions of "blackness" and "*négritude*." Registrants decided that the

conference should become a triennial event and, moreover, that Booker T. Washington should travel to South Africa to try to persuade the white majority there that the aspirations of blacks were just. Before a second conference could be held, World War I began, and a year later Washington died. Given these events, one must agree with Kellogg (1967, 280) that "Du Bois's claim that he was the founder and convenor of the First Pan-African Congress is something of an exaggeration."

The cause of the African peoples was not only on Du Bois's mind. In January 1919, John Shillady proposed that the theme of the annual conference should be "Africa in the World Democracy." Archibald Grimké, however, cautioned the board that the association must not be diverted from its primary purpose, the advancement of African Americans. Walling and Mary White Ovington countered that no disproportionate amount of time would be devoted to Africa, but that the African question was very timely and that its inclusion on the agenda would result in much valuable publicity for the N.A.A.C.P., which in turn would help to promote the primary cause, that of African Americans (Kellogg 1967).

The idea of a Pan-African Congress in Paris in 1919 was not without its difficulties. Lengthy negotiations had to be held with the French government before permission was finally granted to hold the Congress in Paris. Then the United States and the colonial powers refused to issue passports to those who wished to attend, jeopardizing the event. Finally, the N.A.A.C.P. intervened to save the conference. It was an N.A.A.C.P.-sponsored Congress that opened in Paris on February 19, 1919. Only fifteen countries were represented; nine were African, with twelve delegates out of the total of fifty-seven. Twenty-one represented the West Indies, sixteen the United States. Blaise Diagne, a member of the Chamber of Deputies from Senegal, was elected president; Du Bois was elected secretary. Other N.A.A.C.P. members who attended included John Hope, Mrs. W. A. Hunton, Joel Spingarn, Walling, and Charles Edward Russell (Kellogg 1967).

One of the welcomed consequences of the Pan-African Congress, Du Bois argued, was the idea for the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations. The Commission, Du Bois suggested, was a direct response to the Congress's request for an international organization for the administration and supervision of the former German colonies. Other resolutions adopted by the Congress concerned such African issues as natural resources, concessions, investment of capital, labor, education, and the participation of the indigenous people in government. The *New York Evening Globe* reported that the Pan-African Congress would appeal to the Peace Conference to grant black Africans the freedom to develop the continent unhampered by Europeans and other colonial interests. The Paris edition of the *New York Herald* judged it a reasonable request, in particular the Congress's call for the creation of a permanent bureau attached to the League of Nations to ensure observance in Africa of an international code of law. This bureau would aim to protect Africans from European exploitation and support Africans' political and economic interests (Kellogg 1967).

Du Bois had wanted to stop over in Haiti on his return from Europe, but could not. Representing the N.A.A.C.P., he had hoped to investigate reports of intolerable conditions there. Such reports had been filtering into the association since 1915, when the United States had taken control of Haitian finances. This move had been followed in 1916 by American military occupation of the country. The N.A.A.C.P. was concerned because Haiti, as Du Bois put it, was “a continuing symbol of Negro revolt against slavery and oppression, and [of] capacity for self-rule” (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 284). Many of the civilian and military personnel the Wilson administration had stationed in Haiti were known to the association to be racist southern whites. In 1915, on behalf of the N.A.A.C.P., Villard pressed the Wilson administration to establish a commission to visit Haiti. In letters and private conversations with Joseph Tumulty, Secretary of State Robert Lansing, and other Wilson administration officials, he urged that the Haitian problem be resolved not only politically and economically, but also from the point of view of social justice (Kellogg 1967).

Lansing was unenthusiastic. Indeed, nothing was done by the Wilson administration concerning the commission, and reports of intolerable conditions continued to reach the New York office despite tight government control. The news of American atrocities in Haiti combined with reports of the military expedition sent by Wilson to Mexico to suppress Francisco “Pancho” Villa enraged both Storey and Villard, both strongly anti-imperialist as well as antiracist activists. No relief was in sight, however, as reports of the mistreatment of Haitians and American suppression of self-rule continued during the war years. In 1918 the board authorized James Weldon Johnson to travel to Haiti to investigate, as soon as funds became available. The board declined to allow Du Bois to make the trip. Kellogg speculates the reason might have had to do with Johnson’s previous diplomatic experience in Latin America, which in some board members’ minds made him more qualified than Du Bois. Johnson did not make the trip to Haiti until 1920; his revealing report prompted the N.A.A.C.P. to lobby intensively on behalf of the Haitians during the 1920s. The association’s efforts were largely responsible for the evacuation of American troops from Haiti and the end of U.S. financial control (Kellogg 1967).

VII. Commission on Interracial Cooperation (C.I.C.)

It [C.I.C.] functioned as the principal vehicle of southern liberalism during the interwar period.

—Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915–1972* (1999)

The decline of lynchings during the 1920s and 1930s reflects the effectiveness of antilynching activists.

—W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880–1930* (1993)

The Atlanta-based Commission on Interracial Cooperation (C.I.C.) had been founded in 1919 to rally influential white moderates and carefully chosen blacks for its campaign against mob violence. A decade later, it would sponsor the Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching, which published its findings in *The Tragedy of Lynching* (Raper 1933/1969). As well, the commission encouraged the establishment of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (A.S.W.P.L.), and lobbied politically to stop the "peculiar" practice. In 1944, the Interracial Commission dissolved into the Southern Regional Council, an organization with much broader interests. While the council as such was not an activist group, members often were active as individuals and pressed the organization to take direct action, especially in the struggle against segregation. After World War II, the council became an important collector and dispenser of material concerning African Americans and race relations in the South and in the nation (Williamson 1984; Zangrando 1980).

The Commission on Interracial Cooperation (C.I.C.) was founded by a group of prominent white ministers, educators, and social workers in Atlanta. The organization had some of its roots in the "Reconstruction" work that followed the Atlanta riot of 1906. Unlike the N.A.A.C.P., the C.I.C. was an entirely southern and largely white organization. It grew to include local and state interracial committees, but only by carefully avoiding any appearance of challenging segregation and white supremacy. The commission declared that it was "absolutely loyal ... to the principle of racial integrity." Despite these compromises, the organization was, Brundage (1993) judges, "enduring and effective" in the campaigning against lynching (quoted passages on 234).

The founding of the C.I.C. represented a certain culmination of the interracial movement in Atlanta, reinvigorated at the time of World War I, in part to respond to the rapid changes engendered by the war. Beginning in 1916, several white ministers in Atlanta, calling themselves the Committee on Church Cooperation, had periodically met with black ministers to discuss racial problems, especially those associated with urban areas. After two years of informal meetings, these encounters were formalized as meetings of the Christian Councils, comprised of representatives from both races and officials of the Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., and the Salvation Army. The hope was to stimulate communication between racially segregated congregations (Brundage 1993; Williamson 1984).

In January 1919, several members of the Committee on Church Cooperation were concerned that readjustment to peace after the war might be complicated by racial friction, a legitimate concern given that black soldiers were being lynched in uniform upon their return from Europe. These concerned members organized what they called the Atlanta Commission on Interracial Cooperation, the immediate forerunner of the C.I.C. Under the leadership of John J. Eagan, a prominent Atlanta manufacturer, and Plato Durham, former dean of the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, the commission brought together a number of prominent Atlanta citizens who had long expressed an interest in "developing better conditions in the South" (quoted in Brundage 1993, 234).

Among the founders were M. Ashby Jones; Cary B. Wilmer, rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church; Richard T. Flynn, a Presbyterian minister; Will A. Alexander, a 1912 graduate of Vanderbilt's divinity school and for some years a practicing minister in Tennessee as well as a member of the War Work Council of the Y.M.C.A.; and Richard H. King, executive director of the Southeastern Department of the Y.M.C.A. War Work Council. During the remainder of 1919, Jones, Eagan, and especially Alexander ("for whom the interracial campaign became a crusade" [Brundage 1993, 234–235]) searched for sufficient financial backing to expand the Atlanta program throughout the South. Finally, in January 1920, funding was secured from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial and the Commission on Interracial Cooperation was founded, with Alexander as its executive secretary. For the most part, the commission would function as an organization for investigation, study, and publication toward the improvement of race relations (Brundage 1993; Williamson 1984).

The C.I.C.'s most important achievements, Adam Fairclough (1999) suggests, were in the promotion of black education. Functioning as a conduit for northern philanthropy, the commission helped to establish Dillard University in New Orleans, a merger of two older black colleges. (Dillard's first president would be Will Alexander.) The C.I.C. also supported the building of thousands of black schools with money from the Julius Rosenwald Fund, a Chicago-based charity founded with profits from the Sears, Roebuck Company. To a remarkable extent, Fairclough (1997) tells us, the "Rosenwald schools" became embedded in the fabric of rural black communities, a fact that their very name—implying that they were outright gifts of northern white philanthropy—tends to disguise.

