Theodore Roosevelt and the Negro in the age of Booker T. Washington, 1901–1912

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THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND THE NEGRO IN THE AGE OF
BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, 1901-1912

by

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[Signatures]

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One of the most troublesome issues that Theodore Roosevelt faced as President was the so-called "Negro Problem." In his effort to deal with it he alternately pleased and angered Negroes and Southern whites, liberals and conservatives, extremists and moderates.

During his first administration Roosevelt attempted to reform the Republican party in the South by appointing Gold Democrats and black Republicans to patronage positions. He secured Booker T. Washington as advisor on Southern and Negro policy and appointed blacks to office who had the stamped approval of Washington. White Southerners were offended by Roosevelt's actions and directed virulent criticism at the President. Roosevelt invited Washington to dinner at the White House, thus directly insulting the South. He followed with two controversial episodes: the appointment of William D. Crum to the Collectorship of the Port of Charleston, South Carolina, and closing the post office at Indianola, Mississippi, following the forced resignation of Mrs. Minnie Cox, the Negro postmistress.

Attempting to assuage a hostile Southern white population, Roosevelt stressed sectional reconciliation during his second administration. In 1905 he toured the South without making reference to lynching, disfranchisement, or "Jim Crow." He was noticeably silent following the Atlanta race riots in 1906 and in the same year he summarily dismissed 167 black soldiers from the U.S. Army for the alleged participation in the "Brownsville Affair." And in 1912 Roosevelt entered the presidential race as leader of the Progressive Party and established a "lily white" party in the South.
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TJP
CHAPTER I

THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND THE NEGRO:

INTRODUCTION

One of the most critical periods in American race relations occurred at the turn of the Twentieth Century. Historians have given this period the savory title of the "Progressive Era." While being a time of enlightenment and zealous reform, it was an era of pervasive and militant racism. In the South, where ninety per cent of the Negro population lived, black Americans were subjected to physical violence, segregation, economic exploitation and disfranchisement. Southern racist doctrines, expressing the innate inferiority of the black race, had gained wide acceptance and were further expounded by such negrophobes as James Vardaman of Mississippi and Benjamin Tillman of South Carolina. Northern leaders acquired a racial philosophy "akin to their southern counterparts," the difference being that northern racism was often "circumspect, more subtle."¹ Particularly in the South, Progressivism was "for whites only."²


Theodore Roosevelt occupied the White House during this turbulent era in race relations. Throughout his eight years in office, no issue plagued him as much as the so-called "Negro Problem." Each approach he took toward a possible solution alternately pleased and angered blacks and Southern whites. As leader of the Republican party, Roosevelt wished to maintain the historic bond between the Negro and the party in an effort to build a strong organization in the South. He realized that it was among the eleven former Confederate states that the party was weakest. Each of his predecessors had failed to build a respectable party organization there, owing much to the racial attitudes of white Southerners which prevented the acceptance of Negroes as political partners. What Roosevelt desired was a party of both black and white Republicans. The difficulties involved in this prospect troubled Roosevelt as much as they troubled each Republican president prior to his administration.  

The racial crisis of the Progressive era had its origins in the years following Reconstruction. In 1877 President Hayes initiated a policy of reconciliation toward the South by removing the last Federal troops from South Carolina and Louisiana. In an effort to unite the nation and eliminate any sectional strife that existed throughout Reconstruction, he restored "home rule" to Southern white Conservatives. In effect, Hayes abandoned the Southern Negro and the Republican party acquiesced its role as "champion" and "protector" of black political and civil rights. The Negro was no longer considered a "ward of the nation. He became a "ward of a dominant race" in the South. Hayes believed that his course of action would ultimately contribute to the emergence of a strong Republican party in the South. Though the Bourbon leadership promised to protect the Southern Negro, it was not considering the existence of a two-party battle in the South. Determined to keep the Southern leadership white and Democratic, conservative "redeemers" united behind the banner of "white supremacy" and placed the foundation for a solid Democratic South.

In subsequent efforts to gain position in the South, Republican leaders resorted to "bloody shirt" tactics, stressing the unlawful actions committed against Negro suffrage rights by Southern leaders. Throughout the 1880's and 1890's Repub-

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lican statesmen reiterated their desire to build a strong party in the South but the results were negative. Whatever strength the party held in the South by 1900 was the result of those Republicans who promulgated the belief that the party would gain strength only by existing as a "lily white" party. They believed that this would be the only possible method of combating the Democratic majority in the South.

The Southern Bourbons who secured the reigns of government in the South professed to be sincere in their attempts of protecting the Negro's rights. However, they believed that this would best be achieved under conservative white hegemony. Southern Democrats were more interested in industrializing and urbanizing their section than restoring the antebellum slavocracy. To achieve this industrial "utopia" it was necessary to eliminate any signs of racial tension. The "Prophets" of the New South, needing capital and labor from the North and from Europe to reconstruct their economy, preached nationalism and advocated the protection of Negro rights. Northern capitalists and their major spokesman, the Republican party, welcomed this opportunity to fulfill the promises agreed upon in the Compromise of 1877. Further more, they took comfort in the fact that the new Southern leadership was bent on preserving the recently won rights by Southern blacks. But to what

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extent were these Southern "redeemers" willing to protect the Negro?

Southern conservatives, such as Wade Hampton and Henry Grady, believed that the Negro was progressing in the areas of economics and education. The Negro would continue to progress but only under the benevolent guardianship of those spokesmen for the "new order." Since the Negro was acquiring property and education, his vote was no longer a menace. He would now naturally align himself with the more conservative whites. But during the 1880's this "neopaternalist school of thought" came under attack. On one side were the extreme racists and race-baiting politicians of the South who argued that the Negro had not progressed but had degenerated since emancipation. To these Southern negrophobes, the only opportunity for progress for the Negro was under the institution of slavery. On the other extreme Southern liberals contended that it was impossible for the South to have free and honest government as long as blacks were denied their right of public equality.  

It was during the 1890's that the Southern conservative leadership became seriously threatened. The rise of agrarian radicalism in the 1880's culminated in the Populist revolt of the 1890's. Populist spokesmen expressed the kinship of com-

mon grievances and common oppression between Southern blacks and poor Southern white farmers in an effort to gain black support for overthrowing the conservative control of the South. Realizing the potential success that Populists would enjoy with their appeal to the Negro vote, Southern conservatives resorted to cries of "Negro domination" and its ultimate challenge to white supremacy. They enlisted negrophobe elements - fraud, intimidation, bribery, violence and terror - to secure their control of the South. Southern Populists, upon defeat, placed the blame for their failure on the Negro. Southern blacks quickly became the scapegoats for the disruption in Southern politics in the 1890's. The end result was disfranchisement in Mississippi in 1890, South Carolina in 1895, and Alabama in 1900. Devices such as the Poll tax and Grandfather clause were effectively used to eliminate voting by blacks and poor Southern whites. Contrary to the belief that disfranchisement would improve race relations, its implementation in white supremacy campaigns in the South raised race hatred to a dangerous pitch. Lynching and one-sided race riots often resulted from racist propaganda. As C. Vann Woodward has asserted, lynching became "an increasingly Southern and racial phenomenon." 7

The decade of the 1890's further witnessed the economic and social relegation of the Negro. Subjected to the binding poverty of the Southern sharecropping system and the use of such

devices as "crop-lien" and "convict leasing," blacks were forced to the bottom of the Southern caste system. Their social status declined as the result of "Jim Crow" laws, judicial sanction of the doctrine of "separate but equal" in a Supreme Court ruling in 1896 (Plessy vs. Ferguson) and disfranchisement in 1898 (Williams vs. Mississippi). Southern Negrophobia replaced the paternalism of the 1880's. No longer considered to be progressing, the Negro was thought to be degenerating. Under slavery he was considered to be "docile and subordinate;" now he was an "uncivilized beast," who had reverted to savagery and threatened to contaminate white civilization.

By the turn of the century Southern racism was more extreme and Northerners were becoming increasingly indifferent. Ultraracist books (Thomas Dixon's The Clansmen, Charles Carroll's The Negro A Beast, and Robert W. Shufeldt's The Negro: A Menace to American Civilization) reflected Southern opinion that blacks were inferior, immoral, and criminal. The popularity of social Darwinism, with its theories of "survival of the fittest" and the "preservation of favoured races" lent scientific support to the belief that the Negro was degenerating and would become extinct through the process of evolution and the "struggle for existence" between the races.


Against the background of rising prejudice, discrimination and deteriorating race relations, a majority of Southern blacks continued to follow the advice offered by paternalists: to strive for moral and economic development through industrial education, racial solidarity and self-help; to eschew politics and the demand for civil rights. This was essentially the philosophy also expressed by Booker T. Washington and responsible for his acceptance among Southern whites and Northern philanthropists as the leading Negro spokesman. Washington's ideas accorded with the climate of opinion at the time and assured his eminence among the "best class" of Southern whites. The rise of Washington to national prominence was the one note of optimism amidst a hostile environment for the black community. Through a conciliatory and accommodating approach, he was able to penetrate circles that were inaccessible to Negroes at that time. Most significant was his selection by Theodore Roosevelt as presidential advisor on Southern and Negro policy.

Roosevelt's choice of Washington reflected the racial attitude that the former Rough Rider held on his ascension to the presidency. He was in substantial agreement with Washington's overt expressions of accommodation and self-help. He wrote in 1900: "It has always seemed to me that the salvation of the Negro lay in the development of the Booker Washington theory, that is, in fitting him to do ever better industrial work."10

Roosevelt's racial views were consistent with those Northern and Southern liberals who agreed with the vast majority of white Southerns on the inferiority of the Negro but sincerely believed that the race was progressing under the benevolent white guardianship of the "best class" in the South. Writing to the novelist Owen Wister, Roosevelt concurred with the author that "as a race and in the mass Negroes are altogether inferior to the whites" and asserted that he would never ask "the average Negro to be allowed to vote." However, he wished that the "occasionally good, well educated, intelligent and honest colored men and women be given the pitiful chance to have a little reward, a little respect, a little regard if they can by earnest useful work succeed in winning it." He denied the possibility of Negro extinction, declaring that the black man "was here to stay and could neither be killed nor driven away." "The only wise and honorable and Christian thing to do is to treat every black man and every white man strictly on his merits as a man, giving him no more and no less than he shows himself worthy to have." This "merit system" in race relations was essentially what one historian has called Roosevelt's "great rule of righteousness."

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11Roosevelt to Owen Wister, April 27, 1906, Letters, V, p. 228.

12Roosevelt to Albion Tourgee, November 8, 1901, Ibid., III, pp. 190-191.

Southern recalcitrance on racial matters made the Negro problem more difficult for Roosevelt. He continuously blamed his inability to act effectively in the South during his presidency on race-baiting politicians and Southern extremists. He stated to Lyman Abbott, editor of *Outlook*, that these men acted as "grown up and often vicious children" on the Negro question. "They shriek in public about miscegenation," Roosevelt later commented, "but they leer as they talk to me privately of the colored mistresses and colored children of white men whom they know."  

Roosevelt dissented from Southern extremist opinion that the Negro had degenerated since emancipation, describing this belief as "the veriest nonsense." "The Negro has on the whole become better. Among the Negroes of the South when slavery was abolished there was not one who stood as in any shape or way comparable with Booker Washington." Expressing his admiration for the Negro educator, Roosevelt added: "I do not know a white man of the South who is as good a man as Booker Washington today."  

The one exception to Roosevelt's "great rule of righteousness" was in race mingling or social equality. In his conception of race, he believed that the white-skinned, English-speaking Anglo-Saxon was the most superior being racially and culturally. As a strong proponent of Kipling's "White Man's Burden" Roosevelt realized that it was the responsibility of the Caucasian to lend assistance to the backward races of the world. Thus, he advocated a benevolent imperialism abroad and a paternalistic approach at home. Southern extremists misinterpreted his accommodating policies toward the Negro as an effort to establish social equality; an assertion that he emphatically denied. Writing to Grenville Dodge, Roosevelt declared: "I wish to emphasize that we are not fighting for social equality, and that we do not believe in miscegenation; but that we do believe in equality of opportunity, in equality before the law." Roosevelt viewed the problem as how to train "the backward race so that it may enter the possession of true freedom, while the forward race is allowed to preserve unharmed the high civilization wrought by its forefathers." He realized that the uplifting of the Negro would be difficult and take time; but most significantly he was aware that black advancement must be made compatible with the Southern ban on "social intermingling

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18 Roosevelt to Grenville Dodge, November 14, 1904, quoted in Sinkler, Racial Attitudes of American Presidents, p. 400.
of the race." It was apparent to "all reflecting men," that "racial purity must be maintained." 19

During his formulative years Roosevelt had little first-hand contact with black Americans. He became a "vigorous Republican partisan" and his early sympathetic statements on the Negro were more aligned with the party position than a profound personal conviction. As a member of the Civil Service Commission he had occasion to face the "Negro problem" and promulgated the belief in offering "equal and exact justice to all." 20 As governor of New York he seriously considered the problem of "doing justice to and getting good results from the colored race ...." He appointed a few Negroes to office and strongly supported the Elsberg bill which ended racial segregation in New York schools. 21

Roosevelt's presidency, regarding his relationship with the black community, can be divided into two periods. During

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21 Roosevelt to Alexander Monroe Dockery, May 24, 1894, Letters, I, p. 381.

his first administration he made a sincere effort to do justice and provide the opportunity to black Americans for political participation. He resisted attempts to establish "lily white" Republicanism in the South by appointing William D. Crum, a Negro doctor, to the collectorship of the Port of Charleston, South Carolina, and defied southern criticism by standing firm on his belief in a "Square Deal" for all men. In 1903 Roosevelt closed the Indianola, Mississippi, post office when white citizens refused to accept the appointment of a Negro postmistress. And throughout his term in office he refused to apologize to the South for inviting Booker T. Washington to dinner at the White House.

Roosevelt's second administration coincided with extreme anti-Negro sentiment in the South and his policy was directed toward a reconciliation of the South with the rest of the nation. In 1905 he made a tour of the South with the purpose of winning the affections of the white population which he had alienated during his first term of office. He relegated Negro protection and political and civil rights to the last of his priorities. He refused to intervene in the Atlanta Race Riots of 1906 and in the same year he dismissed three companies of black soldiers from the United States Army for alleged participation in the Brownsville Affair. Finally, in 1912 Roosevelt excluded Southern black delegates from participating in the Progressive Party Convention. This reversal of policy towards the black community signified the importance to Roosevelt of sectional reconciliation.
CHAPTER II

DINNER AT THE WHITE HOUSE: THE EMERGENCE OF
BOOKER T. WASHINGTON AS POLITICAL ADVISOR

When Theodore Roosevelt became President following the assassination of President William McKinley on September 14, 1901, he assumed the most responsible and prestigious public office that existed in the nation. Confronting Roosevelt at this time was the problem of securing his nomination in 1904. He had become President by accident but wished to gain the office in his own right. To achieve this goal, he had to assure himself enough Republican delegate support. With the death of McKinley, Roosevelt inherited title to both the office and the Republican organization. The office "with its great powers was his alone." The organization, "for the while," belonged to Marcus Hanna.\(^1\) The powerful Senator from Ohio was the chairman of the Republican National Committee and was believed to be by many, including Roosevelt, an aspirant for the Republican presidential nomination in 1904.

Roosevelt was well aware that, in order to secure enough delegates, he had to gain the support of Southern Republicans. Hanna had a powerful hold upon the Negro delega-

tions in the South and it was the President's primary objective to bring together black and white Southerners while destroying the Reconstruction political machines which supported the Senator. By the use of federal appointments, Roosevelt hoped to achieve his goal. To assist him the President obtained Booker T. Washington as one of his chief advisors for Southern and Negro policy. Throughout Roosevelt's terms of office, and particularly during his first administration, the President's relationship with the black community was conducted through Washington.

The contrasts between these two men are so great that it seems almost impossible that they would jointly influence American society at the turn of the century. Roosevelt was born into the white aristocracy of New York in 1858. The ancestry of his family traces back to the pre-Revolutionary era in American history. His father's forebears were of Dutch descent and for more than "seven generations from father to son one of them was born on Manhattan Island." His mother, Martha Bulloch, was a native of Georgia and traced her lineage through the aristocracy of Georgia and South


Carolina back to England. Washington, in comparison, came from slave ancestry and placed the site of his birth "near a cross-road post office called Hale's Ford [Virginia], and the year was 1858 or 1859." Washington knew little of his ancestry except that on his mother's side they "suffered in the Middle Passage on slave ships from Africa to America" and knew nothing of his father, not even his name.

Roosevelt enjoyed the very best personal education and supervision that aristocratic America could offer. His experiences were broadened by two trips to Europe before his fifteenth birthday. Upon returning home from his second trip, his parents paved the way for his entrance into Harvard in 1876. Under the liberal curriculum pioneered by President Charles W. Eliot, "Teedie" was able to explore the diverse interests that attracted him during his youth. Washington, being a slave on the Burrough's plantation in Franklin County, Virginia, was not offered the opportunity of an early education. In his autobiography he declared: "I had no schooling whatever while I was a slave, though I remember on several occasions I went as far as the schoolhouse door with one of my young mistresses to carry her books...."


5Washington, Up From Slavery, pp. 4-5.
These incidents left a deep impression on the mind of young Booker and it was not until he came under the influence of General Samuel Chapman Armstrong and Hampton Institute that his visions of receiving an education became a reality.

In public life the contrasts between these two men were equally striking. Roosevelt became a Republican because of his aristocratic background and his disillusionment over the Democratic politics exemplified by Tammany Hall and the Tweed Ring of New York. He entered New York politics with a sense of dedication and a strong desire to bring to public life a disinterested honesty of purpose. At this same time Washington was deeply engaged in his work at Tuskegee Institute, promulgating the social philosophy of self-help and economic development. Though seldom declaring any political affiliation, he was a Republican for the same reason most Afro-Americans were: the Republican Party was the party of Lincoln, the party of freedom, the party responsible for upholding the doctrine of racial equality.