The truth of the matter was that Rosenwald money furnished less than half of the necessary funding required to build Rosenwald schools. The greater portion came from state government and from the local citizens themselves. Their contribution was made in the form of money, materials, and labor, a direct involvement in the project that made these schools more than mere buildings. Drives to build Rosenwald schools, encouraged by state agents employed by the fund, provided opportunities for disenfranchised African Americans to mobilize around a common purpose and to achieve a sense of community progress at a time when white violence, including lynching, continued unabated. In rural Louisiana, the Rosenwald Fund helped fund 372 schools, a quarter of all black schools, a third of the total enrollment, and a half of all the teachers. Throughout the South, the fund financed 5,000 schools between 1914 and 1922 (Fairclough 1997, 1999).

As a representative of the Rosenwald Fund, Horace Mann Bond and his wife Julia Washington Bond traveled to Washington Parish in southeastern Louisiana in 1934. Horace Mann Bond was at that time in the early years of a distinguished career as a historian, curriculum theorist, and university president (Urban 1992). At age twenty-nine he was a professor at Fisk University with an impressive list of scholarly publications; his expertise as an authority on black education made him attractive to officials of the Rosenwald Fund who asked him and his wife to live in the small Louisiana farming community to study the operation of the local black schools there. As Adam Fairclough (1997) quips,

today the two would be called “participant-observers,” but in 1934 they were most certainly “explorers” (xvii). This experience, Horace Mann Bond would later write, “proved one of the most valuable of our lives” (quoted in Fairclough 1997, xvii).

For three months in late 1934 the Bonds, who had married in 1929 and had as yet no children (their son Julian would figure prominently in the 1960s civil rights movement), lived in a wooden cabin in a district known as Star Creek. Describing Star Creek, the Bonds reported:

Immediately after the War, when the price of cotton gave economic security to the community that it has never since enjoyed, the members of the community obtained a Rosenwald grant-in-aid. They then rented a saw mill, bought some timber ... and cut the trees, sawed the timber, and hauled it to the site of the school where they erected the structure. This community experience is recalled with pride. ... They speak of the school as “our school” in a sense that transcends the ordinary use of that term. Teachers have come and gone, but the memory of that united community and of their contribution centers the life of all in the institution. (quoted in Fairclough 1997, xix)

So important was the school that it, not the church, functioned as the center of the black community (Fairclough 1997). The lynching of Jerome Wilson (see section V of chapter 11) precipitated the Bonds’ premature departure (Bond and Bond 1997).

Unlike the enthusiasm these school-focused groups enjoyed, the C.I.C.’s local committees started with a zeal that often could not be sustained. While local committees located outside the main cities of the South often failed to survive, in Georgia, local committees not only survived but flourished. No doubt the easy access to and constant attention from the C.I.C. headquarters’ staff in Atlanta helped sustain Georgia’s local committees. The state committee enjoyed the skilled leadership of Thomas J. Woofter, Jr., a recent doctoral graduate in sociology from Columbia University; Clark H. Foreman, the grandson of the founder of the *Atlanta Constitution*; and Arthur F. Raper, a product of Howard Odum’s sociology program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In probably no other southern states was the combination of talent and resources more favorable (Brundage 1993).

By the 1930s antilynching activists went about their work with an intensified sense of urgency. C.I.C. members routinely urged prominent whites in communities where lynchings might occur to use their influence, specifically to remind sheriffs and other local law enforcement officers of their legal obligation to protect prisoners. When commission members were unable to prevent a lynching, they investigated the incident and, when possible, secured indictments against the mob leaders (Brundage 1993). Also in 1930, the C.I.C. took an important step toward activism when it employed Jessie Daniel Ames to organize the A.S.W.P.L. As we have seen (see chapter 8, section VI), Jessie Daniel Ames traveled from state to state, persuading women’s clubs and other women’s groups which had been successful before in the fight for suffrage to concentrate now on the fight against lynching. When a crime occurred that

might result in a lynching, local A.S.W.P.L. members would pressure local officials to take whatever actions were necessary to prevent it. Joel Williamson (1984, 485) regards Ames as "a personality much like Rebecca Felton, but she delivered a message to white men that was precisely opposite to that of the fire-eating Georgian. She was a very strong woman who labored to maintain a household and rear three children after her husband's early death, and she was not very respectful toward men as men. She was forceful, a superb organizer, and highly effective."

Such activism was especially appreciated by the N.A.A.C.P., and Walter White and other N.A.A.C.P. officials watched with hope what appeared to be an increasing resistance to lynching across the South. This resistance seemed fairly widespread, but White looked in particular to Will Alexander and the C.I.C. Both the C.I.C. and A.S.W.P.L. sought to discredit those myths—especially the rape myth—which white men used to justify the practice. The effort involved research and publicity, community education, as well as the political work of the A.S.W.P.L. Robert Eleazer and C.I.C. secretaries in the several states implemented the overall program, while Jessie Daniel Ames organized women locally and regionally (Zangrande 1980; Hall 1979).

Alexander began to feel confident that lynching was nearly played out, and said so. The *New York Times* for January 12, 1930, reported his prediction: "FORESEES END OF LYNCHING. Atlanta, Ga., Jan. 11—Lynching will be a lost crime by 1940—something for scientists to study and the rest of us to remember with disbelief—and it will be wiped out by radio, good roads and the newspapers, according to Will W. Alexander, director of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation" (quoted in Ginzburg 1962/1988, 181). Alexander would be too optimistic by twenty years, as the last recognized lynching occurred in Mississippi in 1959 (see the final section of chapter 2).

Also in 1930 Will Alexander proposed that the organization conduct detailed investigations of each lynching in hopes of understanding the specific causes of mob violence. The C.I.C. had already committed itself to the investigation of lynchings, as had the N.A.A.C.P. What distinguished the new campaign, named the Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching, was the prestige of those involved. Among the participants were the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Julian Harris of the *Atlanta Constitution*, John Hope, the president of Atlanta University, and B. F. Hubert, president of Georgia State College in Savannah. Other members included Howard W. Odum of the University of North Carolina, Dallas attorney Alex Spence, Nashville's W. King, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, President W. J. McGlothlin of Furman University, and such major black figures as R. R. Moton and Monroe N. Work of the Tuskegee Institute, and sociologist Charles S. Johnson of Fisk University. Alexander recruited the young editor of the *Chattanooga News*, George Fort Milton, to chair the commission (Zangrande 1980; Brundage 1993).

Research on each lynching was to be conducted by two social scientists: Arthur Raper, a young white sociologist educated at the University of North Carolina, the emerging center of southern white liberalism, and Walter R. Chivers, a black sociologist from Morehouse College in Atlanta (Brundage 1993; Howard 1995). In November 1931, the commission published its first findings in an eight-page pamphlet, "Lynchings and What They Mean." In

1933, the commission issued its full report in two volumes published by the University of North Carolina Press: *The Tragedy of Lynching*, by Arthur F. Raper, and James Harmon Chadbourn's *Lynching and the Law* (Zangrando 1980; Raper 1933/1969; Chadbourn 1933).

These publications communicated the conclusions of southern white liberals and antilynching activists concerning the causes of lynching and how the practice might be stopped. Brundage (1993) suggests there was not much new in Raper's analysis of lynching; Walter White (1929) had reached similar conclusions just a few years before. But, perhaps due to their scholarly, methodical and the scientific tone, the commission's findings became the definitive contemporary analysis of lynching, at least as far as southern whites were concerned. What was newsworthy about Raper's book was that it provided, as the *Chattanooga News* put it, "all the necessary facts concerning the malady which has made the South a synonym for barbarity in other countries" (quoted in Brundage 1993, 246). Ida B. Wells had seen to that.

From Raper's point of view, the evidence concerning the lynchings of 1930 was unmistakable; illiteracy, poverty, and cultural stagnation were the root causes of mob violence. Unpersuaded by the conventional catch-all concept, white supremacy, Raper insisted that lynchings could not be understood apart from the South's profound social and economic problems. Only the modernization of the southern economy would eradicate those causes which erupted, all too often, in the white male mutilation of black men. Such modernization would not happen overnight. In the meantime, the commission urged influential southern whites to become engaged in the struggle against the practice, as "the primary responsibility for the lessening of crime and eradication of the lynching rests upon that portion of the white population which controls political, social, and economic conditions" (quoted in Brundage 1993, 246). Raper was not content to conduct research on lynching; he spoke to civic clubs, churches, and similar groups throughout the South. The S.C.S.L. sent his book to educational institutions and libraries (Howard 1995).

The Raper study was reissued in 1969. A sober and scholarly study, it merits reading today. The appearance of *The Tragedy of Lynching* as well as an increasing opposition to mob violence encouraged southern liberals and progressives to combat the practice. But southern liberals' position has always been an awkward one. In their public opposition to lynching they seemed too "radical" to their neighbors, but the fact was that they always trailed an increasingly national condemnation of the phenomenon. A character in Lillian Smith's novel of interracial love and lynching, *Strange Fruit*, personifies the problem of the southern liberal.

Prentiss Reid, editor of *The Maxwell Press*, sat late in his office. Yellow sheets of paper lay in front of him, covered with pencil marks. The town's religious skeptic, the admirer of Tom Paine, the man who fought Prohibition, who had dared raise questions in 1917 about the persecution of aliens, had drawn a blank for tomorrow's editorial. Anything you say now will do more harm than good. That's the trouble. Always the trouble! Say what you think, make a gesture, you stir up a mare's nest. Make things worse than they were before—So they say.

He lit a cigarette; stared at the bookshelf above his desk. *Holy Bible*, *Common Sense*, *Age of Reason*, *Rights of Man*. Four books worn from handling. Pages marked, words underlined, comments scribbled in the margins. There was no man in Maxwell who could with so much ease cite Holy Writ in an argument as could the town's infidel; and none who could quote whole pages from Tom Paine as casually as if from a talk with a friend (Smith 1972/1944, 364–365).

What will he say about the lynching of an innocent black man? Reid talks himself into accepting the crime. Instead of criticizing his fellow southerners, he blames the North.

Prentiss Reid lit another cigarette; stared into the wall, shrugged, wrote rapidly for a few minutes. "... [B]ut what's done now is done. Bad, yes. Lawlessness and violence are always bad. And this particular form smacks of the Dark Ages. It hurts business, it hurts the town, it hurts the county, it hurts everybody in it. But it's time now to get our minds on our work, get back to our jobs, quit this talking. Those who participated in the lynching were a lawless bunch of hoodlums. We don't know who they are. They ought to be punished. But who are they? No one seems to know. ... As for northern criticism. There will be plenty. All we can say is: if the damyankees can handle these folks better than we who've had more than two hundred years' practice, let them try it. Lord knows, they're welcome to try it. Up there. And we might ask them how about their own gangsters? And how about East St. Louis and Chicago? (Smith 1944/1972, 367)

These are, of course, references to the famous East St. Louis and Chicago race riots. With southern progressives stymied, is it any wonder that nationally, Americans felt decreasing patience for southerners to solve the problem themselves, and an increased sentiment for federal legislation? (Zangrando 1980).

The C.I.C. served as a clearinghouse of information on lynching. For instance, in 1921, at the urging of Will Alexander, Governor Hugh M. Dorsey (1917–1921) used C.I.C. records to write a speech and a pamphlet that described 135 incidents of mistreatment of African Americans in Georgia, including lynchings and violent intimidation. While hardly an antilynching activist, Dorsey was nonetheless heartened by the work of the C.I.C. in light of the social and economic tensions aggravated by the Great Migration after World War I. Racial violence in Georgia had reached a point, Dorsey decided, where "to me it seems that we stand indicted as a people before the world" (quoted in Brundage 1993, 236). The pamphlet attracted national attention. In it Dorsey called for a comprehensive state antilynching law, including the creation of a state police force controlled by the governor's office. The Georgia C.I.C. drew up an antilynching statute which was introduced into the 1926 legislature by Alexander R. Lawton, a C.I.C. member from Savannah, but the bill, as had previous bills, failed to pass (Brundage 1993).

To what extent the campaigns of the N.A.A.C.P. and the C.I.C. influenced public attitudes toward lynching is difficult to determine. Steven Tolnay and E. M. Beck, two sociologists whose research on lynching we examined in chapter 3, are skeptical, pointing instead to "larger" social and economic shifts in the South. Fitzhugh Brundage, a historian sympathetic to the "empirical" study of lynching whose research we also examined in that chapter, is somewhat more appreciative: the "two organizations almost certainly contributed significantly to the growing intolerance of Georgians toward lynching." He recalls the assessment of another sociologist, Howard Odum, who in 1936 suggested that "the value of the C. I. C. has come from ... [its] continuous, uninterrupted major effort constantly under the same management and motivation. ... It has modified that culture in vigorous and constructive ways" (quoted in Brundage 1993, 238).

VIII. James Weldon Johnson

[James Weldon] Johnson situates the black male body at the center of what he perceives as a national crisis, a crisis conceived in the dual terms of black body and white soul.

—Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Novelist* (1987)

At the forefront of the quickening crusade against lynching was the newly invigorated N.A.A.C.P.

—W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880–1930* (1993)

Despite the importance of southern-based groups such as the C.I.C., Robert Zangrado (1980) argues that it was organized pressure from outside the South that contributed most to lynching's decline. The most visible and concerted pressure was exerted by the N.A.A.C.P. Ida B. Wells had ended the white silence on lynching in the late nineteenth century, and in the early twentieth, the N.A.A.C.P. undertook to end the official governmental silence. The N.A.A.C.P. worked long and hard to force elected officials (who were almost all white men) to face the fact of the illegal and obscene violence against black men in the South. As early as 1916, black academician William Pickens (1969) had argued that white acknowledgment of southern sadism would be a necessary precondition to ending the practice. In like fashion, Walter White argued that the N.A.A.C.P.'s investigations, exposés, and campaigns for a federal antilynching legislation were absolutely necessary in order to provoke public concern, force a national political dialogue on the subject, and prod the South into reflecting on its most vicious form of racist aggression and violence. Writing just after the peak of the association's congressional lobbying efforts, students of American racial relations as diverse as Hortense Powdermaker

(1939) and Gunnar Myrdal (1944/1962) endorsed White's analysis (Zangrando 1980).

Walter White knew that the struggle to secure federal legislation against lynching would be difficult. He knew something of the history of black resistance to lynching, and he knew everything about the depth of black dismay over federal inaction. He was aware that in 1898, prompted by such atrocities as the lynching of Frazier B. Baker, a black postmaster in South Carolina, and the riot in Wilmington, North Carolina, Ida B. Wells and Bishop Alexander Walters of the A.M.E. Zion Church, among others, had organized an Afro-American Council to focus national attention on lynching and other forms of racial hatred. A mass meeting had been held in Chicago at which resolutions were adopted demanding the arrest and prosecution of Baker's killers, indemnities for his survivors, and a federal antilynching law. Wells had delivered the appeals to Washington herself. Accompanied by a delegation of Illinois congressmen, she presented these resolutions to President William McKinley. Wells (1970) remembered: "President McKinley received us very courteously, listened to my plea, accepted the resolutions which had been sent by the citizens of Chicago, and told me to report back home that they had already placed some of the finest of their secret service agents in the effort to discover and prosecute the lynchers of that black postmaster" (Wells 1970, 253).

Wells spent five weeks in Washington; she went daily to the Capitol in the effort to help Congressman George E. White, the lone African-American congressman in the House of Representatives at that time, pass a bill to provide indemnity for the widow and children of the lynched black postmaster. Congressman White told Wells that he had reduced the amount in the original bill from fifty thousand to one thousand dollars in hopes that this lower amount would permit southern congressmen not to oppose the legislation. Wells (1970) knew better: "Whereupon my reply to him was that he did not know the South as well as I had hoped for; if he did, he would know that they would object to the compensation of five dollars not because of the amount, but because of the principle of the thing" (253).

During this time Congress declared war upon Spain, and Congressman William E. Lorimer from Chicago advised her that the war would destroy any chance of action on the bill. Wells returned home (Wells 1970). A federal court failed to convict any of those arrested in the postmaster's death (Zangrando 1980). Despite White's knowledge of Wells's centrality to the antilynching struggle, he did not acknowledge her significance. As Schechter (1997) has observed, by the 1920s the struggle against lynching had become "feminized," women antilynching activists segregated in traditional feminine spheres such as the church. The big boys would go at each other where it counted, in Congress.

The biggest boys of all—those who occupied the White House—had proven themselves undependable allies in the fight against lynching. Benjamin Harrison had been the first president to advocate a federal law against the practice. While he said he opposed violence against African Americans, he acted only in response to official embarrassment over the lynching of eleven Italians in New Orleans in 1891. As would his successors, Harrison emphasized the "limitations" of federal power in interracial matters, a tactical retreat which allowed him to maintain political support from the South. As governor of Ohio,

William McKinley had opposed vigilantism; he had supported the state's 1896 antilynching law. In his first presidential inaugural address he had said that: "Lynchings must not be tolerated in a great civilized country like the United States. ... Equality of rights must prevail" (quoted in Zangrando 1980, 15).