Roosevelt and Washington shared some common traits that formed the base of their association. As Louis Harlan asserts:

Both were self-made men, though in different senses.... Both were pragmatists, willing to sacrifice mere principles for the sake of power, and yet each had a strong sense of personal mission. Each saw himself as a practical reformer with a constructive goal in mind, as much opposed to the militant blacks and the "men with the muckrake" as

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to the entrenched white supremacists and "malefactors of great wealth." Both were direct and plain-spoken and thought of his work in terms of high moral purpose, but, when the occasion called for ruthless action, could decide and act in his own interest.7

The most significant factor which brought Roosevelt and Washington together was their shared convictions concerning the American Negro and his plight in a white society. Washington's Atlanta Speech in 1895 was attuned to Roosevelt's thinking on racial matters. In that speech, delivered before a majority of Southern whites at the Cotton States and International Expositions, the Negro educator delighted his audience by revealing his opinion that the position obtained by the Negro following the Civil War was a mistake. Washington urged the black man to "cast down [his] bucket by making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom [he] is surrounded." He urged the colored people of the South to "cast down their buckets in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions." He urged whites, too, to "cast down their buckets" among the eight million blacks "whose habits you know, whose fidelity and love you have tested in days when to have proved treacherous meant the ruin of your firesides." "The wisest among my race," declared Washington, "understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly." He

7 Harlan, p. 306.
stated that if Southern whites would only concede to the Negro the chance of self-improvement through education and economic opportunity, they would be surrounded in the future as in the past by "the most patient, faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful people that the world has seen." Washington reached the climax of his address by acknowledging Southern segregation sentiments by stating: "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." 8

The conciliatory tone of Washington's address brought wholehearted approval from the Southern press and the Tuskegeean was pronounced "the new Negro leader." The New Orleans Picayune called Washington a "prominent" and "sensible" man and the Charleston News and Courier referred to him as "one of the great men of the South." They continued: "His skin is colored, but his head is sound and his heart is in the right place." The Atlanta Constitution declared that Washington was a "sensible and progressive negro educator" and called his speech the "hit of the day." 9

The Negro press reaction was ambivalent. The Chicago Conservator and the Indianapolis Freeman endorsed Washington's


plea to take the economic approach to racial advancement. In turn, other newspapers expressed disagreement with the Negro educator's "compromise." W. Calvin Chase, editor of the Washington Bee stated that Washington "said something that was the death to the Afro-American and elevating to the white people." The Atlanta Advocate asserted that Washington was "so representative of the Negro that his hat flies off the moment a small red headed white newsboy is introduced to him...." The editorial continued: "We doubt if the Tuskegee normal school will receive any benefit from Prof. Dad Taste's sycophantic attitude but there is no doubt in our minds that his race will suffer...." 10

Criticism from his own race did not alter Washington's view on racial matters. He was convinced that the only way the Negro could advance in American society and simultaneously keep racial tensions in the South to a minimum was through education, racial solidarity, and economic self-help. His social philosophy was embraced by both Southern whites and Northern philanthropists, whom he depended upon for financial support for Tuskegee Institute. Washington also received encouragement from Presidents Cleveland and McKinley. 11

10 Quoted in Harlan, pp. 225-226.

Washington first met Theodore Roosevelt when the latter was governor of New York. They discussed what should be done by a President in the South. As Roosevelt later commented: "We agreed that in the Gulf and South Atlantic States, where there is no real Republican organization ... the thing to do would be to recognize Democrats; to try to appoint men of high character - Republicans where they were available, Democrats where they were not; and to appoint a very few colored men of high character - just enough to make it evident that they were not being entirely proscribed."

Upon Roosevelt's election as Vice-President, Washington offered his congratulations and Roosevelt urged the Negro educator to visit him the next time he came north and give him advise on race matters. Washington took the first train north and conferred with the Vice-President. During their conference Roosevelt expressed his desire to become President. The Negro leader assured him that he would provide a helping hand among Black Republican leaders and Roosevelt, in turn, promised "to help not only the Negro, but the whole South, should he ever become president."

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Roosevelt had been planning a trip South to visit his mother's home in Georgia and extend his travels to Tuskegee. On September 14, 1901 his plans were abruptly changed with the assassination of President McKinley. On the very day that he took the oath of office, Roosevelt wrote to Washington:

I write you at once to say that to my deep regret my visit south must now be given up. When are you coming North? I must see you as soon as possible. I want to talk over the question of possible future appointments in the south exactly on the lines of our last conversation together....

When Washington received this message from the President he confessed that "it caused me some misgivings." He had tried hard to avoid becoming involved in any political activity for fear of endangering his work at Tuskegee, but a calling from the President could not be "lightly put aside." Upon Washington's arrival at the White House, Roosevelt immediately outlined to the Negro leader his ideas with respect to appointments in the South, emphasizing his determination to appoint only the best qualified men, including Democrats where Republicans could not be found. As Washington later wrote: "I repeated and emphasized his determina--


tion to appoint "men of the highest character... regardless of political influences or political consequences." Washington urged the appointment of both Negro Republicans and conservative Democrats. The President stated that he did not propose to appoint a large number of Negroes to office in the South but when he did appoint one he would be "not only a man of ability, but of character - a man who had the confidence of his white and coloured neighbors." Further, he promised to appoint well-qualified blacks to offices in the North as well, which delighted Washington.

Returning to Tuskegee, Washington discovered that the judgeship for the Middle District of Alabama had just become vacant through the death of the incumbent, Judge John Bruce. This presented an opportunity to initiate the policy of appointing qualified men to federal posts, as outlined by the President. Washington sent his secretary, Emmett J. Scott to the White House with a letter recommending the appointment of ex-Governor Thomas G. Jones, a white conservative Democrat, for the vacant position. The Negro leader described Jones as the best qualified man for the office. "He is a Gold Democrat, and is a clean, pure man in every respect," wrote Washington. "He stood up in the Constitutional Convention and elsewhere

17 Ibid.

18 On this idea of the President's, Louis Harlan asserts that Washington "silently filed it away as his ticket to a bargain of mutual interest with the Northern black professional elite, the 'Talented Tenth.'" See Harlan, Booker T. Washington, p. 307.
for a fair election law, opposed lynching, and he has been outspoken for the education of both races. He is head and shoulders above any of the other persons who I think will apply for the position."  

The President, upon reading Washington's letter, was concerned as to whether Jones had supported William Jennings Bryan in either 1896 or 1900. Scott informed him that the ex-Governor supported McKinley in both elections. Roosevelt then questioned Scott on the knowledge of this fact and the secretary told him of a letter wherein Jones stated to Washington that he was "without political ambition because he had opposed Bryan...." The President then requested to hear directly from Washington on the matter and Scott hurried off a telegram assuring the Tuskegeean that Roosevelt already had decided to appoint Jones.

Washington wired "the whole truth" to Scott on the same day: "Party voted for Palmer and Buckner (Gold Democrat Ticket) and supported them strongly in ninety six but in order to have influence in defeating Bryan's nomination went into Democratic primaries in nineteen hundred, voted for him but made no addresses, he has strongly and openly supported McKinley's

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expansion policy, was president of sound money club in ninety six."21

The following day Scott waited for three hours to see the President. When finally invited in, he immediately handed Roosevelt the letter from Washington. "His face was a study," Scott reported. "He was greatly surprised to learn that the Governor voted for Bryan." Roosevelt replied to Scott: "Well, I guess I'll have to appoint him, but I am awfully sorry he voted for Bryan." The President and Scott then discussed Dr. William D. Crum, a prominent Negro doctor from Charleston, South Carolina. Scott told Roosevelt that the doctor was a "clean representative character and that he was favorably considered by [Benjamin] Harrison for the Charleston postmastership...." Roosevelt found that the position Washington has advocated for Crum had been filled, but he told Scott to inform Washington that he would consider Crum for any other vacancy that might occur. (The appointment of William Crum to high office would later become a cause célèbre in Roosevelt's first administration). Scott asked Roosevelt what message he should relay to his boss concerning the appointment of Jones. "Tell Mr. Washington without using my name that party will most likely be appointed - in fact I will appoint him - only don't make it that strong by wire," replied the President.22


22 Scott to Washington, October 5, 1901, in Scott and Stowe, pp. 53-54. For the Crum affair see chapter IV.
A few weeks later, while on tour of Mississippi, Washington received word that the President wished to confer with him once again. At the completion of his business he headed for the Capital and soon arrived at the home of Whitefield McKinlay, a real estate broker and one of Washington's closest friends. There he found an invitation to dinner at the White House at eight o'clock that evening. At the appointed time Washington arrived at the White House and proceeded to dine with the President, his wife, his daughter Alice, and his three sons. Also present at the dinner was one of Roosevelt's old friends, Phillip B. Stewart, a Colorado mining and utilities executive. After dinner Roosevelt and Washington talked at considerable length concerning plans the President had about the South. At the end of the evening Washington boarded a train and headed for New York.

Southern sentiment toward Washington, prior to his second conference with Roosevelt, was very favorable. The conciliatory tone of his speeches were met with astounding applause and his work at Tuskegee was viewed with equal admiration. When news arrived about the appointment of Governor Jones to the Judgeship in Alabama, Southern whites expressed further approval, even when they were later notified that Washington

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23 Roosevelt frequently discussed the political situation in Colorado with Stewart and had gone on hunting trips in the Colorado Rockies with. See Blum, pp. 40-41; Letters, II, p. 146n.

was responsible for it. However, Booker T. Washington was still a Negro and Negroes did not sit down to dinner with a white man and his family, especially when that white man happens to be the President of the United States. The frenzied wave of racism that was sweeping the South at the turn of the century was abetted by news of the Washington-Roosevelt dinner.

The morning following the dinner Washington noticed that the New York Tribune mentioned briefly his dinner with the President the previous night. He gave little thought to the matter. However, only a few days passed before news of the dinner appeared in the Southern press and initiated a "storm of controversy." The New Orleans Times Democrat wrote: "When Mr. Roosevelt sits down to dinner with a negro he declares that the negro is the social equal of the white man." The New Orleans Daily States called the dinner "a studied insult to the South." Southern editors suddenly discovered that Rooseveltism means "nigger supremacy." The New Orleans

25 Ibid., p. 444.

26 Willard B. Gatewood has focused on the dinner as an example of Roosevelt's ability to provoke controversy. However, he concentrates on the Southern mythology surrounding the affair rather than its significance concerning Roosevelt's Southern policy and his association with Washington. See Gatewood, Theodore Roosevelt and the Art of Controversy: Episodes of the White House Years (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), pp. 32-61.

Picayune called the President "the worst enemy to his race of any white man who has ever occupied so high a place in this republic." The Richmond Times stated that the incident "means the President is willing that negroes shall mingle freely with whites in the social circle - that white women may receive attentions from negro men; it means that there is no racial reason in his opinion why whites and blacks may not marry and intermarry, why the Anglo-Saxon may not mix negro blood with his blood." On the lighter side, the Raleigh Post offered this poetic gesture:

Booker Washington holds the boards -
The President dines a nigger.
Precedents are cast aside -
Put aside with vigor;
Black and white sit side by side,
As Roosevelt dines a nigger.

While general disapproval was voiced throughout the South, some moderate opinions were expressed. The Raleigh News and Observer, calling the incident a radical departure from social custom, nevertheless declared: "A man's home is his castle, whether it be a home in the White House or in a humble cabin. He has the right to choose his guests, and to sit down at his


29 Quoted in Mark Sullivan, Our Times, the United States 1900-1925, 6 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), III, p. 135.
own table with whomsoever he pleases to invite to break bread with him." To a majority of Southerners, however, breaking bread with a black man was stretching the metaphor a bit too far.

Southern editors expounded upon the political implications that were involved with the dinner, realizing that Roosevelt had just handed them ammunition to combat any Republican invasion of the South. Josephus Daniels, editor of the Raleigh News and Observer and later Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of the Navy, declared that the dinner "is not a precedent that will encourage Southern men to join hands with Mr. Roosevelt" and the Memphis Scimitar stated that the President had shattered "any expectation that may have arisen from his announced intention to make the Republican party in the South respectable. He has closed the door to any accessions of Southern white men to the Republican ranks.")

While the dinner episode was receiving harsh criticism from the Southern press, it was being viewed favorably in the North. In fact the Southern reaction was the primary source of concern to Northern editors. The New York Press described the outraged Southerners as the "arrogant old plantation strain."

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30 Quoted in Literary Digest, XXIII (October 26, 1901), pp. 486-487.
31 Ibid.
The Boston Transcript stated that "the hysterical and horror-striken Southern Shriekers" were the victims of "old ingrained prejudice." The Northern press was quick to point out that Booker Washington had previously been entertained by many dignitaries in Europe, including Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle, and that he was viewed as one of the most eloquent men of his day.

Perhaps nowhere else was Roosevelt's entertaining of Booker Washington at the White House applauded so loudly as in the black community. The dinner incident served as a fragment of hope amidst the rising tide of disfranchisement and discrimination at the turn of the century. The Washington Bee, one of the most prosperous Negro newspapers published at the time of the dinner, best expressed the sentiments of Black America:

> The Southern Democrats hoped and expected to blarney the President so as to continue unrestrained in their wicked reign of terror and proscription against the colored race. They are shocked, boiled, smitten, and exasperated. In one fell swoop Mr. Roosevelt has smashed to smithereens their fondest idol. They are fuming with dire imprecations against him, and all because he took a meal of victuals with a colored gentleman who had been entertained by the nobility of England, and the best people of America.\(^\text{33}\)

The Cleveland Gazette was another Negro publication that expressed admiration for Roosevelt's action and condemnation of

\(^{32}\)Ibid., p. 487.

Southern reaction but its editor, Harry C. Smith, was quite skeptical to the effects it would have on Booker Washington. According to Smith, the incident was "perfectly right and proper," but he predicted that Roosevelt's entertaining of Washington would "eventually prove the latter's undoing" as far as his educational work was concerned. He felt that the Southern white people, bound by prejudice, were "vindictive" and would punish some one for the social distinction conferred upon Washington and the race by the President. Smith continued, "Privately or rather sectionally, [Southern whites] will quietly work upon Washington and his great school. Some years will elapse before the effect will be noticed in a general way. This is to be regretted as much as the president's action in inviting the Afro-American to dine and counsel with him is to be commended." 34

For the next few years every racial disturbance that occurred in the South was traced back to the Roosevelt-Washington dinner. White Southerners deeply felt that the dinner created restlessness and discontent among the Negro population. Roosevelt's attempt at "social equality" became the sole reason why race riots broke out in Louisiana in 1901, why four Negroes were burned at the stake in Statesboro, Georgia in 1904, and why a shortage of domestic servants persisted in the

34 Cleveland Gazette, October 26, 1901.
South. Southern Democrats expressed opinions akin to Senator Benjamin Tillman, when the South Carolinian asserted that "entertaining that nigger will ... necessitate our killing a thousand niggers in the South before they learn their place." And young white Southerners were heard singing a new song:

Coon, coon, coon,
Booker Washington is his name;
Coon, coon, coon,
Ain't that a measly shame?
Coon, coon, coon,
Morning, night, and noon,
I think I'd class Mr. Roosevelt
With a coon, coon, coon.37

Roosevelt was both surprised and chagrined by the hysteria that persisted in the South. "I suppose you have been amused," Roosevelt wrote to Phillip Stewart, "at finding that our innocent dinner to Booker T. Washington has not only become a national but an international affair." The President thought that it "seemed entirely obvious and natural" to show

35Gatewood, Theodore Roosevelt and the Art of Controversy, p. 36.


the Negro educator "a little ordinary courtesy." Booker Washington represented, in the eyes of the President, the type of black man who should be afforded the same opportunities extended to white Americans; he was a man of "the highest character and ability." However, Booker Washington, in the eyes of Southern whites, was still a Negro and therefore should not be treated on the same social scale or offered the same opportunities as white Americans. Roosevelt, lacking insight into the problem, refused to acknowledge this primary fact and laid the blame directly on the outraged Southern white population. What is apparent is that Roosevelt failed to see that his invitation to Washington was a deliberate assault to their convictions. He expressed his view on the matter in a letter to his friend, Henry Cabot Lodge:

The Booker T. Washington incident was to me so much a matter of course that I regarded its sole importance as consisting in the view it gave one of the continued existence of that combination of Bourbon intellect and intolerant truculence of spirit, through much of the South, which brought on the Civil War. If these creatures had any sense they would understand that they can't bluff me. They can't even make me abandon my policy of appointing decent men to office in their localities.  


Shortly after the initial reactions to the dinner, slight alterations to the story appeared in print. Northern and Southern apologists for Roosevelt issued their own version of the dinner. Their claim was that it was not a dinner that the President invited Washington to but a luncheon. The story went that the President invited the Tuskegeean for a conference and in the middle of their talk a servant walked in with a lunch tray for Roosevelt. Rather than interrupt their conversation, the President ordered the servant to bring a tray for Washington so they could continue their conference through lunch. This altered version gained wide acceptance among Republicans in the South. It seemed entirely plausible for a busy President to impulsively invite the spokesman for the black community to share lunch with him, especially when no ladies were present. The story also became popular because Southerners often referred to the noon meal as either dinner or lunch, and to the evening meal as supper.  

Both Roosevelt and Washington avoided publishing their account of the dinner. It was not until Washington published his autobiographical tract, My Larger Education in 1911 that the actual account became known. However, the luncheon version had gained such wide acceptance by 1911 that Washington's story had little effect as a corrective.