Despite such rhetoric, mobs of southern white men encountered no federal interference in their pursuit of black male bodies. President Theodore Roosevelt encouraged others to denounce lynching but continued to associate it with rape when he spoke of it publicly. William Howard Taft preferred to leave the problem to the states (Zangrando 1980). As we saw in the case of Claude Neal, even Franklin Delano Roosevelt, hardly a states' rights advocate, could not bring himself to intervene, even after Eleanor asked him herself to do so. Lynching was, evidently, a male-male matter.

Key N.A.A.C.P. leaders such as Walter White and James Weldon Johnson knew that the rape rationale was sheer fantasy. They knew that lynchers were not exactly white knights on horseback; they themselves had faced firsthand incidents of mob violence. Lynchers were not, as Ida B. Wells had shrewdly driven home to her British listeners, civilized men. And both White and Johnson knew that every African American alive knew of someone—a family member, a friend, an acquaintance, a friend of a friend—who had been mutilated and murdered by a mob of white men. There could be no question whatsoever that federal intervention was justified (Zangrando 1980).

While the campaign against lynching was sincere, White and Johnson and the N.A.A.C.P. also used the issue to draw attention to other forms of racial violence and inequality. While determined to end lynching, White and Johnson viewed the practice in two ways: each murder justified a continued struggle against the practice, *and* the association used each incident to educate European Americans regarding the necessity for federal protection of the civil rights of African Americans generally (Zangrando 1980). Decades later, in the 1960s, this linkage between gender and civil rights would become explicit; what moderate civil rights workers as well as black revolutionaries said they were fighting for was ... manhood.

As we will see, Congress never would enact antilynching legislation. The closest it had come, long before the N.A.A.C.P. began its lobbying efforts, was in segments of those civil rights statutes passed during the Reconstruction period, specifically in the so-called Enforcement Act of 1870 and the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871. After the Supreme Court nullified portions of these laws, residual elements were incorporated into sections 51 and 52, later 241 and 242, of Title 18 of the United States Code. As interpreted in the judicial system and implemented by law-enforcement officials, however, these did not justify federal intervention against lynching. With intense N.A.A.C.P. lobbying, the U.S. House passed antilynching legislation on three occasions, 1922, 1937, and 1940, but on each occasion a filibuster or the threat of a filibuster in the Senate prevented the law from reaching the White House. Congress did finally pass five civil rights measures from 1957 to 1968, the last of which established fines and jail sentences for anyone who injured or killed a person seeking to exercise a wide range of federally protected civil rights. This was the closest Congress ever came to passing national antilynching legislation (Zangrando 1980).

A decade after the Baker lynching in South Carolina, which had prompted the formation of the Afro-American Council and Ida B. Wells's trip to the White House, another lynching event had sparked another organized response. As we saw earlier, in mid-August 1908, in Springfield, Illinois, two men had been lynched and 2,000 other African Americans were forced to flee the city. Over 4,000 militia had been required to reestablish order. Recall that it had been this racially motivated riot that led directly to the founding of the N.A.A.C.P. The fact that such brutality had occurred in a northern city—indeed, in the capital of Illinois so closely associated with the memory of Abraham Lincoln—mobilized black leaders to organize their resistance against lynching (Zangrando 1980).

Recall too that among those involved in the founding of the N.A.A.C.P. had been W. E. B. Du Bois, the legendary black scholar-activist, whose 1903 *The Souls of Black Folk* had startled readers with its attack on Booker T. Washington's accommodationism. Du Bois would settle for nothing less than absolute equality in political, educational, and civil matters. Not fooled by America's contrived ignorance of racial injustice, Du Bois had spoken of the veil separating the races. He argued, memorably, that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line" (23, 41, 87). When Du Bois agreed to leave Atlanta University in 1910 to become the association's first director of publications and research as well as editor of its magazine, the *Crisis*, Mary White Ovington had observed, "we nailed our banner to the mast. ... From that time onward, no one doubted where we stood" (quoted Zangrando 1980, 24).

Two intervening developments influenced the N.A.A.C.P.'s struggle against lynching. First was the addition to the national staff of James Weldon Johnson in late 1916 and, in early 1918, Walter Francis White. As had Ida B. Wells, and Jessie Daniel Ames would be, White soon became involved in firsthand investigations of mob violence. As noted earlier, his 1929 book, *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (dedicated to his colleague James Weldon Johnson), remains today an important study of the phenomenon. White denounced lynching as an instance of the larger economic and political exploitation of African Americans rationalized by the ideology of white supremacy. He argued that lynching functioned for southern whites as a diversion from their otherwise dull and empty lives, that lynchers were a product of a reactionary southern white culture that rejected new ideas, and that fundamentalist religion aggravated those sexual repressions and ambivalences that surfaced in the sadism of the mobs.

The second development which influenced N.A.A.C.P. antilynching tactics was America's involvement in World War I, which in disrupting traditional social arrangements—black soldiers had been treated with more respect by the French and English than they received at home—greatly increased racial tension and violence. N.A.A.C.P. membership had risen from 329 in 1912 to over 8,700 in 1916, and it would jump to almost 44,000 over the course of the next few years. The circulation of the monthly *Crisis* exceeded 37,000 by the middle of 1916. In its first half-dozen years, the N.A.A.C.P. staff was small in number and sometimes part-time. Board members were forced to divide their energies among personal, business or professional matters and the association's work. There were occasional tensions, for instance, when Du Bois objected to the

presence of too many whites in major staff positions (Zangrando 1980)—an issue that would surface again fifty years later in radical student organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (Carson 1981).

James Weldon Johnson

James Weldon Johnson became field secretary of the N.A.A.C.P. in December 1916, acting secretary in 1917 and again in September 1920, then executive secretary in December 1920. As an African American and a native of Florida, where more lynchings occurred per black population than in any other state, Johnson had lived through the nightmare that was lynching. In fact, he had himself almost been lynched. After a particularly devastating fire in Jacksonville, Florida, Johnson's hometown, a white woman reporter from New York traveled to Jacksonville to write about the impact of the fire upon the local black population. She asked Johnson to read and critique her article; he agreed to meet her in a park (Johnson 1933).

The white streetcar conductor who saw him get off the car to greet a (white) woman reported the “incident” to the local military authority, who sent “eight or ten militiamen in khaki with rifles and bayonets” to arrest Johnson and the unsuspecting reporter. Johnson was beaten while the men in uniform shouted “Kill the damned nigger!” Though the “misunderstanding” was eventually cleared up, the incident haunted Johnson: “For weeks and months the episode with all of its implications preyed on my mind and disturbed my sleep. I would wake often in the night-time, after living through again those few frightful seconds, exhausted by the nightmare of a struggle with a band of murderous, bloodthirsty men in khaki, with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets. It was not until twenty years after, through work I was then engaged in, that I was able to liberate myself completely from this horror complex” (Johnson 1933, 170; quoted in Harris 1984, 205 n. 3).

The memory of this near lynching no doubt strengthened Johnson’s resolve to fight the white male practice during his N.A.A.C.P. days. His (1912/1960) *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, first published in 1912 and reissued during the height of the Harlem Renaissance in 1927, remains today one of the best-known literary studies of the mulatto and the problems of “passing,” a phenomenon that is at once racialized and gendered (Starke 1971; Clarke 1995; Harper 1996). The tragic death in an auto-train collision in early summer 1938 of this novelist, activist, autobiographer—Trudier Harris (1984, 190) adds “songwriter, lawyer, and diplomat”—cut short a remarkable career of activism, public service, and literary achievement (Zangrando 1980).

Johnson proved himself a very able organizer, and his leadership and influence did much to invigorate the N.A.A.C.P. The N.A.A.C.P.’s rapid growth in membership during the war was reflected in the establishment of new branches throughout the South. For instance, by 1920 branches had been organized in all the important Georgia cities; in fact that state boasted the second largest number of branches in the nation. For much of this success in organizing new branches Brundage (1993) credits Johnson, and specifically his tour of the South made during January 1917.

In Virginia, in 1914, students and faculty at Virginia Union University in Richmond had organized the first branch of the N.A.A.C.P. in the state, but black interest in starting branches elsewhere was limited. The turning point for the organization in Virginia came in 1917, when James Weldon Johnson spoke at mass meetings in Richmond and Norfolk. Later, he would think of his tour as not being “overwhelmingly successful,” but that, at the very least, it had demonstrated that “everywhere there was a rise in the level of the Negro’s morale” (quoted in Brundage 1993, 184).

After Johnson’s visit, black residents of Norfolk and Richmond established N.A.A.C.P. branches in 1917. The “quickenning effect” that Johnson perceived among black southerners increased during the war years, the organization attracted new members, and branches were established in many of Virginia’s most important cities and towns. By the end of 1918, branches had been chartered in the smaller cities of Charlottesville, Danville, Lynchburg, Portsmouth, Roanoke, and Salem, and soon after branches opened in Alexandria, Graham, Louisa County, Martinsville, and Petersburg. Although enthusiasm seemed to wane in the immediate postwar period, black residents of Arlington, City Point, Leesburg, Newport News, and Staunton had established branches in their communities by 1921 (Brundage 1993).

As the initial enthusiasm for the N.A.A.C.P. in Virginia dissipated in the 1920s, many branches disappeared due to apathy, ineffective leadership, and white hostility. In Norfolk, for instance, after the initial excitement surrounding its founding faded, the local branch fell dormant. After several failed attempts, the branch was finally revived in 1926. In nearby Portsmouth, branch president David Harrell grew bitter over the resistance he encountered in his decade-long struggle to sustain the organization. After its founding in 1918, the Portsmouth branch had to be revived and reorganized in 1927 and then again in 1933. The same pattern of initial enthusiasm and later disintegration was visible in the Leesburg, Martinsville, Salem, and Staunton branches. Despite the struggles, the Lynchburg, Roanoke, Richmond, and Norfolk (after 1926) branches survived and would later play important roles in mobilizing and expressing black anger over racial violence in Virginia (Brundage 1993).

The establishment of N.A.A.C.P. branches in Virginia did not mark a dramatic departure from earlier traditions of black protest against mob violence. A staunch defender of law and order, the organization was circumspect, not confrontational. Its strategy was to pressure white officials into preventing and punishing mob violence, in part by providing legal representation for alleged black criminals, in part by publicizing injustices. The decline of mob violence in Virginia during the early twentieth century allowed local branches to turn their attention from lynching to other pressing problems, among them poverty, education, and other forms of racial discrimination. Soon enough, residential segregation, not lynching, became the preeminent concern of most branches of the N.A.A.C.P. in Virginia (Brundage 1993).

The New Orleans branch of the N.A.A.C.P. was founded in 1915. Outside New Orleans, the association had a tenuous existence. A branch had been organized in Shreveport as early as 1914, the first in the Deep South, but after ten years of occasional activity it lapsed into silence. “The N.A.A.C.P. is thoroughly hated in this section,” the branch president, Dr. Claude Hudson,

reported in 1923 (quoted in Fairclough 1999, 20). The previous year, angry newspaper editorials and threats from city officials persuaded branch officials to cancel a visit from field secretary William Pickens. An earlier attempt, in 1920, to band the branches together into a state organization came to nothing (Fairclough 1995/1999).

When Johnson visited Georgia, he met with a group of black citizens in Atlanta who were eager to become involved. This group was led by Walter White, a recent graduate of Atlanta University and a cashier with the Standard Life Insurance Company, a prominent black insurance firm, by Harry Pace, an executive of Standard Life, and by Herman Perry, the founder of the firm, who had founded an Atlanta branch of the N.A.A.C.P. in December 1916. The "quickenning effect" that Johnson perceived was "especially noticeable" in Atlanta (quoted phrases in Brundage 1993, 230). It was hardly confined to that city, however. In 1916 there had been sixty-eight N.A.A.C.P. branches in northern and western cities, and only three branches in southern cities: New Orleans, Shreveport (Louisiana), and Key West (Florida). Southern membership totaled 348. In 1919, there were 310 branches, 131 of them in the South (Johnson 1933).

At the time of his visit, the all-male Atlanta branch (the only N.A.A.C.P. branch segregated by gender [Johnson 1933, 316]) was already campaigning to improve public education facilities for black children. In Atlanta and throughout the state, Johnson inspired increased activism (Brundage 1993). While in Atlanta he was struck by "a very young man who acted as secretary of the conference. ... I saw him several times and was impressed with the degree of mental and physical energy he seemed to be able to bring into play and center on the job at hand. I did not need to guess that the representative conference and the extraordinary mass meeting were largely results of his efforts. I left Atlanta having made a strong mental note about him" (Johnson 1933, 316). That man was Walter White.

Back in New York, Johnson nominated White for a position in the national office. The board hesitated, worrying about his youth, his inexperience, and his southern upbringing. Johnson pressed his case and was finally authorized to offer White the position of assistant executive secretary (Zangrando 1980; Johnson 1933). White, Johnson (1933, 316–317) reports in his autobiography, "hesitated for a while, and I could not blame him, for he had a position and a promising outlook with an insurance company; and the salary that we offered him was very small. However, in the end he wrote that he would accept the offer." At the beginning of 1918, both White and John R. Shillady, the newly elected secretary, assumed their new positions.

James Weldon Johnson traveled extensively for the association. One trip took him to Memphis, where Ell Persons had been lynched in the spring of 1917. This lynching was widely publicized, including a photograph of the victim's severed head. Below the photograph in the *Chicago Defender* for September 8, 1917, was the following explanation:

GRIM REMINDER. Above is the head of Ell Persons, Negro, who was burned to death in Memphis, Tenn., on May 18th. His head was cut off the body and is seen here on the pavement of Beale Street, the principal

business street of the Negro section. Both ears have been severed from the head by souvenir hunters, along with the lower lip and nose. Copies of this photograph are sold in Memphis for a quarter apiece. (quoted in Ginzburg 1962/1988, 112-113)

Johnson investigated the charges that Persons had been an “ax murderer.” After ten days in Tennessee talking with journalists, the sheriff, several white and many black citizens, he found no conclusive evidence confirming Persons’s guilt. His investigation persuaded black residents to establish a local chapter of the N.A.A.C.P. He returned to New York to attend a rally in Harlem organized to denounce Persons’s murder (Zangrando 1980). Later, Johnson published his findings in a widely read pamphlet (Johnson 1933).

Such shocking, seemingly unintelligible brutality suggested to James Weldon Johnson that there was more to racism than “prejudice.” It suggested to him that there was more to lynching than economics. “Through it all,” Johnson (1933, 170) wrote in his autobiography,

I discerned one clear and certain truth: in the core of the heart of the American race problem the sex factor is rooted, rooted so deeply that it is not always recognized when it shows at the surface. Other factors are obvious and are the ones we dare to deal with; but regardless of how we deal with these, the race situation will continue to be acute as long as the sex factor persists. ... It may be innate; I do not know. But I do know it is strong and bitter.

Now what could that “sex factor” be?

After fourteen years of service with the association, James Weldon Johnson resigned as executive secretary. He was elected to membership on the board of directors and made a vice-president. The Rosenwald Fund awarded him a fellowship which allowed him to revise *The Book of American Negro Poetry* he had published earlier and to begin work on his autobiography. He was awarded the Adam K. Spence Chair of Creative Literature at Fisk University. In the spring of 1931, a committee of his friends, headed by staff members of the association, gave him a farewell dinner at the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York. Three hundred persons attended the dinner, and, Johnson (1933, 408) reports, “I experienced the ordeal of hearing one’s friends say extremely nice and generous things about one before a large company.” Among the speakers were Walter White, W. E. B. Du Bois, J. E. Spingarn, Mary White Ovington, Robert W. Bagnall, Heywood Broun, M. Dantes Bellegarde, the Haitian Minister to the United States, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Carl van Doren. Arthur B. Spingarn was toastmaster; a letter of tribute from Wilbur J. Carr, First Assistant Secretary of State, was read, and Countee Cullen contributed an original poem. Before the speeches began, his brother Rosamond—with whom he collaborated on a number of songs, including what later became known as the “Negro National Anthem”—played and sang a number of their old Broadway songs (Johnson 1933).

IX. The War Ends ... Another Begins

Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

—Ida B. Wells, echoing Thomas Jefferson, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (1970)

Lynching did not make for southern hospitality, at least as far as African Americans were concerned. In droves they fled the eleven states of the old Confederacy. During the lynching decade—1890 to 1900—approximately 242,400 black men and women moved north. Over 216,300 moved during the period 1900 to 1910; 478,800 from 1910 to 1920; and 768,600 from 1920 to 1930. The North, as we have seen, was not exactly the promised land. First, it was cold, often very cold. Most refugees from Dixie arrived with very few personal possessions, no coats, few sweaters, few savings accounts. Many were greeted with icy hostility, especially from northern white workers who were threatened by this new source of cheap labor (Zangrando 1980).