Gatewood, pp. 32-61. Contemporary historians and publicists relied on the luncheon version in assessing the episode, thus explaining the popularity it received during and after Roosevelt's presidency.
Contrary to Southern claims, there were precedents for the White House dinner. In 1900 at Albany, Governor and Mrs. Roosevelt "cordially greeted" a black delegate to the state federation of women's clubs at a reception, after she had been snubbed by her white fellow members. Also while Governor, Roosevelt invited William H. Lewis, a black lawyer and a classmate of Roosevelt's at Harvard, to spend the night. And finally, Roosevelt had entertained Booker Washington earlier at Oyster Bay.\footnote{Harlan, Booker T. Washington, p. 312; Henry F. Pringle, "Theodore Roosevelt and the South," \textit{Virginia Quarterly Review}, IX (January, 1933), 14-25.}

In consequence of the dinner at the White House, both Roosevelt and Washington received threats against their lives. The drawer of Emmett Scott's desk was full of letters threatening the life of the Negro leader. One incident occurred a few weeks following Washington's return from the White House. A black man, hired by a group of white men in Louisiana to assassinate Washington, was hurt jumping off a train before arriving at the Tuskegee station. The town had no hospital for Negroes so he was taken to the Institute hospital where doctors and nurses proceeded to care for him. Amazed by the help he received, the man became ashamed of himself, refused to carry out his commission, and confessed the whole plot.\footnote{Basil Mathews, Booker T. Washington: Educator and Interracial Interpreter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948; reprint ed., College Park, Md.: McGrath Publishing Co., 1948), pp. 233-234.}
The controversy over the Roosevelt-Washington dinner and the hostile attitude of the South toward the President persisted during the next three years. The dinner was mentioned in Southern opposition to the appointment of the Negro doctor, William D. Crum, as Collector of Customs in Charleston, South Carolina and to Roosevelt's closing of the post office in Indianola, Mississippi in 1903, when white citizens intimidated the Negro postmistress, Mrs. Minnie Cox. In 1904 two peddlers from Chicago were arrested in Indianola for distributing "obscene photographs" among the Negro population of the town. The "photographs" were pictures of Roosevelt and Washington dining together, surrounded by banners proclaiming EQUALITY. The Maryland political campaign of 1903 witnessed the reiteration of the dinner when Democrats issued campaign buttons showing Roosevelt and Washington sitting together at dinner. Advocates of Negro disfranchisement used the dinner as part of their campaign and James K. Vardaman of Mississippi referred to the incident on several occasions between 1901 and 1909.43

43 Gatewood, p. 43. Another incident that related to the dinner occurred in 1904. Lew Dockstader, a minstrel known for his political monologues, filmed a short skit in front of the Capitol steps that comprised of a "take off" on Roosevelt's relationship with Booker Washington. Dockstader, famous for his portrayal of blackface, dressed as the Negro leader and staggered, as if drunk or ill, along the walkway. A fancy carriage, drawn by spirited horses and outfitted with a coachman and footman in White livery including red, white and blue cockades, stopped alongside the black man. The man inside, dressed as Roosevelt in frock coat and silk hat, proceeded to lend assistance. The black man was helped into the carriage, given a cigar, and the carriage rode away with the two men embracing affectionately.
What Theodore Roosevelt hoped to do in the South when he became President in 1901 appeared to be shattered with one move. Hoping to establish a real Republican Party in the South, he failed to realize that the racial passions of white Southerners, aggravated by Reconstruction, had not subsided. Roosevelt was not disliked in the South. Prior to his administration, Southerners were too firmly committed to the Democratic Party and too suspicious of Republicans to even pay close attention to Republican presidents. However, Roosevelt seemed different. His dynamic character and tremendous vigor was admired throughout Dixie. His charge up San Juan Hill reminded the South of the gallantry shown by Confederate officers in the Civil War. Perhaps most significant, Theodore Roosevelt could boast proudly of his southern heritage. He pleased the South further when he announced his intentions of appointing the best qualified men to federal positions, including Gold Democrats, and initiating this policy with the appointment of Judge Thomas Jones in Alabama. But when he proceeded to invite a Negro to dinner at the White House, he had made his first serious blunder.

The skit quickly assumed "sinister political overtones" and rumors spread that the Democratic party had paid Dockstadter four million dollars for the use of the film in the 1904 Presidential campaign. Soon Dockstadter became the subject of investigation by the Secret Service and several city police departments. The minstrel's film was confiscated and destroyed with the approval of President Roosevelt. See Willard B. Gatewood, "Theodore Roosevelt and the 'Kinetoscope Fakes': An Incident in the Campaign of 1904," Mid-America, XLIX (July, 1967), 190-199.
Roosevelt received greater condemnation for the incident than Booker Washington. Several years following the dinner Washington gave an illustration of the contempt that Southerners held for the President. Writing in 1911, the Negro educator told about a trip he made through Florida some weeks after his dinner at the White House. With news that Washington was aboard the train, a group of people gathered at the Gainsville station to greet him. Among the group was a white man, whose dress and manner seemed to reveal him to be a small farmer. The man entered the train and cordially shook hands with Washington. "I am mightily glad to see you," the farmer confessed to the Tuskegeean. "I have heard about you and I have been wanting to meet you for a long while." Washington was pleased at the man's remarks and the farmer continued to compliment him: "Say, you are a great man. You are the greatest man in this country!" The Negro leader mildly protested but the farmer insisted: "Yes, sir, the greatest man in this country." Washington told the man that he felt President Roosevelt was the greatest man in the country and the farmer replied: "Huh! Roosevelt? I used to think that Roosevelt was a great man until he ate dinner with you. That settled him for me."\(^4\)

Washington's popularity in the South did decline, however. The Southern press continued to attack him, not because of his work at Tuskegee, but because he had the insolence to sit down

and eat a meal in the White House. Southerners also attacked him because he was suddenly the chief "referee for patronage" in the South for President Roosevelt.

Roosevelt never realized why the South held such contempt toward him. On one occasion he wrote: "I really felt melancholy for the South at the way the Southerners behaved in the matter." Despite his conviction toward the incident, Roosevelt never asked Booker T. Washington to dinner again and he later confessed his uncertainty over the matter.

The President's difficulties with the South did not cease with the White House dinner. In December, 1902, he appointed the Negro doctor, William D. Crum, as Collector of Customs for the Port of Charleston, South Carolina and in January, 1903 he closed the Indianola, Mississippi Post Office when white citizens of the town forced the Negro postmistress to resign. Both incidents brought further criticism from the South and moved Roosevelt closer to the realization that "the Negro Problem always ye have with you."

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46 Roosevelt to Owen Wister, April 27, 1906, Ibid., V., p. 227.

CHAPTER III

THE INDIANOLA POST OFFICE AFFAIR:
DEFENSE OF THE NEGRO AND THE LAW

While the South was responding hysterically to his entertaining of Booker T. Washington at the White House, Theodore Roosevelt was acting upon the policy that he and the Negro educator had agreed to; appointing men of character and fitness to office in the South. The appointments would go to Democrats where Republicans could not be found, and to a few upright colored men and women of "property and character" who had the stamped approval of Washington.

In regards to Negro appointments, Roosevelt was determined to remove those black officeholders who were commonly associated with the old Reconstruction regimes and those who were connected with the machine of Mark Hanna and working for the Senator's nomination in 1904. On the recommendation of Washington, the President appointed a majority of Gold Democrats and ex-Confederate soldiers to Southern patronage positions. This delighted the South and caused prominent citizens to apply for various offices. To Southern whites, the President's appointment policy indicated a chance of removing all Negroes from political office in the South. However, Roosevelt was not considering this for he was aware that slighting the black community would result in the loss of support in

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the North as well as in the South.

Roosevelt made two appointments of Negroes in the South that became the source of conflict between the President and white Southerners. In South Carolina he appointed William Crum, and in Mississippi he reappointed Mrs. Minnie M. Cox to the Post Office in Indianola. Both appointments, occurring simultaneously, provoked a wave of protest and became controversial issues during the President's first administration.

In Mississippi, Roosevelt found the Republican organization "utterly rotten" and thought that it was impossible to rejuvenate the party with the existing leadership. On the recommendation of Booker T. Washington, he selected Edgar S. Wilson as United States Marshal for the Southern District of Mississippi in January, 1902. Wilson was an able journalist, editing several newspapers and serving for twelve years as Mississippi correspondent of the New Orleans Daily Picayune. He was a Democrat but in 1896 refused to support William Jennings Bryan for President and turned to the Palmer-Buckner ticket, joining the ranks of Gold Democrats. He was the bother-in-law of Mississippi Governor Andrew H. Longino, assisting him to that position in 1899.


Roosevelt was enthused over Washington's recommendation of Wilson. He had been informed that both Wilson and Governor Longino were men "who had endeavored to put a stop to lynching and to a division of the educational fund" in Mississippi. To the President, Wilson was the man he "could trust to recommend ... good people for the offices" in that state.\(^3\) Washington reassured Roosevelt: "Mr. Wilson is not only keeping in mind the putting of first class men in office but also ... the bringing about of such conditions as will not injure the party and the support which you should have from Mississippi. The more I see of him the more I am convinced of his wisdom and unselfishness and his great power for good."\(^4\)

Both the North and the South praised the selection of Wilson as "patronage referee" in Mississippi. It was viewed in the North as an indication that Roosevelt was not about to appoint unfit Republican officeholders. In the South, the appointment signified that the President was keeping his word in appointing Gold Democrats to office. To the black community, however, the appointment of Wilson was looked upon as an effort to formulate a lily-white Republican party in the South. The Boston Guardian declared: "The scheme to give the federal offices in the South to white Democrats rather than to colored Republicans on the part of a Republican administration and

\(^3\)Roosevelt to John Graham Brooks, November 13, 1908, Letters, VI, p. 1346.

\(^4\)Booker T. Washington to Roosevelt, December 24, 1901, quoted in Gatewood, p. 67.
to thus build up a white man's party there is a policy which meets the opposition of the entire Negro race." The Cleveland Gazette asserted: "In carrying out that new southern policy born under the McKinley administration, President Roosevelt seems to 'Out-Herod Herod.' In vainly trying to build up a Republican party in the south he is slowly but surely disrupting the portion of the party that is the backbone of northern republicanism - namely, its Afro-American contingent."

In Mississippi, the most outspoken black man against the appointment of Wilson was James Hill. Hill was the most prominent Negro Republican in the state and for years had held various offices. Roosevelt failed to reappoint him to any office and his duties in the state were handed over to Wilson. Angered at this move, Hill attempted but failed to block Wilson's confirmation in the Senate and then launched an anti-Roosevelt movement among Mississippi Republicans "in the hope of securing a delegation to the national convention in 1904 which would oppose the President's nomination."

The appointment of Wilson, together with the removal of Hill, led many Mississippi whites to the conclusion that Roosevelt would eliminate all Negroes from office in their state and consider prominent white citizens to replace them. This

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5 *Boston Guardian*, July 26, 1902.
6 *Cleveland Gazette*, February 1, 1902.
7 *Cleveland Gazette*, February 15, 1902; Gatewood, p. 68.
conclusion resulted in an affair that became one more issue of controversy in the Roosevelt administration. In the town of Indianola, white citizens erroneously concluded that the time had arrived to replace the Negro postmistress with a white citizen. However, Roosevelt had purposely reappointed the woman because she was a person of "property and outstanding character" and he was determined to keep her in office, despite the hostile reaction he was to receive from the South.

Mrs. Minnie M. Cox, a quiet and sophisticated Negro woman, had held the postmastership in Indianola for several years. She was first appointed by Benjamin Harrison when no white Republican in the area qualified for the office. Following the Democratic administration of Grover Cleveland, she was again appointed by McKinley in 1897 and on January 25, 1900 the office was raised from fourth-class to third-class status, elevating it to a presidential office. In 1900 Mrs. Cox began a four-year term under a commission signed by McKinley. The postmistress and her husband, Wayne W. Cox, a postal employee in the railway mail service, were among the most prominent citizens in Indianola. Both attended college, Mrs. Cox receiving a teacher's certificate from Fisk University and her husband graduating from Alcorn University. Their educational qualifications and their allegiance to the Republican party was manifest in their positions in government ser-

8Charles Fitzgerald to Joe P. Johnson, December 11, 1902, in "Resignation of the Postmaster at Indianola, Miss", House Documents, 57 Cong., 2d sess, Doc. no. 422, vol. 92, ser. no. 4531, p. 21 (hereafter cited as "Resignation of the Postmaster").
vice. Mrs. Cox was one of only five Negroes who had held a presidential third-class office.\textsuperscript{9}

The white citizens of Indianola had gained the impression that in the dispensation of federal patronage certain Democrats would be recognized where suitable Republicans could not be found, a direct result of Roosevelt's Southern policy in Mississippi. Their eyes now focused upon the post office and Mrs. Minnie Cox. Relations between the postmistress and her white patrons had been quite good for the past ten years but suddenly the community discovered they had an "obnoxious nigger postmaster." Those individuals who desired the office for themselves or for relatives started to raise the question of "nigger domination" in the hope of causing a vacancy in the post office. Mrs. Cox's presence was now a "menace to white civilization."\textsuperscript{10}

The manner in which Mrs. Cox conducted her office, prior to the deterioration of relations with the citizens of Indianola, was praised by her patrons and postal officials. Charles Fitzgerald, Post Office Inspector for the area and a native of Mississippi, made several visits to Indianola and reported that the office was "excellently conducted" and that Mrs. Cox was "couteous and efficient and render\textsuperscript{ed} the patrons a satisfactory service." He noted that the postmistress even extended

\footnotesize{9} "The Indianola Case," \textit{Outlook} LXXIII (January 24, 1903), p. 188; Gatewood, p. 64.

\footnotesize{10} Fitzgerald to Joe P. Johnson, December 11, 1902, in "Resignation of the Postmaster," p. 21.
her services to include assuming the responsibility of covering delinquent rent payments with her own funds "in order to avoid friction with her white patrons."\textsuperscript{11}

In the spring of 1902 several prominent citizens of Indianola submitted applications to Postmaster-General Henry C. Payne and President Roosevelt for consideration in the Indianola postmastership. The most persistent candidate for the position was A.B. Weeks, the brother-in-law of Indianola mayor, J.L. Davis. Weeks stated that because he was financially hurting, that he was white, and that he shifted his allegiance to the Republican party in 1896, he should be appointed postmaster. He declared that Mrs. Cox should be replaced because it was unfair "that one family should have two federal offices, especially when they are wealthy."\textsuperscript{12} Weeks continued submitting letters to the President and the Post Office Department, assuring them that the people of Indianola no longer wished the services of the Negro postmistress and were determined "to make her resign or give up the office in some way." He concluded: "They only do this because she is colored."\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{11}Fitzgerald to Joe P. Johnson, December 15, 1902, in "Resignation of the Postmaster," p. 22.

\textsuperscript{12}A.B. Weeks to Theodore Roosevelt, April 7, 1902, Ibid., p. 8.

\textsuperscript{13}A.B. Weeks to J.L. Bristow, September 19, 1902, Ibid., p. 10.
Late in September, 1902 the white citizens of Indianola became alarmed over another incident involving racial matters. It seemed that a Negro porter of Cohn's Brooklyn Bridge Store named Burnet was alleged to have shown "misconduct" toward a young lady, also employed in the store. Burnet had proved himself very useful as a salesman in the store, selling goods to Negro customers. For this he was permitted to act as clerk, which brought him in close contact with the young lady. He became "unduly inflated with his own importance" and became "habitually discourteous" toward her. She advised her friends of the man's behavior and the word spread throughout the town. This inflamed the white citizens against the Negro to such an extent that a public meeting was called to take action. When the meeting ended, the townspeople voted to banish the porter immediately and to also notify Dr. J.C. Fulton, a Negro physician, that he had until January 1, 1903 to leave town.14 Fulton had recently set up practice in Indianola to treat Negro patients. By doing so he had taken those patients away from several white doctors of the community. It was evident that Fulton, like the Coxes, had become "too prosperous" and therefore had to leave town.15


The Negro porter Burnet left Indianola immediately and Fulton, as mentioned, was given until January 1 to arrange his business interests. A second public meeting was called in opposition to the order given to Dr. Fulton. A vote was taken and it was decided, 45 to 37, that Fulton should remain, if he so desired. Believing that an outraged minority could easily become very threatening, Fulton decided that it would be in his best interest to leave Indianola. At the meeting, attention was called to the fact that a Negro was postmaster and it was stated that "this condition should not be longer tolerated." It was moved that she be ordered to resign at once. By expression of a majority, Mrs. Minnie Cox was ordered to vacate her office by January 1, 1903.16

Wayne Cox, husband of the postmistress, immediately wrote Post Office Inspector, Charles Fitzgerald, requesting "a talk about the 'Indianola Affair.'" Cox believed that he could handle the situation by attempting to work out some arrangement so that his wife would retain her post until the expiration of her commission in 1904. Writing to Fitzgerald, he stated: "I thought at first, after the 'heat' I could manage the affair, but now I am afraid not."17 Fitzgerald wrote Mayor Davis of Indianola, asking whether there was any truth


17 Wayne W. Cox to Charles Fitzgerald, November 18, 1902, Ibid., p. 19.
to the story that "certain citizens ... have banded together and intimidated Minnie M. Cox ... to agree to tender her resignation." The Mayor replied that he had no knowledge of any "parties, citizens or others" who have "intimidated Mrs. Cox into tendering her resignation." However, he was informed that a sentiment existed in the community that a change should be made in the post office management and when Mrs. Cox was informed through her husband, she offered to vacate her position. The Mayor concluded:

Considering the fact that fully five-sixths of the mail handled by the post-office at this place is sent and received by the white patrons of the office, it strikes me that the people have acted in a very exemplary manner to this time, and considering the further fact that she has acted as postmistress for years, and that she as postmistress, and her husband as mail clerk, have made money and are now in easy circumstances, and that she finds the people and patrons generally desire a change in the administration, it seems to me that it is the part of wisdom on her part and the best way out of an unpleasant outcome of the matter for her to resign, as it seems she has agreed to do.18

Following the receipt of Mayor Davis' letter, Fitzgerald travelled to Indianola to investigate the matter. Both the Mayor and the Sheriff of Indianola reassured the Inspector that "the people would prefer to see the office discontinued before submitting to a negro postmaster any longer." And if Mrs. Cox persisted in retaining the office, they "could not

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18 Fitzgerald to J.L. Davis, November 23, 1902; Davis to Fitzgerald, November 29, 1902, Ibid., pp. 19-20.
guarantee her protection from violence." Fitzgerald concluded that the Indianola assembly was actually a mob gathered together for an unlawful purpose. He reported that the meeting was not a mob in the sense that it was composed of "the riffraff of the community," it was "'the mob of gentlemen,' but a mob nevertheless."

On December 9, 1902, Mrs. Minnie Cox wrote Fitzgerald stating that "if I don't resign, there will be trouble and cause the town to lose post-office facilities." "This is my home, and I feel a deep interest in the town and its people. Under the circumstances in a few days I will tender my resignation." Two days later Fitzgerald received another message from Wayne Cox, expressing agreement with his wife's decision, but requesting the Inspector "to frame [his] report so that those that [have] caused this unpleasantness will not profit by it."21

Fitzgerald called upon B.G. Humphreys, the district attorney and Congressman-elect from the Indianola area, hoping to reach a settlement of the troubles of the post office.


20 Ibid.

21 Minnie M. Cox to Fitzgerald, December 9, 1902; Wayne W. Cox to Fitzgerald, December 11, 1902, Ibid., pp. 20, 25.
Humphreys conferred with several citizens of the town and reported back to Fitzgerald. He found that "the race prejudice ... is running too high just now in Indianola to be checked or curbed by a simple resort to reason." The district attorney feared that the authorities in Washington would resort to abolishing the post office, thereby punishing "many good people for an offense which they have not committed." Indianola was the county seat of Sunflower County, Mississippi, with some 1200 to 1500 inhabitants. "It is a very serious matter to deprive a community as large as Indianola of postal facilities," asserted Humphreys.22

Whatever pressures were applied by Humphreys, Fitzgerald, or Edgar Wilson, they were to no avail. The white citizens of Indianola were determined to have Mrs. Cox removed as postmistress and replaced by a "respectable" white member of the community. The Post Office Department continued to receive letters from A.B. Weeks and other citizens of the town, requesting to be considered for the position. On December 4, Mrs. Minnie Cox submitted her resignation to President Roosevelt, to be tendered on January 1, 1903 or "as soon thereafter as my successor can be appointed and qualified."23 Fitzgerald

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23Minnie M. Cox to Theodore Roosevelt, December 4, 1902, Ibid., p. 20.
followed Mrs. Cox's resignation with his own decision on the Indianola affair:

It is certain if the Department yields in this case it will be the beginning of interminable trouble, for it will encourage outbreaks of this kind in the comparatively few communities in this State where we have negro postmasters . . . .

We have before us the unpleasant spectacle of the Constitution and laws of the United States being trampled under foot by a community, and to meet the exigencies of the case is quite a problem because of its peculiarity.

I would, in the interest of a peaceful solution of this question, and at the same time a dignified maintenance of the laws and authority of the United States and the Post-Office Department, recommend that the resignation of the postmaster at Indianola, Miss., tendered under duress, be accepted January 1, 1903, ... and discontinuance of the post-office at Indianola, Sunflower County, Miss.24

Fitzgerald's report was forwarded to Postmaster-General Henry C. Payne and referred to the President. Roosevelt and Payne conferred on what course to take in the Indianola affair. It was, indeed, a unique circumstance facing the President. His appointment policy in the South was primarily aimed at receiving delegate support in 1904. However, the affair raised the question of individual rights as well as the authority of the Federal Government. Indianola presented an opportunity to test whether a community could force out an officeholder appointed by the Executive and also whether the Federal Government was powerless to interfere in the race problem. Roosevelt refused to accept Mrs. Cox's resignation and followed Fitz-

24 Fitzgerald to Joe P. Johnson, December 15, 1902, Ibid., p. 25.
gerald's recommendation by closing the Indianola Post Office on January 2, 1903. The President specified that the office was suspended, not abolished, since it was situated in a county seat of government and thereby entitled to postal facilities. The post office would still exist and the postmistress, Mrs. Cox, would continue to draw her salary and whenever she could resume her duties, postal service would then be restored. All mail that was destined for Indianola would be routed to Greenville, located thirty miles from town.25

The citizens of Indianola were disturbed over the closing of the post office but were convinced that their representatives in Congress, Senators Anselm J. McLaurin and Harando D. Money, would have postal service quickly restored. If not, they were willing to allow the post office "to remain closed until doomsday" just as long as they were rid of the Negro postmistress.26 Inspector Fitzgerald was sent to Indianola to "protect the Government property and funds" that were at the office. When he arrived he found "the populace deeply stirred, yet on the surface everything was quiet and orderly."27


26 Indianola Enterprise, January 16, 30, 1903, quoted in Gatewood, p. 77.

27 Charles Fitzgerald to Joe P. Johnson, January 6, 1903, in "Resignation of the Postmaster," p. 27.
The atmosphere was still too menacing for Minnie Cox and on January 5 she left Indianola to stay with friends in Birmingham. It was reported by a post office official that he overheard a man from the town state that "if that woman should go back and take charge of the post-office she would get her neck broken inside of two hours."\textsuperscript{28}

As would be expected, there was a mixed reaction in the press to Roosevelt's closing of the post office in Indianola. The moderate New York \textit{Times} chastized the President for lacking the knowledge that he "cannot lawfully punish an entire community for the offenses of some of its members." Insinuating that his action was part of his political strategy to secure his nomination in 1904, the \textit{Times} asserted that the incident "was certainly an act of gross injustice ... and was not the statutory procedure indicated in such cases and we cannot resist the conviction that it was a highly impolitic act."\textsuperscript{29} In the South, the incident sparked an outburst against the President comparable to that which followed his famous dinner with Booker T. Washington in 1901. In the eyes of white Southerners, Roosevelt was a "cynical Negrophile whose theories of social and political equality were responsible for a long

\textsuperscript{28}Fitzgerald to Joe P. Johnson, January 8, 1903; Letter of an unidentified post office official, February 23, 1903, \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 30, 33.

\textsuperscript{29}\textit{The New York Times}, January 6, 1903.
list of problems ranging from the outbreak of Negro outrages to the servant problem in the South." The Louisville Courier-Journal claimed that the method used by the citizens of Indianola to oust Minnie Cox from the post office was "merely a response to the extremism of the President" regarding the race question. The Savannah Morning News declared: "To make a person postmaster who is objectionable to the community is not in keeping with republican institutions, ... the rule of the majority, ... the principles of local self-government." One Southerner charged the President with "stirring up a frenzy of race feeling such as the South had not exhibited since Reconstruction" and another claimed the closing of the post office as being the next logical step in Roosevelt's treatment of the South. Finally, Harper's Weekly expressed hope that Mr. Roosevelt "will recall the order."30

The President did receive support for his action in several Northern journals such as the New York Tribune and the Washington Evening Star, both commending the government's action in attempting to forestall any further attempt at "lawlessness." The Nation exclaimed that Roosevelt "rings true

30"Southern Press on the Indianola Incident," Literary Digest, XXVI (January, 1903), 71-72; Gatewood, p. 82.
again in the matter of the post office....

The rowdy white element in the community, whose Anglo-Saxon chivalry towards Mrs. Cox's sex is reserved for white women exclusively, has tried to drive her out of office simply because of her color. The prosecution of the offenders belongs... to the community, and the President's action is a proper bringing to bear of pressure to that end. Southern regeneration from lynching must come from the South itself; but the Federal Government should not withhold its moral influence when its own offices are threatened.\(^3\)

The Outlook stated that the attack on Mrs. Cox "had its origin in a political cabal" because the President was naming Democrats to office in the South. Agreeing that the Government was bound to protect its officers, its editor, Lyman Abbott, concluded that the Post Office Department had not deprived the citizens of Indianola the facilities of the United States mail, "... it appears that the citizens are simply depriving themselves of these benefits."\(^3\) The New York Evening Post viewed the President's action as "simply an act of justice ... but for it he deserves great commendation," and the Buffalo Express predicted that Roosevelt's course "will be approved by all who believe in law and order."\(^3\)

\(^{3}\)The Nation, LXXVI (January 8, 1903), 21.

\(^{3\text{a}}\)"The Indianola Case," Outlook, LXXIII (January 24, 1903), 188-189.

\(^{3\text{b}}\)The New York Evening Post and Buffalo Express quoted in the Cleveland Gazette, January 24, 1903.
The Negro press hailed Roosevelt for his defense of the Negro postmistress. At first skeptical of his appointment policy in the South, the black community commended the President for closing the office and for appointing William Crum to the Charleston collectorship. Both events helped to reinforce the faith they held in the President since his dinner with Booker T. Washington. The Boston Guardian stated that the President, "like Lincoln is taking the right step at the right time." His action in the case of Mrs. Cox and his attitude toward Dr. Crum "are eminently satisfactory to colored Americans. All fair-minded citizens must uphold the president in these cases." Perhaps Harry C. Smith of the Cleveland Gazette best expressed the attitude of the Negro community:

The Roosevelt policy ... is the only correct one under the law, is fair and honorable, and while we do not always agree with the president in all things he does that affect our people, we cannot but honor and give him full credit for the stand he has taken in the Crum and Cox matters, as well as for the principle and policy enunciated as a result of the same. The prejudiced southern jackass can bray to its heart's content, but it will be in vain, because there is at last a man in the White House as president who has the courage of his convictions, right or wrong.

In Washington, Senator McLaurin came to the defense of the citizens of Indianola. His initial concern was over the

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35 The Boston Guardian, January 10, 1903.

36 The Cleveland Gazette, January 10, 1903.
distance that members of the community had to travel to receive their mail. With the mail being sent to Greenville, the people of Indianola had journey thirty miles. The Senator wrote a letter to Postmaster-General Payne requesting that the mail be sent to Heathman, a town only four miles away from Indianola. More convenient for the citizens, it would also be at no extra expense to the Government. McLaurin notified Payne that the people of Indianola had employed a person to carry their mail to Heathman and had directed their correspondents to address them at Heathman. "While I have not express authority to do so," wrote McLaurin, "I take the liberty in behalf of the people of Indianola to propose that whatever extra expense the Government incurs ... \[it\] will be paid by the people of Indianola." Payne replied to McLaurin that it was impossible to have the mail sent to Heathman because the post office was only a fourth-class office and was "not in any manner equipped for handling mail to the amount which would be received" from Indianola. Having failed to change the office, McLaurin conferred regularly with Payne and Roosevelt in an effort to have the Indianola post Office reopened with a white postmaster in charge. The President was persistent in keeping the office closed until the citizens allowed Mrs. Cox to assume her duties.

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38 Henry C. Payne to Anselm J. McLaurin, January 21, 1903, Ibid.
Failing to win any concessions from Roosevelt, the Senator took his fight to Congress.

On January 15, 1903 McLaurin rose in the Senate and stated that "the white people of Mississippi don't want negro postmasters appointed to give them out their mail." Rejecting the notion that Mrs. Cox had been forced to resign or that any threats had been made against her, the Senator referred to the President's public explanation of the affair as "a slur upon the high-toned, chivalrous, industrious ... and law-abiding people" of Indianola. The President was not without his supporters and Senator John C. Spooner of Wisconsin took to his defense. "It is as idle as the wind," Spooner declared, "to cavil upon the proposition that this was not a forced resignation. It is altogether evasive to dwell upon the 'politeness' of the request for Mrs. Cox's resignation. It was the power behind it which constituted the duress; it was the fact that that power was executed by white citizens of that county, and that this person against whom it was directed was colored." Spooner referred to the white citizens who forced Mrs. Cox to resign as a "brutal and lawless element" of that community. To the Senator, the President had acted on the principle that the Federal Government must exercise its constitutional authority and administer its affairs "without obstruction and without local duress applied to its officials." 39

The debate continued in Congress over the Indianola affair. Strong opponents of the President, such as Senators John Bankhead of Alabama, Edward Carmack of Tennessee, and Benjamin Tillman of South Carolina, were calling Roosevelt's closing of the post office a "tyrannical and unconstitutional act." Senator Bankhead condemned the President's action as being disgusting and amounting to anti-"lily white" conduct. Senator Tillman asserted that the appointment of a Negro to even a minor post was "the match which has touched off an electrical line of thought, reaching to the remotest bonds of this country." Whenever the Southern people were against an issue, their protests were treated, according to Tillman, with "contumely and contempt" by the President. In the House of Representatives, Congressman Edgar D. Crumpaker of Indiana introduced a resolution to investigate the entire Indianola affair and Postmaster-General Payne submitted all relating documents to Congress.

The Indianola incident became an important issue in Mississippi politics. In the elections of 1903, Governor Longino was running for the Senate and his opponent was the incumbent, Senator Money. Due to illness, Money was absent during the debate in the Senate over Indianola. Upon his re-

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turn in March, he delivered a speech in the defense of the citizens of Indianola. He effectively mixed his defense with lengthy segments on the general inferiority of the Negro and the implications of the Washington-Roosevelt dinner.\textsuperscript{42} His opponent, Governor Longino, became the victim of the community's outrage over the incident. He was accused of appointing Negroes to office and was the subject of a circular, distributed throughout the town, charging him of having "Negro blood" in his veins. Longino refused to admit that the racial question was an issue in the campaign, declaring that he would not appeal to race prejudice to obtain office.\textsuperscript{43}

The most outraged and antagonized citizen of Mississippi over the closing of the post office in Indianola was James K. Vardaman. The cousin of Senator Money and the editor of the Greenwood (Miss.) Commonwealth, Vardaman was an ardent champion of white supremacy. He had previously run twice for governor, defeated in 1895 by McLaurin and in 1899 by Longino. Nevertheless, he was determined to succeed in 1903 and the Indianola crisis provided him with an ample theme to appeal to the racist convictions of the white population of Mississippi. In the autumn of 1902 Vardaman delivered several speeches in Indianola where he "chided the people for tolerating a negro

\textsuperscript{42}\textit{Congressional Record}, 58 Cong., 1st sess., pp. 125-135; Gatewood, p. 83.

wench as postmaster" and expressing his view that her presence was because of Roosevelt's "referee system." In an editorial in the Commonwealth, Vardaman lashed out at the President:

It is said that men follow the bent of their genius and that prenatal influences are often potent in shaping thoughts and ideas of after life. Probably old lady Roosevelt, during the period of gestation, was frightened by a dog and that fact may account for the qualities of the male pup which are so prominent in Teddy .... I am disposed to apologize to the dog for mentioning it.

In 1902 the passage of the primary law, where the selection of a party's nominee was made by the voters rather than by convention delegates, aided Vardaman's campaign. A candidate's personality and oratory were now essential to capture the nomination and these two factors were deeply imbedded in the editor from Greenwood. By exploiting the Indianola affair and appealing to anti-Negro sentiments among white Mississippians, Vardaman, along with Senator Money, was elected in 1903.

Despite the existence of such demagoguery and negrophobia, Roosevelt never entertained the thought of retreating from

44 Gatewood, p. 71.
his original position. He closed the post office not for the Negro vote, for this was not an issue involving race. The citizens of Indianola had denied the authority of the Federal Government and must be reprimanded for such defiance. Writing to Clark Howell, editor of the Atlanta Constitution, Roosevelt stated that "to connect either ... appointments in the South ... or my actions in upholding the law at Indianola, with such questions as 'social equality' and 'negro domination' is as absurd as to connect them with the nebular hypothesis or the theory of atoms." In another correspondence, Roosevelt clustered labor strife, the Northern Securities case, and Indianola as being "three facets of the same crystal." "The sick Wall Street man ... the labor leader ... and the white man who attempts to act outside the law against a colored man must all three be made to understand that the law applies to them as well as their fellows," asserted the President.

Roosevelt was following precedent in his ordering the Indianola post office closed. In fact, Edgar Wilson reminded Postmaster-General Payne that similar incidents had occurred. President McKinley had closed an office in Pickens, Mississippi, because of the refusal of the people to accept a colored postmaster, and it remained closed for nearly a year. Wilson


48 Roosevelt to Oswald Garrison Villard, July 25, 1903; Ibid., p. 531.
also recalled that President Cleveland issued an order to close an office in Missouri because its patrons refused to accept a "white" postmaster named under his administration.\textsuperscript{49} Under such circumstances, Roosevelt asserted that he would "under no consideration ... refrain from doing what I did in closing the Indianola post office."\textsuperscript{50}

The post office at Indianola remained closed until 1904. Roosevelt had intended to keep it closed as long as the white citizens refused to accept Mrs. Cox as postmaster. However, certain events unfolded that convinced him to reopen the office. In 1903 James K. Vardaman was elected Governor of Mississippi and this signified that Indianola residents were determined to prevent Mrs. Cox or any Negro from serving as postmaster. In January, 1904, the Mississippi legislature passed a resolution attacking Roosevelt's "wilful nullification of the Constitution ... and the laws of Congress" in closing the Indianola post office. Mrs. Cox notified the President that she would not be a candidate for reappointment. Roosevelt could have kept the office closed but this would have involved legal complications since Indianola was a county seat and thus required postal facilities. The President decided to reopen the post office with a white postmaster, but he would not consider

\textsuperscript{49}Edgar S. Wilson to Henry C. Payne, January 17, 1903, in "Resignation of the Postmaster," p. 33.

any applicant for the position who had "been in sympathy with, or had anything to do directly or indirectly" with the forced resignation of Mrs. Cox. On the recommendation of Edgar Wilson and Inspector Charles Fitzgerald, Roosevelt appointed William B. Martin, the chairman of the local Democratic executive committee and one of Mrs. Cox's bondsmen, who remained "her staunch friend throughout the whole trouble." Finally, Postmaster-General Payne reduced the Indianola post office from third-class to fourth-class, stating that the receipts for 1903-1904 were not sufficient to be considered for presidential status.