As we have seen, on July 2, 1917, white labor in East St. Louis, Missouri, started one of the most vicious race riots in American history. This was the city which Du Bois had proposed to study as a “typical” city affected by the “great migration” and whose schools Jonathan Kozol (1991) later described so vividly in *Savage Inequalities*. Nearly 6,000 African Americans had been driven from their homes; between 150–200 had been murdered. Ida B. Wells went to investigate. In New York, thousands marched down Fifth Avenue in protest on July 28, 1917 (Lemelle 1995; Rudwick 1964). James Weldon Johnson (1933) estimated that nine or ten thousand marched; (white) newspaper accounts placed the figure considerably lower. Protestors marched in silence; the only sound was muffled drums. The procession was headed by children, some of them not older than six, all dressed in white. These were followed by women also dressed in white, followed by men dressed in dark clothes. They carried banners, some of which read:

MOTHER, DO LYNCHERS GO TO HEAVEN?
 GIVE ME A CHANCE TO LIVE.
 TREAT US SO THAT WE MAY LOVE OUR COUNTRY.
 MR. PRESIDENT, WHY NOT MAKE AMERICA SAFE FOR
 DEMOCRACY?

(quoted in Johnson 1933, 321)

In front of the man who carried the American flag stretched a streamer half across the street that read: YOUR HANDS ARE FULL OF BLOOD (quoted in Johnson 1933, 321).

“The streets of New York,” Johnson (1933) comments, “have witnessed many strange sights, but, I judge, never one stranger than this; certainly, never one more impressive. The parade moved in silence and was watched in silence” (321). There were those who watched with tears in their eyes. Black Boy Scouts

distributed to those lined along the sidewalks printed circulars which explained why black New Yorkers were marching:

We march because by the Grace of God and the force of truth, the dangerous, hampering walls of prejudice and inhuman injustices must fall.

We march because we want to make impossible a repetition of Waco, Memphis, and East St. Louis, by rousing the conscience of the country and bringing the murderers of our brothers, sisters, and innocent children to justice.

We march because we deem it a crime to be silent in the face of such barbaric acts.

We march because we are thoroughly opposed to Jim-Crow Cars, Segregation, Discrimination, Disfranchisement, LYNCHING, and the host of evils that are forced on us. It is time that the Spirit of Christ should be manifested in the making and execution of laws.

We march because we want our children to live in a better land and enjoy fairer conditions than have fallen to our lot.

(quoted in Johnson 1933, 321)

Something of the power and majesty that characterized the parade made it into the press accounts. The July 29th edition of the *New York World* reported:

NEW YORK NEGROES STAGE SILENT PARADE OF PROTEST. Leaders among the negroes of New York City decided that a silent parade would be the most dramatic and effective way to make felt the protest of their race against injustice and inhumanity growing out of lynch law. And this silent parade was staged with real impressiveness and dignity and with an indefinable appeal to the heart in Fifth Avenue yesterday afternoon. From the time that the 3,500 or 4,000 men, women and children marchers left Fifty-sixth Street shortly after 1 o'clock until they were completing their dispersal in Twenty-fourth Street about 3 no note of discord was struck. ... Of the many printed signs prepared by the marchers, [Police] Inspector Morris doubted the good taste of only one. It showed a colored mother crouching protectively over two cowering children with the caption, "East St. Louis." And then it showed a photograph of President Wilson and his assertion that the world must be made safe for democracy. (quoted in Ginzburg 1962/1988, 104)

That last comment leaves one wondering: how can matters of "taste" be relevant when thousands of black citizens were driven from their homes by frenzied racist white men?

The association achieved some success in changing white opinion, at least enough to alter the matter of the long-standing presidential resistance to speaking out against lynching and mob violence. Presidential statements, however, came neither quickly nor easily. For instance, Woodrow Wilson (in the words of one observer) remained "inexcusably slow" (quoted in Zangrando 1980, 40) in using his authority against lynching. Wilson worried that an intense debate over race in America would jeopardize his political support among southern leaders. He was also concerned such a debate would endanger

the nation's wartime unity. And his southern upbringing had left him imprinted with a southern hostility toward African Americans (Friedman 1970). On July 26, 1918, Wilson did finally issue his much-anticipated, much-quoted denunciation of those who participate in mob action. Even so, the respected *Survey* magazine, in an editorial entitled "Democracy Versus Demo-n-Cracy," judged the message ineffective, as Wilson had failed to deal specifically with lynching (Zangrando 1980).

Like Ida B. Wells, the leaders of the N.A.A.C.P. combated lynching by questioning the myths southern whites used to rationalize the practice—in particular the rape myth. In April 1919, the N.A.A.C.P. had published—under Shillady's supervision—*Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918*. Recall that one important point made in the report was that the rape myth was precisely that. Fewer than 20 percent of the more than 2,500 black people lynched during that thirty-year period had been accused, let alone tried and convicted, of rape. Along with the annual supplements that the N.A.A.C.P. published, *Thirty Years of Lynching* helped puncture the fantasy that lynching had anything to do with the protection of southern white women (Zangrando 1980).

When World War I began in 1914, upwards of nearly a million European immigrants were coming to America each year. When the U.S. entered the war in 1917, Charles S. Johnson (of Fisk University, formerly the editor of *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*) put the matter this way: "the cities of the North, stern, impersonal and enchanting, needed men of brawny muscles, which Europe, suddenly flaming with war, had ceased to supply, [then] the black hordes came on from the South like a silent, encroaching shadow" (quoted in White 1929, 189). Nearly a million and a half African Americans moved northward between 1916 and 1928. At first, Walter White reports, the migration north was greeted "with joy" in the South. He reports that more than a few southerners said: "Now that we're getting rid of the niggers we'll have nothing but peace." Soon enough white southerners felt a not so peaceful, joyous feeling when they discovered that a maid or a cook could not be hired "with the old ease and at the old wages." Surprise gave way to consternation when "vast areas, especially after a lynching, were depopulated overnight" (quoted in White 1929, 190).

In 1918 the Great War ended. Restrictive immigration legislation further limited the flow of European migrants and opportunities for African-American migrants continued in the North (Tolnay and Beck 1995). Due partly to their experience of the war and its aftermath, black men and women adopted a less accommodationist view, a transformation of black political attitudes also enabled by the mass migration to the North and Midwest. These demographic shifts had not only depopulated the South but had also established important black constituencies for political action. Chicago was one such important center; the following editorial in the black *Chicago Defender* for February 12, 1916, illustrates the coming new mood in its demand:

HOW MUCH LONGER? In four weeks the intelligent and cultured citizens of the commonwealth of Georgia have lynched sixteen colored people, which is a record. ... As ghastly as are the horrors of the European

war, man's inhumanity to man is not confined to our brethren across the sea. We have this same hideous story every year. Are we ever going to do anything about it? (quoted in Ginzburg 1962/1988, 101–102)

Perhaps it is no surprise, then, that an attempt to enact federal law against lynching was made in April 1918. In that month both Leonidas Dyer (R-Missouri) and Merrill Moores (R-Indiana) introduced an antilynching bill. Dyer's (H.R. 11279) became the prototype for subsequent N.A.A.C.P.-sponsored legislation. These bills failed, as we shall see, but the N.A.A.C.P.'s intensive lobbying drive from 1919 to 1923 was a portent of more aggressive civil rights activism in the future (Zangrandino 1980; Van Deburg 1997).

Despite the aggressiveness of the N.A.A.C.P.'s efforts, its visibility, particularly within African-American communities, was not as great as it is today. While thousands joined the association's interracial coalition to fight lynching and secure basic civil rights protections for African Americans, millions endorsed Marcus Garvey's black-nationalist, back-to-Africa movement: the Universal Negro Improvement Association, founded in Jamaica in 1914. Based in Harlem after 1916, Garvey pointed out that lynching and racial discrimination occurred only in nations where African peoples did not control their own governments (Zangrandino 1980).

Meanwhile, a heightened self-consciousness among intellectuals of the worldwide black community inspired Du Bois to organize the first of several postwar Pan-African Congresses. Fifty-seven delegates from sixteen nations had attended the Paris meeting in February 1919. Recalling Du Bois's and Ida B. Wells's campaigns of the mid-1890s, William Monroe Trotter traveled to Paris in May 1919 to register international protests against lynching as well as other forms of racial violence. That same month a Du Bois (1919) editorial in the *Crisis* expressed the new tone. African-American soldiers had fought for the United States in World War I, he pointed out, but when these men returned "home" they still faced lynching, job discrimination, unequal educational opportunities, disfranchisement, and general insult. Things, he warned, must change: "But by the God of Heaven, we are cowards and jackasses if now that that war is over, we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight the sterner, longer, more unbending battle against the forces of hell in our own land." He concluded:

We return.
 We return from fighting.
 We return fighting.
 Make way for Democracy!
 We saved it in France,
 and by the Great Jehovah,
 we will save it in the United States of America,
 or know the reason why.