Mrs. Minnie Cox returned to Indianola following her stay in Birmingham and shortly after, she and her husband organized the Delta Penny Savings Bank of Indianola and purchased a large plantation near the town, "worth $35,000 or $40,000." Booker Washington kept Roosevelt informed about the Coxes and the President was delighted over their progress. "It is a curious circumstance," Roosevelt wrote Owen Wister, "that while objection was made to this black family at the head of the post office, no objection is made to the black man being president of a bank in the same town."

The Indianola Post Office Affair served as another incident where Roosevelt came in direct conflict with the "Negro

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51 Gatewood, pp. 86-87.
Problem." He never understood why he angered the South by his closing the office, just as he did not understand its hostility over his entertaining Booker T. Washington at the White House. Perhaps the reason was that he shared racial views of white Southerners. He was not trying to establish "social equality" or "Negro domination." All he was asking was the chance to apply his "great rule of righteousness" and reward those black men and women who are "well-educated, intelligent and honest" and who are "propertied and of good character."54

54 Theodore Roosevelt to Owen Wister, April 27, 1906, Letters, V, p. 228.
CHAPTER IV

WILLIAM D. CRUM AND THE CHARLESTON COLLECTORSHIP

In the Autumn of 1902 the Lily White Republicans moved against the Negro "with an aggressiveness that was compared to that with which the white supremacy Democrats had driven him from political life." After launching their campaign of disfranchisement in the Southern States, the color line was drawn and Negro delegates were barred from Republican conventions.\(^1\) Roosevelt, seeking political reform in the Southern Republican party while destroying the political machines of Mark Hanna, initiated his program of appointing Gold Democrats and ex-Confederate soldiers to Southern patronage positions. He also included a few Negroes who had been recommended to him by Booker T. Washington.

The President acted first in Alabama with his appointment of Judge Thomas G. Jones. Then he refused to reappoint a lily white district attorney and replaced him with a Gold Democrat on the recommendation of James S. Clarkson, former Surveyor of the Port of New York, and Henry C. Payne, the

Postmaster-General. Both Clarkson and Payne had become Roosevelt's political advisors. The President's next maneuver, occurring again in Alabama, was the removal of the Collector of Internal Revenue for anti-Negro activities. Protest was very slight among white Southerns over these two incidents. Roosevelt's next move, however, created a storm that spread throughout the South. It occurred in Charleston, South Carolina, and it involved the appointment of Dr. William D. Crum to the Collectorship of the Port of Charleston. This appointment was both a manifestation of Roosevelt's displeasure with the lily whites and an effort to promote his belief that educated and propertied Negroes should be given the opportunity of playing a part in American politics.

A Charlestonian by birth, William D. Crum was the youngest of seven children in a family of German-African descent. His grandfather was a German who had emigrated to South Carolina early in the nineteenth century and upon arrival anglicized his name from Krum to Crum. William's father, Darius, had inherited a sizable plantation near Orangeburg where the Crum family grew up. Following the Civil War and the death of their father, the family fortune was depleted and the older sons migrated North in search of work. They had agreed upon securing William an education and with their help, he graduated from the Avery Normal Institute, a school sponsored by the American Missionary Association in Charleston. He studied briefly at the University of South Carolina, then went to medi-
cal school at Howard University where he received an M.D. degree in 1881. After establishing a medical practice in Charleston, he married Miss Ellen Craft who, like himself, had been born free and had enjoyed a formal education. By 1900 the Crums were among the most prominent members of the black community in Charleston. Aside from practicing medicine, William was actively engaged in Republican political affairs in South Carolina.  

Crum was selected as the Republican County Chairman of the Charleston district in 1890 and was elected to the Republican National Convention in 1892 as a delegate for James G. Blaine of Maine. Upon instructions from the convention, Crum shifted his allegiance to Benjamin Harrison, who secured the nomination for the second time.

Harrison, during his administration, showed no opposition to appointing Negroes to Federal offices. He expressed his feelings concerning the Negro in the South in a speech on the Senate floor in 1886, stating that he was "one of those who feel that the colored race in the South since the war has been subjected to indignation, cruelties, outrages, and a repression of rights such as find no parallel in the history of

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civilization."^4

Toward the end of his administration, Harrison came under pressure from Negroes concerning their condition in the South. T. Thomas Fortune, editor of the New York Age, called upon him to carry out the party's pledge, made during the campaign of 1888, to help the Negro cause and to avoid President Hayes' policy of "conciliating, bowing, and scraping, and apologizing and supplicating the white man of the South."^5 Harrison attempted to give Negroes what they were requesting and proceeded to appoint them to Postmasterships in Southern cities, initiating this action in 1892 with the appointment of Crum in Charleston.

Opposition stirred among the white citizens of Charleston, becoming so bitter that the President withdrew the nomination upon Crum's request. Crum acted from the conviction that withdrawal of his name would relieve Harrison of embarrassment and avoid the bitterness that would rise in the community by the appointment of a colored man to the office of Postmaster.^6

Two years later Crum was selected as the Republican candidate for the United States Senate, as an effort to combat the attempt by lily whites to eliminate the Negro from the poli-


^5Quoted in DeSabtis, p. 222.

tical scene in South Carolina. Crum's candidacy, however, was little more than a symbolic gesture, for his opponent was Benjamin Tillman, master of South Carolina's Democratic Party and staunch defender of white supremacy. By a majority of 5 to 1, Tillman was elected by the legislature to the Senate. 7

When Theodore Roosevelt took office he found John G. Capers "already installed as the nominal head of the Republican organization" in South Carolina. 8 Capers, the son of an Episcopal Bishop, was originally a Democrat but left the party in 1896 to support McKinley. He was rewarded with the appointment of District Attorney. He was later appointed by Hanna to the Republican National Committee, where he assumed the role of "Republican boss." 9 In the election of 1900, he officially joined the Republican party, campaigning for McKinley and Roosevelt. Although Capers was appointed by Hanna, Roosevelt accepted him and "ruthlessly threw out all of the old republican politicians." 10

Roosevelt made it clear that he objected to any attempt to eliminate the Negro from participation in party affairs.


9 Gatewood, p. 308.

Capers, who shifted his allegiance from Hanna to Roosevelt, publicly committed himself to a biracial party in South Carolina. Despite Capers' position as "patronage referee," Roosevelt continued to consult with others regarding appointments in South Carolina. Among these was Booker T. Washington, who suggested Crum for the Collector of Internal Revenue. Roosevelt had already designated Louis Blalock, a white manufacturer and a strong proponent of the President's policies, to fill the vacancy. He assured Washington that he would be happy to consider Crum for "any other position which became available."

Roosevelt's patronage program had to this time failed to serve its announced intention of giving hope to Negroes. The President turned to Washington for advice in appointing a collector to the Port of Charleston, to succeed R.M. Wallace, who died in September, 1902. During a visit to the Charleston Exposition early in 1902 Roosevelt had discussed appointments with white politicians of both parties but neglected to consult with Negro Republicans. They were convinced that the President's ears had been "poisoned against their interests." However, this accusation proved to be wrong for on the recommendation of Washington and the approval of Capers, Roosevelt appointed Crum Collector of the Port of Charleston.

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12 Gatewood, p. 310.
The announcement came early in November, 1902 and began a new era of harmony among South Carolina Republicans. It was also the signal for a long struggle between Roosevelt and the South. Led by Southern white Democrats, the citizens of Charleston were determined to defeat Crum's nomination and to persuade the President to abandon such a "reckless and irresponsible course."\(^\text{13}\)

The opposition was initiated by Mayor James A. Smyth of Charleston and James C. Hemphill, editor of the Charleston News and Courier. Both men were familiar with Roosevelt new Southern policy and expressed their concern over the matter. Smyth's main opposition to Crum was based on certain specific charges that tended to show his unfitness for the office. The mayor contended that the proposed postmaster appointment in 1892 was the fulfillment of a promise made by Harrison for Crum's shifting his allegiance. Crum "proved recreant to his obligation."\(^\text{14}\) Smyth also asserted that opposition to Crum was expressed in Charleston for the simple fact that he was a colored man. "We have sworn never again to submit to the rule of the African," the mayor explained to Roosevelt, "and such an appointment as that of Dr. Crum to any office forces us to protest unanimously against this insult to the white blood."\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{13}\) Gatewood, p. 311.

\(^{14}\) The New York Times, November 28, 1902.

Hemphill accused Roosevelt of taking advantage of the death of a native white citizen of South Carolina to name Crum as his successor, "not by and with consent of the Senate ... but by and with the advice of Booker Washington and the negro preachers and politicians of the country." He expressed concern that Crum was a colored man and "that in itself ought to bar him from office." Hemphill contended that Negroes were not engaged in commercial pursuits in Charleston and would not come in contact with him, while ninety per cent of those who had business there were white.16

Roosevelt answered Smyth and Hemphill with an "Open Letter" that was written on November 26 and was released to the press for publication the following day. In reference to Smyth's accusation that Crum was "unfit for office," the President assured the mayor that he would give the charges made against Crum the "utmost consideration ... and shall go over them carefully before taking action." He had "absolutely no intention of appointing unfit men to office."17

It was to Hemphill's objection that Crum was a Negro that Roosevelt directed his attention. How influential Charlestonians "could have gained the idea" that he had said he would not appoint a "reputable and upright colored man to office


when objections were made solely on account of color," he confessed, "was entirely beyond comprehension." Since his visit to Charleston, he averred, several Negroes had been appointed in the South. However, "the great majority of appointments in every State have been white men." In South Carolina "to the four most important positions ... I have appointed three men and continued in office a fourth, all of them, white men - three of them originally gold Democrats - two of them ... the sons of Confederate soldiers." Roosevelt affirmed that he could not consent to take the position that "the door of hope - the door of opportunity - ... be shut upon any man, no matter how worthy, purely upon the grounds of race or color."

The speculation that the Crum appointment would promote "Negro Domination" did not enter the matter, according to the President. He believed that the issue raised was much broader. It was a question of "whether it was to be declared that under no circumstances shall any man of color, no matter how upright and honest, no matter how good a citizen, no matter how fair in his dealings with all his fellows, be permitted to hold any office under our government." On this, the President stated that he "certainly could not assume such an attitude." He concluded: "... it is a good thing from every standpoint to let the colored man know that if he shows in marked degree the qualities of good citizenship ... then he will not
be cut off from all hope of similar reward."\(^{18}\)

When the letter was made public the Charleston News and Courier declared that Roosevelt "failed to understand the South." "The President," the News maintained, "is not vicious; he simply is ignorant." William Jennings Bryan wrote in his Commoner that if Roosevelt had "genuine courage," he would appoint "some reputable negro" to a position in a Northern state. Bryan felt that the President was deliberately insulting the South. It was "hardly probable," he concluded, "that Mr. Roosevelt would dare appoint a negro ... in any Republican community in a Northern state." In view of these attitudes from Charleston whites and Democratic political aspirants, Roosevelt was more determined than ever to support Crum for the position.\(^{19}\)

Opposition to the Crum appointment was not limited to the South. The moderate New York Times expressed its concern over the matter, calling it "unjustifiable" and "distasteful and offensive to ninety-nine-hundreths of the persons having business to do at the Custom House." There was no advantage for the administration or the Government to force an act that embittered an entire community against the President. "The colored race, either individually or as a whole, had nothing to gain


\(^{19}\)Bryan quoted in Letters, III, p. 385n.
by obstinate persistence in a policy which intensifies race
feeling and confirms the resolve of the whites of the South to
resist by every means in their power the political advancement
of the blacks." The Times believed that Roosevelt was using
the power of appointment to "efface the distinction" between
the white Southerners and a race which they universally regarded as inferior. "In this attempt the Administration is dashing
its head against a granite wall." ²⁰

Before sending Crum's name to the Senate for confirmation, Roosevelt conferred with Washington and requested him
"to probe every aspect of the case" in an effort to determine
the validity of the charges made regarding Crum's unfitness for
office. Receiving the information he requested, Roosevelt con-
cluded that the only real objection to Crum was his color.²¹

The President submitted Crum's name to the Senate for confirmation on January 5, 1903 and it was referred to the
Senate Committee on Commerce for action. Chaired by Senator
William P. Frye of Maine, the Committee was composed of ten
Republicans and six Democrats. There was no assurance that
the nomination would be reported favorably since there was
speculation that the two Republicans members from the West,
Senators John P. Jones of Nevada and George C. Perkins of

California, were expected to vote against a favorable report to the full Senate. When the committee did vote it rejected Crum by an 8 to 7 vote, with New Hampshire Republican Senator Jacob Gallinger absent and Jones and Perkins shifting to the Democrats. When informed of the results, Roosevelt became enraged over what he considered to be insincerity on the part of the Republican members of the committee.

Prior to the committee vote, the black community was divided over the issue. The Afro-American Council, the leading Negro organization of the country at that time, conferred with Republican Senators in behalf of Crum. Bishop Alexander Walters, the chairman of the Council, confessed that their fight for Crum's nomination was not "made because of his color." He continued: "Dr. Crum is a man of character, has every qualification for the position, and ... no valid objection has been offered against the appointment." 23

On the other hand, some Negroes believed that the nomination should be withdrawn. An unnamed black delegation -"some of Dr. Crum's friends" - called upon the President and requested that he withdraw the nomination for "reasons not connected with him but with what they considered as the good of the colored race." Roosevelt informed them that if Crum withdrew, 

22 The New York Times, March 6, 1903.
23 Ibid., February 4, 1903.
he would "accede to his request" but he could not ask him to do it.

The President felt that in the Crum Case he "had a right to expect the Senate to act one way or the other on the appointment." He requested Frye: "not to leave it unacted upon when the Senate adjourns." In spite of Roosevelt's plea, the Senate refused to act on the nomination. It had seemed apparent that the people of Charleston were willing to wage an all-out campaign to defeat the nomination and it was having its affects on the Senate.

The fight against the confirmation on behalf of the citizens of Charleston was taken up by Senators Benjamin Tillman and John L. McLaurin. Any efforts to give Negroes office "was bound to incur the animosity" of Tillman. Roosevelt's Northern attitude toward the black man seemed especially designed to inflame men of the Tillman type.25

Late in January, 1903, the South Carolina Senate and House of Representatives passed a resolution protesting the nomination of Crum to the Charleston Collectorship. The appointment was stated as being "detrimental to the commercial interests of the principle port and the chief city" of the State of South Carolina. The Legislature declared that Roosevelt's ac-


25 Simkins, Pitchfork Ben Tillman, p. 415.
tion was "in disregard of the sentiment and wishes" of the citizens of Charleston and called upon their Senators "to exercise their earnest efforts to prevent the confirmation of the nomination." 26

In Tillman's case the resolution was unnecessary, for he had already decided to do whatever was desired by his constituents in the case. As for McLaurin, it was undeterminable whether he would take any action in the matter. The two Senators were in constant disagreement over previous issues and it was known that McLaurin's relationship with the Administration was very close. Roosevelt at one time intended to appoint him to a judicial position, but McLaurin declined. 27

The people of Charleston were given a chance to be heard at a Senate hearing before the Committee on Commerce on January 22, 1903. The delegation for the people consisted of Senator Tillman, Mayor Smyth, James C. Hemphill, and A.C. Tobias, President of the Charleston Merchant's Exchange. Speaking in behalf of Crum were ex-Senator P.B.S. Pinchback of Louisiana and Whitefield McKinlay, Booker Washington's close friend and strongest supporter in the national capital.

Tillman stated that the real objection to Crum was that he was a "nigger." Charleston people would not say he was not


gentlemanly or capable. He was, in fact, an "educated nigger," and was no doubt honest. If he were a white man he would be alright but he was not, and that was all there was to it. Tillman argued that the people of Charleston had their ideas, and it was foolish to try to reform them by doing the things that were objectionable to them. He concluded: "Oil and water will not unite." 28

Mayor Smyth reaffirmed his objections based on the simple reason that colored people did not do any business before the Custom House and were not entitled to the office of Collector. In Crum's defense Pinchback and McKinlay spoke briefly, saying that he was one-eighth colored and seven-eighths white; that he was well-educated; and that there had never been any criticism of his ability or integrity. 29

On March 4 the Senate refused to confirm the nomination of Dr. Crum and on the following day Roosevelt sent his name back to the Senate for consideration. "The more I have thought it over," he expressed to Washington, "the more convinced I have been that Crum must be appointed." If the Senate did not act, he would "appoint Crum as soon as it adjourned." 30


29 Ibid.

Roosevelt called a special session of the Senate on March 5. The first communication presented was the nomination and request for the nomination of Crum to the Collectorship at Charleston. It was expected that Roosevelt would re-nominate Crum, but no one had been prepared for its receipt so early during the special session. While Democrats in the Senate presented a solid front in opposition, many of the leading Republicans were reputedly against the nomination, taking the view that the President should not force a Negro upon a community that did not want him. As a result, the session adjourned without acting on the nomination, and Roosevelt was forced to make the first of three successive recess appointments of Crum as Collector. After making the first appointment, Roosevelt told Crum to "keep in close touch with Mr. Capers" and admonished him to "administer your office with probity and efficiency and with such tact and judgment that no cause of complaint can be found against you." The Senate once again refused to confirm the appointment, when it returned in session, and once again Roosevelt renewed the appointment. On the third appointment Crum was to assume office. Upon notice of this action, Stephen E. Barnwell, an employee in the Custom House, immediately sent in his resignations.


tion stating his objection to working under a Negro. Also Miss Martha Washington, of the family of the first President, retired from her position as clerk.33

Roosevelt's theory of recess appointments was the center of attack for Senator Tillman. Always welcoming the opportunity to turn his arguments on the Negro question into a constitutional debate, Tillman challenged the President's theory of "constructive recess." He declared that Crum's appointment was "a very slight, insignificant incident" compared with the "great constitutional question" involved in the application of the Senate's right to confirm Presidential appointments. Tillman demanded that the Senate take Roosevelt "by the throat" and "stop dawdling around here neglecting its duty."34

The Treasury Department held up the personal account of Crum, refusing to pay him on the grounds that he could not receive compensation until his appointment had been confirmed by the Senate. Secretary Leslie Shaw held that nothing other than judicial determination could settle Crum's status and while holding office under a recess appointment he could not be paid. Shaw sent a letter to the Senate asserting that only the judiciary could determine the authority of Crum's position. Until

34Congressional Record, 58 Cong., 2d sess., p. 1106; Simkins, Pitchfork Ben Tillman, pp. 417-418.
then the office was to be "held in abeyance" until confirmation.  

Upon receiving the letter from the Secretary, Tillman immediately introduced a resolution, asking for more specific information from Shaw. He stated Shay's letter was ambiguous, and that it failed its object. He asserted that the Secretary had "with great adroitness, dodged the issue."  

Two months before the Republican Convention, Roosevelt wrote Senator Nelson Aldrich, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance and one of the most influential Republicans, and insisted upon action on the Crum case. He felt "not only that Crum was entitled to confirmation," but that "politically it would be a bad thing for the Senate to refuse to vote one way or the other upon his nomination." He told Aldrich that the Republican party was "being taunted with insincerity and timidity in the matter."  

Congress refused to confirm the nomination on December 6, 1903 and Crum was reappointed to the position and took the oath of office on January 9, 1904. It was more than evident that

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the President was determined to get Crum into the Collectorship. Opposition increased along with Roosevelt's persistence over the matter. The New York Times, for example, declared: "The Crum Case affords a remarkable illustration of Mr. Roosevelt's dogged determination to have his own way, even though people and Senators oppose him." 38 The Parker Constitution Club attacked the President, charging him with "a usurpation of powers of the Senate and with something more than a technical violation of the Constitution." 39

Roosevelt's determination carried him to the decision of having the Senate meet again in special session. However, this was to no avail and his hopes dwindled when once again the Senate failed to make the confirmation. The President reappointed Crum for the fourth time on April 28, 1904 and received positive assurance that the Senate would take up the case immediately on reconvening and that it would be disposed of finally. Senator William B. Allison of Iowa, the Chairman of the Committee on the order of business in the Senate, declared that the Crum Case "would be pressed to conclusion regardless of the other business." 40

39 Ibid., October 27, 1904.
40 Ibid., April 29, 1904.
By December, 1904, Roosevelt was "at wits end" on what to do over his Southern policy in general, and the Crum appointment in particular. He concluded that the entire blame had to rest with the South "for failure to meet his effort half way." He confessed that it may have been better "not to have originally nominated Crum for the Charleston Collectorship" but that personally he felt he was right. Even if he was wrong, "to say that the South's attitude is explained by this act is to say that the South is in a condition of violent chronic hysteria." In December news leaked out of Washington that Senator Tillman had returned to South Carolina due to illness, thus giving up the fight. It was also reported that the Senate Committee would vote favorably on the issue. On January 5, 1905, the Committee authorized a favorable report on the nomination and on January 6 Crum was confirmed. On that same day, following a debate of a dozen Senators, the Senate confirmed the nomination of William D. Crum as Collector of the Port of Charleston.

When Crum was confirmed, the editor of the Coloured-American expressed the significance of the appointment to the black community: "The Negro had witnessed his greatest political


42 Roosevelt to Henry S. Pritchett, December 15, 1904, Ibid., IV, pp. 1070-1071; Roosevelt to Owen Wister, April 27, 1906, Ibid., V, p. 462.

triumph in twenty years. ...Under a general of less courage and honour than Roosevelt, history would read differently. It has been thoroughly established that the law recognizes no man by the colour of his skin ...."^{44}

Roosevelt's appointment of William Crum to the Collectorship of Charleston played a significant part of his Southern policy. This policy attempted to achieve certain goals: improve and strengthen the Republican party in the South; secure his nomination in 1904; and recognize the merits of those blacks of property and good standing. Crum came to symbolize the new breed of Negro that Roosevelt wished to cultivate. His appointment was a part of his plan to undermine the Southern political machine which supported Hanna. In June, 1904, Roosevelt received the unanimous endorsement of the Republican Convention and several months later, the greatest popular majority of any President until that time.

The Crum appointment was a great political victory for the President. The New York Times summed up the entire affair when it stated: "The President's reasons for appointing Dr. Crum seemed to him worthy enough and important enough to justify overriding the objections of the Senate. Mr. Roosevelt is so accustomed to winning his battles that he may make a small

account of the Crum victory. The matter is not a trivial one, however.45

William Crum served his position as Collector of the Port of Charleston until March, 1909 when William Howard Taft secured his resignation. Both Roosevelt and Taft concluded that reappointing Crum would revive the struggle that had previously occurred. When Roosevelt learned of Crum's willingness to surrender his post he called it "first-rate."46

CHAPTER V

RECONCILING THE SOUTH

Theodore Roosevelt's primary political concern during his first administration was to reform the Republican party in the South, in order to secure his nomination in 1904. In the process, he would secure enough delegates and destroy the old Hanna-dominated Republican political machines. This major effort culminated in 1904 with the President's renomination at the Republican National Convention and his victory in the presidential contest.

As his second term began, Roosevelt realized that in the process of winning support, he had alienated white Southerners with his efforts to recognize prominent Negroes in the South. He was now determined to bind the sectional wounds that he had helped inflict and direct his attentions toward reconciliation between the North and the South. Anti-Negro sentiment was flourishing and the President responded by refusing to speak out against disfranchisement, "Jim Crowism" and mob violence. In 1905 he made an extensive tour of the South with the sole purpose of winning the affections of the white population. He was conspicuously silent following the Atlanta race riots in 1906 and in the same year, summarily discharged 167 black soldiers from the United States Army for alleged participation
in the Brownsville affair. During the course of his second administration, Theodore Roosevelt demonstrated that sectional reconciliation was more important than racial reconciliation.

On February 13, 1905 the President addressed the New York Republican Club in commemoration of Abraham Lincoln. In his speech, Roosevelt devoted his attention to the race problem that existed and the principles that should be applied in the solution to it. This was his first public statement on the subject since his election. He had failed to mention anything during his Inaugural Address of 1905 on disfranchisement in the South or whether he would support the movement to enforce the Fourteenth Amendment by calling for a reduction of Southern representation in the House of Representatives.\(^1\) This omission signaled the beginning of his efforts to reconcile the South with the rest of the nation. However, in his Lincoln Day Speech, the President outlined the race problem as that "of so dealing with the man of one color as to secure him the rights that no one would grudge him if he were of another color."\(^2\)

There was no immediate solution to the problem, but Roosevelt felt that an ultimate solution could be reached only


by an effort "to secure to each man, whatever his color, equality of opportunity, equality of treatment before the law."

Roosevelt charged that the vices of "laziness, shiftlessness and criminality" among Negroes were more of a hindrance to their race than "all acts of oppression put together." He admonished blacks to condemn crime when committed by Negroes, and to cooperate with local authorities to bring guilty members of their race to swift justice. Failure to do this, the President continued, would make Negroes the "worst enemy of their own people as well as the enemy of all people." Roosevelt contended that the social question "must ... be left to the people of each community to settle for themselves, as in such a matter no one community, and indeed no one individual, can dictate to any other." "There must be no confusing of civil privileges with social intercourse." The President conceded that blacks should have an equal opportunity and the "suffrage based on character and intelligence for black and white alike."

He then concluded his address with a special appeal to the South:

\[\text{I believe in the Southerner as I believe in the Northerner. I claim the right to feel pride in his great qualities and in his great deeds exactly as I feel pride in the great qualities and deeds of every other American. For weal or for woe we are knit together; and we shall go up or down together; and I believe that we shall go up and not down, that we shall go forward instead of halting and and falling back, because I have an abiding faith in the generosity, the courage, the resolution, and the common sense of all my countrymen.}\]

Several months following his Lincoln Day Address, Roosevelt made preparations for his Southern tour with the purpose of winning the South for the Republican administration and bringing about a better understanding between himself and the Southern white people. This indeed was to be a difficult task. To white Southerners, Roosevelt had committed unpardonable sins during his first administration, and many considered the President the "blackest" of black Republicans. He had insulted them on three occasions to win approval from the Northern black community: the Crum appointment, the closing of the Indianola Post Office, and more seriously, inviting Booker T. Washington to dinner and supposedly "proclaiming to the world his belief in social equality."4

Roosevelt believed that reconciliation toward the South was perhaps one answer to the Negro problem. In the fall of 1906 he wrote Harvard President Charles W. Eliot: "I have been at my wits' end in knowing how to deal with this negro problem." He believed the situation was bad wherever there were "large bodies of negroes" North or South. "Things are hideous in the South." He added: "I am certain that what I have done has been all right, yet often the results have been most unsatisfactory; and while I have in different States tried different experiments, none of them have come out so I am really pleased." Roosevelt's

4"The President and the South," Nation, LXXXI (November 2, 1905), 352.
next "experiment" was to travel to the South and make a direct appeal to white Southerners.\(^5\)

The Southern press voiced mixed reaction when it was learned that the President was to tour the South. The Atlanta Journal stated that the only influence at work in bringing the President to the South was the existence of "a few Republican officeholders." Fearing that Roosevelt would not be received cordially by the Southern people and not extended the courtesy that "the great office of President of the United States ... should receive," the Journal expressed hope that the visit would be cancelled or delayed. "We are impressed with the belief that this man ... has purposely derided and scorned the best sentiment and the best traditions of all southern people ... and we cannot think there will be an overwhelming desire on the part of Southerners to receive him around the hospitable board of southern homes." The Houston Chronicle aspired that the President "will do nothing to give offense to a Southern community any more than he would to a Northern community, ... that the sentiments and even what he considers the prejudices and the hereditary antipathies of Southern people will be respected and that ... he will regard the preferences of Southern communities and not do anything to cause irritation or arouse sectional bitterness." The Charlotte Observer declared, with

somewhat less intensity, that "despite the fear which many Southerners have that the President may continue to stir up the race problem by appointing negroes to office, there is no perceptible bitterness toward him. On the contrary, he is generally regarded as an honest and straight-forward man who intends to do right, and whose wrongful acts are all mistakes."\(^6\)

In September, 1905, T. Thomas Fortune, editor of the New York Age, expressed the sentiment of many Negroes against the President's proposed Southern tour. Fortune believed that Roosevelt would lose nothing if he should cut out all of the trips "except the visit to Tuskegee Institue where he would be among true friends and where nothing would likely occur in words or acts to prejudice him against Afro-Americans." If the President proceeded with his planned visit throughout the South, Fortune asked that he seize the opportunity to denounce lynching, discrimination against blacks, and condemn the Southern disfranchisement constitutions which were so detrimental to black political participation.\(^7\)

In October, Roosevelt left for his Southern tour. The excursion carried him through eight Southern States - Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Arkansas and Louisiana, with special stops at Tuskegee and the Florida

\(^6\)The Atlanta Journal, Houston Chronicle, and Charlotte Observer quoted in "Will Southerners Welcome Mr. Roosevelt?," Current Literature, XXXVIII (January, 1905), 14-16.

\(^7\)The New York Age, September 28, 1905.
Baptist Academy. In speech after speech, Roosevelt paid homage to Lee and the Confederacy and praised the Southern people for loyalty to their traditions. He sent roses to Stonewall Jackson's widow and had himself photographed with Negro servants of the Bulloch family in Georgia. While he spoke on many national issues, the President failed to mention anything concerning Southern disfranchisement or the increasing Jim Crow legislation which was rapidly spreading throughout the South. 8

Roosevelt had accepted an invitation to speak at the Florida Baptist Academy, a small industrial institution similar to Tuskegee. This caused the white citizens of Jacksonville to make arrangements to keep the President from addressing Negroes of the city. J. Douglas Wetmore, a prominent lawyer of the city and one of the two black members of the city council, wrote to the President's secretary, William Loeb, and informed him of the situation stating that the Reception Committee made no provisions for blacks in their general plans of entertainment for the President. When Loeb received the complaint, he wired the Committee and requested some type of recognition for blacks. The Committee responded that to change their original plan would cause "embarrassment" among the white people.

citizens of the community. Nevertheless, arrangements were made for Roosevelt to address the academy following his scheduled speech to the white population of Jacksonville. Because he was running on a tight schedule, however, the President was only able to be present at the Academy for ten minutes.9

Roosevelt delivered a speech to the students and faculty of Tuskegee Institute on October 24, 1905. While he issued moral injunctions to Negroes and praised Southern civilization throughout his tour, it was at Tuskegee where the President devoted considerable discussion to the question of the Negro's place in Southern society, and to what they must do to eventually enter into the possession of those freedoms that most Americans accepted as a matter of course.

Roosevelt urged both the white and the black population to encourage the Negro to make himself a citizen of the "highest type of usefulness." He asserted the belief that the South "offered opportunities for blacks in economic development that were not offered elsewhere in America." Because of the scarcity of labor, "it is the part of wisdom for all who wish the prosperity of the South to help the negro to become ... useful to himself, and therefore to the community in which he lives." The President reminded his audience that economic development was the major hope of Negroes because "the professional and

mercantile avenues to success are overcrowded." He emphasized the importance of an industrial education, coupled with training in agriculture and household duties. It was primarily in these three areas where "the Negro can at present do the most for himself and his white neighbor." Roosevelt asserted that Negro education was "in the interest and for the protection of the white man" for "ignorance is the costliest crop that can be raised in any part of this Union." "It is not only the duty of the white man," explained the President, "but ... [in] his interest, to see that the negro is protected in property, in life, and in all his legal rights."

Roosevelt expressed his concern over lynching in the United States. "Lawlessness ... is not confined to any one section," he stated, "lynching is not confined to any one section." He gave praise to the "countless thousands of high-minded private citizens" who have aroused public opinion against lawlessness and especially against lynching. Directing himself to the educated black community, he declared that "You are in honor bound to join hands in favor of law and order and to war against all crime, and especially against all crime by men of your own race; for the heaviest wrong done by the criminal is the wrong to his own race." He called on the men and women educated at Tuskegee to lead their fellow citizens toward "sober, industrious, lawabiding lives." "The colored people have many difficulties to pass through, but these difficulties will be surmounted if only the policy of reason and common sense is
Roosevelt emphasized the importance of moral and industrial education for the progress of the black community. "The race cannot expect to get everything at once; it must learn to wait and bide its time; to prove itself worthy by showing its possession of perseverance, of thrift, of self-control." Speaking to both races, he concluded:

The hope of advancement of the colored man in the South lies in his steady, common-sense effort to improve his moral and material condition, and to work in harmony with the white man in upbuilding the Commonwealth. The future of the South now depends upon the people of both races living up to the spirit and letter of the laws of their several States and working out the destinies of both races, not as races, but as law-abiding American citizens.¹⁰

The President's Southern tour accomplished its primary objective in bringing about a better understanding between himself and white Southerners and served to increase sectional reconciliation. Southern editors, such as Clark Howell of the Atlanta Constitution and Henry Watterson of the Louisville Courier-Journal, expressed approval of Roosevelt's direct appeal to the South. Watterson completely reversed himself; in 1902 he had called the President "infinitely a worse enemy of the white men and women of the south than any of the radi-

cal leaders of the past." William Garrott Brown called the President's tour a "bolder and more direct challenge to the Americanism, the sense of nationality, of the Southern people than any ... earlier presidential visitations." "If there has been any conversion on the subject of race," concluded Brown, "it is rather the President than the South that has seen a new light." To emphasize the spirit of reconciliation, Roosevelt purposely avoided reference to any subject that might irritate Southern whites. He passed through Georgia during the bitterly contested disfranchisement campaign, but he never spoke about the movement in his public addresses. He made one reference against mob violence in Little Rock, Arkansas, but his remarks were more of a reaction to the impropriety of the statements of Governor Jefferson Davis. The rebuke to Davis came when the Governor, following an introduction to the President, "ventured to say a good word for the fiendish institution." Davis stated that lynching was caused by the rape of white women by black men and intimated that the "only good Negro was a dead Negro." Roosevelt turned to the Governor and declared that the effect of "one heinous crime by another heinous crime was to reduce the man doing it to the bestial level of the man who com-


12 William Garrott Brown, "President Roosevelt and the South," Independent, LIX (November 9, 1905), 1086-1089.
mitted the bestial crime." He informed Davis that "three
fourths of the lynchings were not for rape at all but was for
other crimes," and reminded him that, as a representative of
the law, he owed it to "humanity to free the United States
from the menace and reproach of lynch law."\(^1\)

The Negro reaction to the President's Southern tour was
one of disillusionment. J. Max Barber, editor of the *Voice of
the Negro*, conducted a canvass of influential Negroes and twen-
ty five black newspapers to ascertain their opinion on Roose-
velt's trip. Ten per cent voiced approval, but the remainder
were highly critical of the President's activities in the South.
W. E. B. DuBois condemned Roosevelt's silence on disfranchise-
ment: "... if men like Theodore Roosevelt dared not speak the
truth, who shall?" Booker T. Washington refused to reply to
Barber's survey, but he did approve of the President's conduct.
After all, was not the President reiterating the philosophy of
self-help?\(^2\) The New York *Age* charged Roosevelt with the
"grave sin of omission" and believed that "no good would come
of it to the black South."\(^3\)

The theme of reconciliation was further reflected in
Roosevelt's appointment policy. Following his inauguration

\(^1\) The New York *Age*, November 2, 1905.