(13–14; quoted in Zangrandino 1980,
 53–54)

The editorial proved upsetting, especially to southerners and to many in Congress. Might not blacks return to prewar Jim Crow patterns of racial subservience? Recall that the Bolshevik Revolution had established the Soviet Union in Russia in 1917, and in 1919 the first wave of communism-phobia swept across the U.S. This "Red Scare" was used by the right wing to suspend the civil rights of political opponents in the name of national security (Zangrando 1980). The right wing, primarily through the Republican Party, would again use fear of communism to suspend Americans' civil rights during the early 1950s when Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-Wisconsin) conducted his own Senate-based witch-hunt. It would occur again a decade later when F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover used the agency to undermine the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements (Churchill and Wall 1988).

In this first Red Scare in 1919, postal authorities were directed to withhold the May edition of the *Crisis* from the mails for seven days. In earlier *Crisis* articles discussing the treatment of black soldiers in France, Du Bois had attacked the Wilson administration. Recall that the Justice Department had warned the N.A.A.C.P. the year before concerning the "tone" of some of its articles. Mary White Ovington had given strict orders that Du Bois must submit his editorials to the *Crisis* committee before publishing them. Despite these precautions, Du Bois's attacks on the Wilson administration continued. Finally, the Post Office Department was directed to hold up the May 1919 issue of the *Crisis*. No reason was given (Kellogg 1967, 286).

The May issue inflamed conservative Democrats. In addition to the poem, the issue reproduced official documents showing prejudice and discrimination in the army, including attempts to influence French attitudes and behavior toward African-American troops. The League of Nations, wrote Du Bois, was absolutely necessary to the salvation of black peoples everywhere. Only an international organization could intervene in racist nations such as the United States and South Africa. Unless such an agency is established, he warned, "we are doomed eventually to *fight* for our rights." Only such an organization could counteract the barbarism of the white ruling classes in the American South. Peace for the Negro was not only peace in Europe, but prevention of a Great War of Races, which Du Bois argued was absolutely inevitable unless "the selfish nations of white civilization are curbed by a Great World Congress in which black and white and yellow sit and speak and act" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 286-287).

Given postwar hysteria, specifically the fear of communism in America, it was perhaps unsurprising that Du Bois's words, hardly outrageous by today's standards, provoked many whites, including, for instance, Representative James F. Byrnes of South Carolina. Byrnes claimed that the black press, not white mobs, was responsible for the wave of race riots that swept the nation in the summer of 1919. Du Bois was undaunted; in the October *Crisis*, Du Bois replied that it was Byrnes and white men like him, white men who had supported and sometimes participated in fifty years of lynching and had enforced ignorance on three million American citizens and disfranchised half that number, who were primarily responsible for the riots (Kellogg 1967).

The Post Office's delaying of delivery of the *Crisis* verged on censorship, but that was hardly the only form of political repression in the land. Once again, white men hunted down and mutilated black men. There had been sixty lynchings in 1918 and seventy-six in 1919. There were twenty-five race riots. In late September, a mob of several thousand whites, among whom were numerous returning servicemen in uniform, burned a black man to death across the street from the federal courthouse in Omaha. The mob very nearly lynched Mayor Edward Smith when he refused to assist them. Desperate, municipal and state authorities requested and received army troops to restore order (Zangrandi 1980), but not before the prisoner had been lynched. Twenty-four hours later Mayor Smith died from injuries sustained while fighting the mob (Ginzburg 1962/1988).

Predictably, the situation was even worse in the South. One army veteran was lynched for refusing to take off his uniform, a decision that was evidently financial as well as patriotic. The *Chicago Defender* for April 5, 1919, carried the story:

NEGRO VETERAN LYNCHED FOR REFUSING TO DOFF UNIFORM. Blakely, Ga., Apr. 4—When Private William Little, a Negro soldier returning from the war, arrived at the railroad station here several weeks ago, he was encountered by a band of whites. The whites ordered him to doff his Army uniform and walk home in his underwear. Several other whites prevailed upon the hoodlums to leave Little alone and he was permitted to walk home unmolested. Little continued to wear his uniform over the next few weeks, as he had no other clothing. Anonymous notes were sent him warning him not to wear his Army uniform "too long" and advising him to leave town if he wished to "sport around in khaki." Little ignored the notes. Yesterday, Private Little was found dead on the outskirts of this city, apparently beaten by a mob. He was wearing his Army uniform. (quoted in Ginzburg 1962/1988, 118)

The annual N.A.A.C.P. conference was held in Cleveland in 1919, and delegates were in no mood to pander to right-wing paranoia. To make sure that the Wilson administration and the American public understood the seriousness of their commitment to equal rights, delegates prefaced their resolutions with a warning that Bolshevism ought not be rejected out of hand, that in fact it offered an attractive political program to disenchanted African Americans. The inference was unmistakable that the two major parties could only counter this threat by demanding full citizenship and integration of African Americans (Kellogg 1967).

When Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer's report on radical propaganda in the United States was released in November 1919, James Weldon Johnson, on behalf of the N.A.A.C.P., immediately took exception to the section entitled "Radicalism and Sedition Among Negroes as Reflected in Their Publications." Specifically, he demanded proof for the allegation that there was "a well-concerted movement" among certain black intellectual leaders to set themselves up as "a determined and persistent source of radical opposition to the

Government, and to the established rule of law and order" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 288-289).

Following release of the attorney general's report were two bills introduced into Congress early in 1920, the Sterling Bill (S. 3317) and the Graham Bill (H.R. 11430). These legislative proposals denied postal privileges to all books, magazines, newspapers and communications of any kind which could conceivably contribute to the heightening of racial tensions. N.A.A.C.P. officials correctly interpreted these bills as efforts to restrict and possibly suppress the *Crisis* and other black publications. If these bills passed Congress, any protest against lynching and mob violence generally could be interpreted by the southern-dominated Wilson administration as appealing to racial prejudice and inciting to riot. Consequently, the N.A.A.C.P. and the black press waged war against the passage of these bills, a war they won (Kellogg 1967).

At the state level things were different. Mississippi passed legislation forbidding the sale of any publication "tending to disturb relations between the races," resulting in the arrest of a *Crisis* agent in April 1920. Not merely arrested, the agent was badly beaten, heavily fined, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment for simply selling the magazine. The lawyer retained by the black community to defend the agent was threatened by mob violence. When the N.A.A.C.P. wired Governor Lee M. Russell asking protection for the attorney, the lieutenant governor answered that, should the *Crisis* editors visit Mississippi, "we would make an example of them that would be a lasting benefit to the colored people of the South and would not soon be forgotten" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 290). The N.A.A.C.P. repeated its request for protection to the governor, who replied that he shared the sentiments of his lieutenant governor (Kellogg 1967).

The North was hardly free of the postwar Red Scare. In the report of the so-called Lusk Committee, New York State, presumably worried over the role African Americans might play in revolutionary radicalism, listed several *Crisis* editorials as dangerous and attributed the N.A.A.C.P.'s "decidedly radical stand" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 290) to certain board members who were sympathetic to socialism, namely, John Haynes Holmes, Archibald Grimké and Mary White Ovington. It was this report that provoked Joseph C. Manning, editor of the *Southern American* and formerly a member of the Alabama Legislature, to publish a vitriolic attack on the N.A.A.C.P. Such attacks combined with legislative efforts to silence the black press, not to mention increased racial violence, led to heightened interest in both the *Crisis* and the N.A.A.C.P. At no time since has the *Crisis* enjoyed as many readers as it did during the frightening opening of the 1920s (Kellogg 1967).

The year 1919 was important to the association not only due to attacks from outside the organization. The year also marked a turning point in its internal history. By this time a number of the "old guard" had departed the organization due to death or retirement. Their departure marked the end of the abolitionist tradition within the association. No longer would the N.A.A.C.P. be referred to as the "new abolition movement." This meant the beginning of the end of white leadership and control of the N.A.A.C.P. From the beginning the association had sought African Americans to serve on local and national

levels. Since 1915 suggestions had been surfacing that it was now time for an African American to become the executive head of the organization. By 1919, the local branches no longer operated under the scrutiny of advisory committees, committees which had been populated, by and large, by white liberals. Fewer whites were asking to serve as officers and members of the local branches. By 1919 only on the national board did white leadership still predominate, but white influence was on the wane as more and more of the actual direction of the association's affairs was assumed by the secretary and the executive committee, composed primarily of African Americans. In 1920, James Weldon Johnson became the first black secretary, succeeding John R. Shillady, who had effectively organized the national office but whose nearly fatal beating in Austin, Texas, had left him no longer able and willing to participate (Kellogg 1967).

The year 1919 also saw an expanded thematic emphasis at its annual convention. Still under Shillady's leadership, for the first time the N.A.A.C.P. concerned itself with the problem of black workers and the organized labor movement. Partly this was acknowledgment of the increased visibility of "class" due to the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and to the "Red Scare" in the United States. But partly this was acknowledgment of the association's enlarged membership. The number of members had increased dramatically in 1918; afterward most of the support of the association no longer came from a few wealthy (often white) members and friends, but from the (black) membership at large. Income reached a peak in 1919, but the Great Depression a decade later would be felt severely by African Americans and N.A.A.C.P. income would fall precipitously (Kellogg 1967).

Finally, 1919 was noteworthy because for the first time membership in the South outnumbered that in the North. The conference in Cleveland disclosed a heightened militancy among delegates, and an end of the former domination of the association by philanthropically minded whites. In Cleveland blacks dominated discussions regarding what should be done for African Americans. Black delegates had begun to take the association into their own hands. Although the N.A.A.C.P. had from its inception been considered by many whites militant and radical, after 1919 the organization had an even more clearly defined public identity. The N.A.A.C.P. stood for militancy but biracialism too, in contrast to what was perceived as the extremism and racial separatism of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, with its racial chauvinism and Back-to-Africa movement. Militant but committed to working within the judicial system, the N.A.A.C.P. continued to rely upon legal measures to achieve its aims. Only through law, N.A.A.C.P. officials believed, could one "fix beyond question the status of the American citizen of Negro descent" (quoted in Kellogg 1967, 293). Key to the association's efforts, then, was an ongoing struggle to secure the repeal and to prevent passage of discriminatory legislation on local, state, and national levels and to promote and pass new civil rights legislation (Kellogg 1967).

The end of the association's first decade also saw its participation in international affairs. The N.A.A.C.P.-sponsored Pan-African Congress held at Paris in 1919 and the Pan-African theme at the 1919 annual convention were protests directed to both international and national levels against continued

imperialism and exploitation of blacks in Africa. They proclaimed that the association was concerned with the fate of blacks everywhere, if most especially in the United States. During the war African Americans' attention had been drawn to the American occupation of the black republic of Haiti. In 1920 an N.A.A.C.P. investigation of the American occupation marked the beginning of prolonged agitation for the restoration of Haitian independence, which was finally achieved in 1934. N.A.A.C.P. intervention in Haiti's fate marked a transition from strictly domestic protest to effective international action (Kellogg 1967).

With its powerful southern segregationist wing, the Democratic Party was not exactly out in front on racial issues in 1919. The grandchildren and great-grandchildren of this reactionary segment later switched parties; today they form the southern political base of the Republican Party. These southern whites remain an influential force against racial and gender progress, including gay/lesbian civil rights. Those leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention who called for a boycott of the Disney Corporation to protest that company's extension of family benefits to its gay employees and later demanded that women "graciously submit" to their husbands are in spirit, if not in genealogy, the descendants of those same segregationists and white supremacists who lynched black men in the 1920s. Then as now, they quote scripture to justify their hatreds.

In the 1920s the party of Lincoln was difficult to distinguish from the Democrats on racial matters. Despite this fact, the N.A.A.C.P. sent James Weldon Johnson to the 1920 Republican National Convention, where he conferred with party chairman Will Hays, Senator James Watson of Indiana who chaired the Resolutions Committee, and Harry Daughtery, Warren Harding's campaign manager and the future attorney general. Johnson and other black advocates were given just twenty minutes before the Resolutions Committee. Johnson used the opportunity to stress the need for a plank against lynching (Zangrando 1980). Johnson achieved some success; the GOP platform did "urge Congress to consider the most effective means to end lynching." He came away, however, with the feeling that "the Republican Party desires, more and more, to get rid of the Negro" (quoted in Zangrando 1980, 56).

Johnson was not finished lobbying the Republicans. On August 9, he and Harry E. Davis, a Cleveland resident and member of the N.A.A.C.P. board of directors, visited candidate Warren G. Harding at his home in Marion, Ohio. They asked Harding to make several preelection statements on racial issues, including voting rights, the problem of segregation in federal departments, passage of a federal antilynching law, an investigation into the American occupation of Haiti, federal aid to education, equal opportunity in the armed services, and Jim Crow restrictions in interstate travel. Harding expressed concern over each but declined to make a campaign issue of any, except Wilson's decision to occupy Haiti, and specifically charges that American marines had killed, without provocation, three thousand Haitians. Only that issue might embarrass the Democratic administration in the national election (Zangrando 1980). Johnson reported later that "Mr. Harding's handsome face was a study while I talked with him. Despite his occasional grave and cautious

protestations, I could see that he looked upon the Haitian matter as a gift right off the Christmas tree. He could not conceal his delight" (Johnson 1933, 359).

After the meeting, Johnson investigated the Haitian occupation further, writing four articles that were published in the *Nation*, articles for several other publications, and a lecture on "Self-Determining Haiti" (Johnson 1933). His estimate of the number of Haitians murdered was soon confirmed by the U.S. military. In a published report the number of "indiscriminate killings of Haitians" was calculated to be 3,250, the number of Haitians wounded "impossible to estimate" (quoted in Johnson 1933, 359 n. 1). Harding and G.O.P. strategists used the facts Johnson uncovered to good advantage in the party's successful campaign. Indeed, the scandal "struck Washington like a bombshell" (Johnson 1933, 359). Later, the new president thanked Johnson for his help (Zangrando 1980). But Johnson's labor was not remunerated, financially or politically.

On January 15, 1921, Johnson returned to Marion to discuss a governmental inquiry into conditions facing African Americans, including federal appointments, voting rights, the Ku Klux Klan, and lynching. Harding was cordial but, predictably, even less willing to promise action than he had been the summer before his election. The president-elect, Johnson said later, while an "average, decent American citizen," was really "a man of very little imagination and seemingly of very little human sympathy." He met with Harding once more, on April 4. Johnson asked: would the president in his first message to Congress ask for the passage of federal antilynching legislation? Harding declined to do that, but he did tell Congress that we "ought to wipe the stain of barbaric lynching from the banners of a free and orderly representative democracy." The *New York Times* reported that the president's remarks on the subject drew "applause and then silence" from House and Senate members (quoted in Zangrando 1980, 57). Was the applause automatic and the silence an expression of disapproval following the listeners' awareness of what he had said? Subsequent events would suggest so.

The spread of lynching and mob violence mobilized African Americans across a broad political spectrum. When Jake Brooks was lynched in Oklahoma in 1922, editor Roscoe G. Dunjee of the Oklahoma City *Black Dispatch* sent reports to President Harding and to Representative Dyer for distribution to members of Congress. Early that summer, on June 14, the black community in Washington demonstrated its concern. Headed by Shelby J. Davidson of the N.A.A.C.P., some five thousand black people picketed the White House and the Capitol. STOP LYNCHING NOW and PASS THE DYER BILL were the signs and sentiments of the day (Zangrando 1980).

The black nationalists of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association flirted with the idea of supporting federal legislation against lynching. In early summer 1919, Garvey's weekly *Negro World* had dismissed the N.A.A.C.P.'s antilynching drive as fundamentally mistaken. The proper response to the threat of lynching was not fund-raising, the paper declared; it was self-defense. Despite his differences with the N.A.A.C.P., lynching was too important an issue for Garvey to ignore. Early in 1922 he wired Congress his support of the Dyer bill. When it was passed by the House by a vote of 230 to 119, he took some credit for its success (Zangrando 1980).

After House passage of the bill, it would move to the Senate where southern senators mobilized. Senators John Sharp Williams and Pat Harrison of Mississippi, Oscar Underwood of Alabama, Thaddeus Caraway of Arkansas, as well as other senators from southern states where lynchings were common, filibustered, thereby preventing even a discussion of lynching legislation. These southerners were not alone, however; considerable aid was given to them by various northern and Republican senators who had promised their constituents they would combat the filibuster (White 1929). Among these was Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, father of Richard Nixon's vice-presidential running mate in 1960. Let us examine in greater detail the early struggle for federal antilynching legislation, focused as it was on doctrines of federalism and states' rights, themselves rhetorical weapons in white men's war over access to black men's bodies.