\(^3\) The New York *Age*, November 2, 1905.
in 1905, he initiated a general appointment policy for the Federal Government. There was now to be a "uniform policy of retaining the incumbents in office during satisfactory service." The policy would hold "irrespective of the length of service of the incumbent and would apply to all branches of the federal government." Nine months later, Roosevelt removed most of the Southern blacks appointed by McKinley through the application of a "two-term tradition." According to this doctrine, those officeholders who had served for more than eight years would not be reappointed.

The President received strong criticism from the Negro press for his failure to speak out against lynching on his Southern tour. Roosevelt had purposely remained silent on the subject for fear of alienating the people to whom he was appealing for support. The problem did exist, however, and he knew its seriousness and was aware that silence would not cure lawlessness. One event seemed to accelerate the dire need for action on the subject and cause the President to face the problem: the Atlanta Riots of 1906.

Violence against Atlanta Negroes erupted on September 22, 1906 and lasted for three days. Three major factors caused the racial disturbance on that evening. Hoke Smith and Clark Howell had just finished a hard campaign for Governor, with both standing on firm ground against Negro suffrage. Two Atlanta news-

papers, the News and the Georgian, had contributed to the racist campaign via "yellow journalism" in their stories concerning race relations in the city. And there existed a deep jealousy among the white citizens of Atlanta toward the well-educated and prosperous Negroes who had established themselves as prominent citizens within the community.  

On Saturday September 22, the News and Georgian reported that five white women had been assaulted by Negroes during the past week and that one of the assaults had occurred just prior to the release of the Saturday evening editions. The News ran five such editions with large type proclaiming "THIRD ASSAULT" and "FOURTH ASSAULT." Competition between the News and Georgian for circulation was keen; yellow journalism dramatized each incident, and the result was an increase of racial tensions in Atlanta. Following the latest edition of both papers on that Saturday evening, white mobs formed to patrol the streets and began dragging Negroes off streetcars to beat and kill them. The police attempted to control the rage, but they were too late. Negroes raced into the Decatur Street slums seeking protection and others fled to the post office, where at least one

black man died on the steps before he could reach the door. Another victim fell from blows delivered by the mob under a monument of Henry Grady. At two-thirty in the morning the Governor called out the militia. For three more days sporadic violence continued. Negroes mounted fitful counterattacks with little effect. By the end of the riot at least twelve blacks were dead and over seventy wounded.

The black community was enraged by the mob attacks. The Cleveland Gazette and the Washington Bee called for a national investigation into the disturbances. Harry Smith of the Gazette contended that Roosevelt should be more concerned about the conviction and punishment of the "guilty Georgia barbarians" than he was about American Jews' protest to the Russian Czar as a result of the Kishenef Massacre, since blacks were United States citizens and were "butchered on American soil."18

Booker T. Washington was in New York when the Atlanta riots broke out. Through the New York Age, the Negro leader gave Atlanta's Negroes advice on how the affair should be handled, urging the "best white people and colored people" to unite in their efforts to stop the disorder. He cautioned blacks to exercise self-control and not to make the fatal mistake of attempting to retaliate but to "rely upon the efforts of proper authorities to bring order out of confusion."19

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18 The Cleveland Gazette, September 29, 1906.
19 The New York Age, September 27, 1906.
travelled to Atlanta and "gathered together his frightened people amid the smoking ruins of their homes, soothed, calmed, and cheered them." He surveyed the damage done by the riots and later published an optimistic account in *Outlook* prophesying advancements and understanding between the races as a result of the riot.

Roosevelt failed to act on the Atlanta riot, to the dismay of the black community. He viewed the disturbance as a civil matter, not warranting federal intervention. A group of newspaper editors in Atlanta and former Governor Andrew J. Montegue of Virginia approached the President and requested that a commission be appointed to investigate and make recommendations on the Southern Negro problem. The proposal was instituted by Clark Howell, editor of the Atlanta Constitution. These Southerners urged Roosevelt to announce in his December Annual Message of 1906 his intentions in appointing such a commission. The President considered the proposal seriously but decided against mentioning it in his message. He explained his reasoning to Howell: "I am very much afraid that a certain extreme element here in the North would misunderstand that recommendation and hail it as having what would be in reality a sinister party purpose; and I am almost equally afraid that an

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exactly opposite element in the South, but an element no less radical and no less prejudiced, would make the same mistake." Roosevelt then suggested that a "first-class southern Senator or Congressman" introduce the bill and he would follow by "heartedly backing it up." As a result the bill was never mentioned by Roosevelt in his message, nor was it proposed by any member of Congress. 22

In his Annual Message to Congress in 1906, Roosevelt did refer to the Negro lynching problem. He stated that "the greatest existing cause of lynching is the participation, especially by black men, in the hideous crime of rape - the most abominable in all the category of crimes, even worse than murder." In attributing a greater "perpetration" of rape to Negroes than to white men, Roosevelt presumably did not consider it rape for a white man to force his intentions on a helpless Negro woman, nor did he take into consideration how easy it was for a black man who accidentally touched a white woman to be accused of rape. He did recognize that "when mobs begin to lynch for rape they speedily extend the sphere of their operation and lynch for many other kinds of crimes." He asserted that "two-thirds of the lynchings are not for rape at all" and that "a considerable proportion of the individuals lynched are innocent of all crime." In the President's judgment, "the crime of rape should always be punished with death, as in the case with murder,"

and "assault with the intent to rape should be made a capital crime, at least in the discretion of the court." But he emphasized the necessity of "justice under the law." Roosevelt continued: "There is no question of 'social equality' or 'negro domination' involved; only the question of relentlessly punishing bad men." Every colored man should realize that the worst enemy of his race is the negro criminal, and above all the negro criminal who commits the dreadful crime of rape." He urged that "respectable colored people must learn not to harbor criminals."^23

Roosevelt linked the problem of crime with the need for more education for Negroes. He felt that education would lessen the possibility of crime and believed "the best type of education for the colored man, as a whole" was that given at such schools as "Hampton and Tuskegee," where "young men and young women are trained industrially as well as in the ordinary public school branches." He added that "hardly any of them become criminals," especially of "the form of that brutal violence which invites lynch-law."^24

In his address to Congress, Roosevelt confronted the issue of lynching, as requested by the black community, but what he said did not concur with their sentiments on the matter. Be-


believing that reconciliation toward the South was of the utmost importance, he sided with the arguments of white Southerners and placed the responsibility on the black community. Furthermore, he expressed concern over the sheltering of black criminals by members of their own race, without taking issue with white Southerners who sheltered their criminals, especially following the execution of lynch-law. Prior to his address to Congress, Roosevelt expressed this sentiment: "I speak of the grave and evil fact that the negroes too often band together to shelter their own criminals [and this] action had an undoubted effect in helping to precipitate the hideous Atlanta race riots. I condemn such attitude strongly for I feel that it is fraught with the gravest danger to both races." 

Roosevelt's direct appeal to white Southern sentiment during his second administration was in the effort of "winning the South." But while he moved closer to the South, he moved away from the black community. His lack of response to lynchings, disfranchisement, and the Atlanta riots only proved to Negroes that sectional reconciliation was more important to the President than racial reconciliation. When Roosevelt summarily dismissed 167 black troops in Brownsville, Texas, for alleged participation in a raid on that town, the black community fully realized that the man in the White House was no

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longer their friend. Black dissatisfaction with the President's decision reached its zenith, and for the first time a disaffection from the Republican ranks appeared as a serious consequence of his appeal to the white South.
CHAPTER VI

THE BROWNSVILLE AFFAIR

When Theodore Roosevelt returned from his "Southern tour" he had gained the admiration and support of the South. With his silence following the Atlanta Riots of 1906 and his acceptance of the Southern argument on lynching, announced in his annual message to Congress in the same year, it was apparent that the President had formulated a new policy toward the South. This policy was confirmed by an act that further alienated the black community. In October, 1906, Roosevelt summarily dismissed members of the Twenty-fifth Infantry Regiment of the United States Army, because of alleged participation in the "Brownsville Affair." Because these particular soldiers were Negroes, all hope and confidence that the black community had once held in Roosevelt was shattered.

Around midnight on August 13, 1906, a number of men, estimated to be between ten and twenty, ran through the main street of Brownsville, Texas, shooting at random. The "raid" lasted approximately ten minutes. One man was killed and two more were injured.

Two weeks prior to the raid, companies B, C, and D of the First Battalion of the United States Twenty-fifth Infantry arrived at Port Brown, located just outside of Brownsville. The Twenty-fifth Infantry, composed of 167 black troops under the command of Major Charles W. Penrose, had been stationed at Fort Niobrara, Nebraska, for more than two years. The soldiers were originally ordered to travel to Austin, Texas, but the order was rescinded by the War Department at the request of the white officers of the Twenty-fifth. They feared that racial tension in Texas would flourish with the presence of black troops. When news arrived in Brownsville that the Twenty-fifth was to replace the white troops stationed at Port Brown, complaining citizens immediately wired Washington requesting that the orders be changed. Secretary of War William Howard Taft replied that racial tension existed throughout the country and claimed that the black troops were "quite as well disciplined and behaved as the average of other troops." Refusing to change the orders, the War Department sent the Twenty-fifth Infantry to Brownsville. It arrived on July 28.

Relations between the white citizens of Brownsville and the Negro troops had already deteriorated prior to the raid. In at least two incidents Negroes were pushed or struck down by whites because of "disrespectful behavior." On the day of the raid, a complaint issued to city and military officials stated that a Negro soldier had attempted to rape a white woman in the town.

Circumstantial evidence linked the soldiers to the raid. It was claimed that because of the harassment that the troops were receiving, the attack was made as a revenge against the white citizens of Brownsville. Several citizens alleged that they recognized, by sight or by voice, the raiders to be Negro soldiers. The area attacked was adjacent to the enlisted men's barracks and was separated only by a low wall. Empty shells were discovered along the route of the attack and were immediately assumed to have been fired by the new Springfield rifles that the troops possessed. 3

The white officers of the Battalion initially assumed that the troops were innocent and that the raid was a local matter. On the day of the attack, Mayor Fred J. Combe called upon Major Penrose and advised him to keep his troops confined to the Fort because of the rape allegation. When the raid occurred, Penrose believed it was an attack against the Fort and called for defensive positions. After several soldiers

were ordered to town to investigate the occurrence, and returned with Mayor Combe, the officers realized that the troops were being accused. They refused to believe the accusation until Combe returned the following morning with several exploded shells, cartridges and clips, the type used by the men in the battalion. With this evidence, the officers concluded that some of their men must have been involved in the shootout.

The day after the raid, the Mayor appointed a committee of four to select a Citizens Committee of fifteen townspeople to investigate the raid. When the Citizens Committee began its deliberation, it assumed the black troops were guilty of the shooting. It was the committee's job to determine which of the soldiers were involved. Twenty-two witnesses, all citizens of Brownsville, appeared before the committee. Eight identified the raiders as black soldiers. Five of the eight asserted that they actually saw and recognized blacks. The remaining three testified that they recognized the black soldiers by their voices.4

On August 15 the committee telegraphed President Roosevelt their conclusions and the President responded immediately by ordering Major August P. Blocksom, Assistant Inspector-General of the Southwestern Division, to Brownsville to take charge of the investigation. Blocksom recommended that the

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troops be removed from Fort Brown because of the tension that existed in the town. By August 25 the battalion was on its way to Fort Reno, Oklahoma Territory, where Blocksom completed his inquiry. He filed his report on August 29 and charged an unidentified number of the battalion with the actual guilt of the raid and the remainder with banding together in a "conspiracy of silence" to shield the guilty. Blocksom asserted that the troops wished to gain revenge for the harassment committed against them by the white citizens of Brownsville. He concluded his report by recommending that the entire battalion be discharged from the Army if the "conspiracy of silence" was not broken.⁵

Roosevelt received Blocksom's report and gave it his approval. On October 4 he ordered General Ernest A. Garlington, the South Carolina Inspector-General, to Fort Reno, specifying that the troops be informed that unless those who had knowledge of the raid and its participants came forward, every member of companies B, C and D would be discharged without honor. On October 22 Garlington submitted his report:

After due opportunity and notice, the enlisted men of the Twenty-fifth Infantry have failed to tell all that is reasonable to believe that they know concerning the shooting. If they had done so, if they had been willing to relate all of the circumstances - instances preliminary

⁵For the complete report of Major Blocksom see "Report on Brownsville Affray," pp. 425-430.
to the trouble - it is extremely probable that a clue suf­
ficiently definite to lead to results would have been dis­
closed. They appeared to stand together in a determination
to resist the detection of the guilty; therefore they should
stand together when the penalty falls.  

By November 5 Roosevelt had read Garlington's report,
agreed with its conclusions, and ordered Secretary Taft to carry
out the recommendation. Execution of the order began November
16, and ten days later the last member of the battalion was
discharged without honor from the United States Army.

The dismissal of the three companies of the Twenty-fifth
Infantry was a crucial blow to the black community in general
and to the black soldiers in particular. Roosevelt insisted
upon punishing the innocent to condemn the existence of a "con­
sspiracy of silence." With the dismissal, the President removed
the most distinguished black soldiers in the United States
Army. Members of the Twenty-fifth had service ranging from
six to twenty years. One soldier in particular, Sergeant Mingo
Sanders of Company B, personified the harm Roosevelt had in­
flicted with his order. Sanders had served in the Twenty­
fifth continuously for twenty-six years. Because of his over­
seas duty time, less than eighteen months after his dismissal
he would have been entitled to retire on three-quarters pay
with all of the rights and allowances provided by law for men
who served for more than thirty years. Under such circumstances,

6Ibid., pp. 445-448; "Committee Report of Military Inves­
tigation; Just Act; Discharging Negro Troops," Outlook, LXXXIV
(December 11, 1906), 810-812.
it was doubtful whether Sanders would have sacrificed his enlistment to participate in the Brownsville shoot up, yet he was among the 167 men dismissed by the President's order.⁷

Roosevelt realized that there would be objections to his order from black Americans, but he was unprepared for the storm of protest that erupted. The response of blacks was one of extraordinary outrage and anger. The Negro had suffered injustice, intimidation, disfranchisement, and lynching, but the source of these inflictions came from irresponsible racists. Now the attack came from Theodore Roosevelt, a man viewed as a friend to the black race and held in reverence not equalled since Lincoln. Who was the Negro to turn to for help when the man in the White House, the man who had entertained Booker T. Washington, closed the Post Office in Indianola, and fought for the appointment of William Crum in Charleston, South Carolina, had now turned against him?

The most significant comments and criticisms of the black community came from the editorial pages of the Washington Bee, the Cleveland Gazette, and the New York Age. When the dismissal order was issued, W. Calvin Chase of the Bee declared that Roosevelt and his advisors held a profound prejudice against the Negro. Chase contended that the President sought the

"hearty approval of Southern rebel opinion" with his order. Harry C. Smith of the Gazette denounced the President's action as an "undeserved and unmerited triumph of Southern prejudice" against the black race.8

The Gazette and Bee were usually anti-administration, and their protests were to be expected. But the New York Age, the most distinguished Negro paper, was controlled by Tuskegee and the criticisms that flowed from the pen of its editor, T. Thomas Fortune, alarmed Roosevelt.9

Fortune's initial reaction to Brownsville was not a criticism of Roosevelt's decision, but a warning to "any black man who offered to enlist in the United States Army to fill the place of the innocent members of the Twenty-fifth." Such men, Fortune wrote, "should be hated and shunned by the Afro-American race at large [for] if we cannot get justice in the army, we are not compelled to enter it." As the events of Brownsville unfolded, the Age took a progressively harder stand against Roosevelt. Fortune later referred to the President's order of dismissal as "executive lynch law," and charged Roosevelt with being a Democrat.10

8 The Washington Bee, November 10, 1906; The Cleveland Gazette, January 12, 1907.

9 The Age was an important organ for molding Negro opinion and even more an expression of Negro opinion favorable to policies advocated by Booker T. Washington. See Emma Lou Thornbrough "More Light on Booker T. Washington and the New York Age," Journa. of Negro History, XLIII (January, 1958), 34-49.

10 The New York Age, November 8, 29, 1906; February 21, 1907
Booker T. Washington found himself in a peculiar situation. The black community, hearing of the dismissal, speculated about Washington's role in the decision. Washington personally did not agree with the President's order but he could not criticize "his friend" without jeopardizing his relationship with Roosevelt.

Publicly, Washington remained noticeably silent about the Brownsville dismissal, but privately he attempted to get the order rescinded. The Tuskegeean had advance knowledge of the President's decision to discharge the troops and had written asking him to reconsider the order. Roosevelt replied: "I could not possibly refrain from acting as regard these colored soldiers. You cannot have any information to give me privately to which I could pay heed ... because the information on which I act is that which came out of the investigation itself."  

Washington turned to Secretary Taft and urged him to hold up the discharge until the President returned from his trip to Panama. "I have never in all my experience with the race, experienced a time when the entire people have the feeling that they now have in regard to the administration," explained Washington.  


12Washington to William Howard Taft, November 20, 1906, quoted in Ibid., p. 475.
Taft was also approached by Mary Church Terrell, the wife of Judge Robert H. Terrell, and a member of the District of Columbia Board of Education. After waiting nearly six hours, she was ushered in to see the Secretary of War and she requested him to withhold execution of the order until the soldiers were given a trial, so that the innocent "shall not be sent forth branded as murderers." After Mrs. Terrell left, Taft cabled Roosevelt, stating that he would withhold the execution of the order until he heard from the President. "Discharge is not to be suspended unless there are new facts of such importance as to warrant you cabling me!," replied Roosevelt. Outraged over the protests he was receiving, he continued: "I care nothing whatever for the yelling of either the politicians or the sentimentalists. The offense was most heinous and the punishment I inflicted was imposed after due deliberation. All I shall pay heed to is the presentation of facts showing the official reports to be in whole or in part untrue, or clearly exculpating some individual man. If any such facts later appear I can act as may deemed advisable, but nothing has been brought before me to warrant the suspension of the order, and I direct that it be executed."  

13Mary Church Terrell, "Secretary Taft and the Negro Soldiers," Independent, LXV (July 23, 1908), 189-190.  
Taft believed that a suspension of the order would convince people of the fairness of the hearing by granting a rehearing. Writing to his wife, Taft informed her that "the President is worked up on the subject and does not propose to retract from his position." He did not believe that Roosevelt had quite realized "the great feeling that has been aroused" on Brownsville. Although Taft had no part in the decision to discharge the troops, he asserted that the order was "entirely justified." However, he felt that a rehearing would be the best method to clarify a matter "where a decision is questioned." He later commented to his brother: "If a rehearing shows that the original conclusion was wrong, it presents a dignified way of recalling it; and if it does not, it enforces the original conclusion." When Roosevelt refused to consider the idea, Taft stood by his chief and refused to question or criticize the action. The Secretary of War, according to his biographer, "was really an innocent victim of Roosevelt's impetuosity." 

Roosevelt's determination to dismiss the troops brought further attempts to rescind or modify the order. Prominent


16 Taft to C.P. Taft, January 1, 1907, quoted in Ibid., p. 32.

17 Ibid., p. 323.
white officials, such as Massachusetts Governor Curtis Guild, Jr., wired the President stating that black citizens believed that members of the War Department's investigating team were prejudiced toward Negroes and that Roosevelt had acted upon their prejudice. Angered by this accusation, Roosevelt replied that prejudice played absolutely no part in his decision. "The action was precisely such as I should have taken had the soldiers guilty of the misconduct been white men instead of colored men." He continued:

When the discipline and honor of the American Army are at stake I shall never under any circumstance consider the political bearing of upholding that discipline and that honor, and no graver misfortune could happen to the American Army than failure to punish in the most signal way such conduct as that which I have punished....

Writing to Silas McBee, Roosevelt asserted that he was "angered and indignant at the attitude of the negroes and of the shortsighted white sentimentalists" as to his action. The Twenty-fifth Infantry "took action which cannot be tolerated in any soldier, black or white, in any policeman, black or white, and which, if taken generally in the army, would mean not merely that the usefulness of the army was at an end but that it had better be disbanded in its entirety at once."

Roosevelt believed that the pressure being exerted against him,

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"not only by sentimentalists but by the northern politicians" was an effort "to keep the negro vote." \(^{19}\)

Roosevelt's decision to dismiss the Negro troops coincided with the upcoming Congressional and State elections of 1906. He soon became the victim of another attack - he was charged with playing politics with the Brownsville decision. The dismissal was ordered on November 5 but not issued until after the November 9 elections, when Republicans retained control of the House of Representatives. The Waterville (Maine) Sentinel stated that in many northern districts black voters had held the balance for the Republicans because of their personal devotion to the President. "It was a case of 'we are coming brother Theodore, three hundred thousand strong' but they would have been coming in different temper had they known that on brother Theodore's desk was an order to disgrace and humiliate the entire colored regiment of the 25th Infantry." The New York Herald surmised that had news of the order been received six hours earlier, "it would have caused the Republican majority in the House of Representatives to drop from 59 to 14." \(^{21}\)

Other papers pointed out that the President's son-in-law, Nicholas Longworth, re-elected to Congress in Ohio, benefitted tremendously from Roosevelt's delay in issuing the order. Had

\(^{19}\)Roosevelt to Silas McBee, November 27, 1906, Letters, V, p. 509.

\(^{20}\)The Waterville (Maine) Sentinel, November 26, 1906, quoted in Lane, The Brownsville Affair, p. 80.

one-half of the Negro vote been switched, Longworth would have lost the election in Cincinnati. A similar shift of Negro votes in the New York State gubernatorial race would have meant defeat for Charles Evans Hughes.22 At the Abyssinian Baptist Church, Reverend W. Bishop Johnson, pastor of the Second Baptist Church (colored) declared:

The President's decree was signed the day after the election. He shot us when our gun was empty. But we have two years to work, and our slogan shall be "a Republican Congress to protect our people in the South, a Democratic President to resent the insult heaped upon us." Thus shall we answer Theodore Roosevelt, once enshrined in our hearts as Moses, now enshrined in our scorn as Judas.23

Roosevelt continually denied any political play involved in the entire Brownsville proceeding. He wrote to Silas McBee: "As you know I believe in practical politics, and, where possible, I always weigh well any action which may cost votes before I consent to take it; but in a case like this, where the issue is not merely one of naked right and wrong but one of vital concern to the whole country, I will not for one moment consider the political effect."24

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22 Tinsley, p. 47.


During his first term in office, Roosevelt provoked a substantial amount of criticism from the Southern press for his defense of the Negro. With the Brownsville raid and his subsequent action toward dismissal, the President received genuine support from the South and was commended by its press. The Nashville American, for example, called the order "the most praiseworthy thing the President has done," and contended that the soldiers should have been "discharged without their heads." The New Orleans Times-Democrat asserted that black troops were "menaces to the country and ... a disturbing influence wherever they were stationed." The paper favored the elimination of all Negro companies from the Army as the "proper and only solution to the problem."  

Northern editors generally assumed that a few of the soldiers were indeed guilty. What they condemned was the manner in which Roosevelt punished the accused. Many believed that he had acted unjustly in punishing the men of the Twenty-fifth Infantry without benefit of court-martial. The Washington Post argued that "while the President's power to discharge a soldier cannot be questioned it is not conferred for purposes of punishment. Punishment is suppose to follow a trial." The New York Sun observed, "By the old law the individual is entitled

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to trial and must be proved guilty. By the new law the penalty falls on a number of men collectively, because they 'appear' to an investigating or prosecuting officer to 'stand together,' and to escape the punishment thus imposed by wholesale the individual must prove his innocence." The black press assumed the soldiers had perpetrated the raid, with many of the papers justifying it. The Cleveland Gazette believed that the men acted "in defense of their lives." The black press defended the soldiers in some way and criticized the severity of the punishment. It was not until the Constitution League of the United States and Senator Joseph B. Foraker began their investigations into the affair, that the black community came to believe that the soldiers were innocent.

The Constitution League, an interracial organization formed shortly before the Brownsville affair to attack disfranchisement and other forms of discriminatory practice, submitted a report to Congress on December 10, 1906, stating that the evidence indicated that the soldiers were innocent. Spirited by John E. Milhollard, the organization sent its own investigator, Gilchrist Stewart, to Brownsville and Port Reno and was soon notified that the facts in the case did not justify the charge. Stewart declared that much of the "evidence accepted

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28 The Cleveland Gazette, January 12, 1907.
as incriminating the soldiers is incompetent, flimsy, and biased, or expressions only of opinion of witnesses." Stewart turned upon General Garlington and Major Blocksom and charged them with "preconceiving the guilt of the soldiers and denying them a fair trial." 29

The Constitution League report was hastily drawn and contained bias in favor of the soldiers as strong as the bias of which it complained. The significance of its statement, however, was the impact it had on Senator Foraker, provoking him to examine the President's action more closely and to call for a full Senate investigation. 30

The action of Senator Foraker in the Brownsville episode projected the incident into the political arena and it assumed national importance. Foraker mobilized the widespread outrage of the black community into a lengthy but unsuccessful campaign against Theodore Roosevelt. Foraker denied that Brownsville played any role in his political aspirations, though his eye was on the Presidential nomination in 1908, and the Brownsville affair presented an opportunity to undercut Roosevelt's support for Taft.

In December, 1906, Foraker introduced a resolution in the Senate calling upon the War Department to make available


all information concerning the Brownsville incident. He be­lieved that the testimony on which the President acted upon was "flimsy, unreliable and insufficient and untruthful...." In a heated exchange on the floor of the Senate, he defended his resolution, charging that the soldiers were entitled to a trial if their discharges rested upon a "conviction that a felony had been committed." Foraker's resolution was adopted.

In response to the resolution, Roosevelt sent a message to Congress on December 19, 1906, defending his position and justifying his dismissal, without honor, of the three black companies. He had ordered the discharge "in the exercise of my constitutional power and in pursuance of what, after full consideration I found to be my constitutional duty as Commander in Chief of the United States Army." He stated that he "re­sented with the keenest indignation" any efforts to draw a line based upon the birthplace of members of the Department's investigating team, an answer to critics who pointed out that General Garlington was from South Carolina. He declared that the same action would have been taken had the soldiers involved been white. Roosevelt presented in length the "facts" of the Department's report and asserted that the soldier's act "was one of horrible atrocity," and so far as he was aware, "un­paralleled for infamy in the annals of the United States Army."

31Foraker, Notes of a Busy Life, II, pp. 234-236.
He continued:

The evidence proves conclusively that a number of soldiers engaged in a deliberate and concerted attack, as cold blooded as it was cowardly; the purpose being to terrorize the community, and to kill or injure men, women and children in their homes and beds or on the streets, and this at an hour of the night when concerted or effective resistance or defense was out of the question, and when detection by identification of the criminals in the United States' uniform was well-nigh impossible ... the crime was supplemented by another, only less black, in the shape of a successful conspiracy of murder.

Roosevelt explained that this discharge from service was not a punishment. "The Punishment meted for mutineers and murders," the President proclaimed, "is death." He regretted that it was impossible "to have punished the guilty men" but warned the black community not to defend their guilty members for they "were laying up for themselves the most dreadful day of reckoning." 32

In the Senate, Foraker effectively challenged much of the President's message and a debate followed on a new resolution, calling for a full scale investigation of Roosevelt's actions. Recognizing that the evidence was insufficient, Roosevelt sent Assistant Attorney-General Milton D. Purdy to Brownsville for further investigation. Purdy's review contained no new evidence but it replaced Blocksom's original statement with

a comprehensive coverage of all the evidence, along with the witnesses' statements presented in the form of sworn affidavits. On January 14, 1907 Roosevelt sent another message to the Senate, offering in detail the evidence of shells, cartridges, as well as the eyewitness reports, so that "the fact that the assailants were United States soldiers ... would be conclusive ... if not one soldier had been seen ... and if nothing were known save the finding of shells, clips, and bullets." The President accompanied the Purdy report with an order rescinding the part of his original order which debarred the ex-soldiers from appointment in the civil service. "This action convinced many doubtful Senators that the President had strong legal support for his stand and that he was acting in good faith."

With the tide slowly turning in his favor, Roosevelt looked to the Senate vote on the Foraker resolution as a test of confidence. Writing to his son Kermit, the President stated that Brownsville "is really not any of the Senate's business." He was uncertain how the vote would turn out but expressed hope that "those who support me will win; but if they do not, it will not make the slightest difference in my attitude." Roosevelt's chief spokesman in the Senate, Henry Cabot Lodge, 

33Quoted in Lane, The Brownsville Affair, pp. 137-138.
34Tinsley, p. 52.
was joined during the later stages of the debate on the Foraker resolution by John C. Spooner of Wisconsin and Philander C. Knox of Pennsylvania, and the Republican leadership forced Foraker to amend his resolution so that neither the "legality nor the justice" of the President's act was questioned. On January 22, 1907 the Senate passed the resolution calling for an investigation by the Committee on Military Affairs. Foraker was a member of the committee.36

Roosevelt was sincerely disturbed with Foraker for introducing his resolution for another investigation. This became apparent on January 26 when the two met head on at the Gridiron Club dinner. Foraker arrived at the dinner unaware that Roosevelt was to address the Club. During his speech, the President spoke about legislation for regulation of corporations and railroads, and the Brownsville investigation, subjects on which the two men were in basic disagreement. Roosevelt contended that the Senate Brownsville investigation was purely "academic," and denounced those who had challenged his authority. Following his speech, the toastmaster of the Club, Samuel G. Blythe, feeling that "the hour for bloody sarcasm had arrived, ... took the liberty of calling upon Senator Foraker for some remarks."37 What followed was a rare

36Tinsley, pp. 52-53.

37Ibid., pp. 53-54; Foraker, Notes, II, pp. 249-257; Pringle, Theodore Roosevelt, p. 462; Everett Walters, Joseph Benson Foraker: An Uncompromising Republican (Columbus; The Ohio History Press, 1948), pp. 238-240; Lane, pp. 147-148.
public confrontation between the President and a United States Senator.

Although Foraker was unprepared, he immediately launched into a defense of his stand on Brownsville. He called Roosevelt's order illegal, unconstitutional, and unjustifiable. He spoke of Mingo Sanders, and the President's insistence upon punishing the innocent with the assumed guilty. Foraker believed that "the President knew [Sanders] was as innocent of offense against the law of any kind whatever from what had appeared in the newspaper accounts of the affair." He asserted that his purpose for calling an investigation was not that of a "demagogue to secure negro votes." He was seeking "to provide the troops with an opportunity to be heard in their own defense ... to the end that if it should appear that injustice was done it might be righted."\(^{38}\)

No sooner had Foraker finished, than Roosevelt jumped up and began a short but bitter rebuttal. He emphatically stated that if the Senate passed a resolution to reinstate the soldiers, he would veto it; if they passed it over his veto, he would pay no attention to it. "I welcome impeachment," exclaimed the President.\(^ {39}\) He then left the dinner abruptly, leaving no time for discussion.

\(^{38}\)Foraker, Notes, II, p. 251.

\(^{39}\)Lane, pp. 147-148.
Foraker won the sympathy of the crowd that evening. He had been attacked by the President before a large and rather influential gathering. He was cheered for his courageous defense.

On the following day, Roosevelt reflected on the previous night, in a letter to Albert J. Beveridge:

Foraker ought not to have been called upon to speak; but, as he was called upon, I do not blame him much for the speech he did make. I was in two minds what to say in answer; I was inclined to make a Berserker speech myself and go over the whole business, and perhaps this would have been better; but in the few minutes I had to decide I concluded that I would merely make a flat contradiction of what he had said, point out the fact that I and not he would pass judgment upon the case, and that I should absolutely disregard anything except my own convictions, and let it go at that.

Relations between the President and Senator Foraker strained following the Gridiron Dinner. Roosevelt was determined to eliminate the Senator from political life. He refused to appoint a lawyer, recommended by Foraker, for a newly created district in Ohio. The Senator had recommended Judge John J. Adams for Roosevelt's consideration, and he assumed that, inasmuch as he was senior senator from Ohio and a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee and that the judgeship in question was for the Southern District of Ohio, the President would comply with his recommendation. Roosevelt's failure to appoint

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40 Roosevelt to Albert J. Beveridge, January 27, 1907, Letters, V, p. 571.
Adams indicated to Foraker that relations with the President were strained beyond repair. 

On March 11, 1908, the Committee on Military Affairs completed its investigation of the Brownsville affair and issued its results. As expected, its report was divided into majority and minority opinions. The majority report held that the shooting at Brownsville was done by some of the soldiers but the testimony did not identify the particular soldiers involved. This report confirmed the President's convictions. It was signed by all five Democrats on the committee and four of the Republican members. These four Republicans also recommended the passage of a bill that would extend for one year the President's authority to re-enlist any member of the Twenty-fifth who could prove his innocence.

Four Republicans, including Senator Foraker, subscribed to a minority report, stating that the testimony taken was unsatisfactory, indefinite and conflicting in its nature. It failed to identify the particular individuals who participated in the shooting and failed to prove that a "conspiracy of silence" existed among the soldiers. Senators Foraker and Morgan G. Bulkeley of Connecticut offered a second minority report which claimed that the weight of the testimony showed that none of the soldiers participated in the shooting.41

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Roosevelt accepted the majority report without reservation. He felt that the committee's results "conclusively show that the murderous assault in question was committed by various soldiers, probably ten to twenty in number." The Foraker opinion, to the President, amounted "simply to a proposal to condone murder and perjury in the past and put a premium upon perjury in the future by permitting any murderer or perjurer, who will again perjure himself, to be restored to the United States Army...." He would "refuse to sign" the bill and "refuse to obey if it were passed over my veto." He referred to it as "academic" and believed that if it received a two-thirds vote in each House, "which is not possible," it would be clearly unconstitutional and I should pay not the slightest heed to it." Roosevelt reaffirmed his executive position:

No law can take my power of appointment or force me to make appointment, any more than I could by Executive order decree that I had the power to make appropriations. The Legislature cannot usurp the functions of the Executive any more than the Executive can usurp the functions of the Legislature.

The choice of the two bills was left to the Senate. If they selected the minority report, Foraker would be successful

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\[42\] Roosevelt to Francis Emroy Warren, March 9, 1908, Letters, VI, pp. 966-967.

\[43\] Roosevelt to Ernest Hamlin Abbott, March 12, 1908, Ibid., p. 968.

\[44\] Roosevelt to William Alden Smith, April 24, 1908, Ibid., pp. 1016-1017.
in embarrassing the President and would enhance his chances at securing the Republican nomination. However, a canvass of Republican Senators showed that he could receive the support of only thirty-five colleagues. With this knowledge, Foraker decided that more would be gained if consideration of his bill were delayed until December, 1908. 45

In the summer of 1908, however, Roosevelt authorized a secret investigation of the Brownsville matter. Feeling Foraker's pressure, the War Department hired Herbert J. Brown, a Washington journalist, and William B. Baldwin, head of a Negro detective agency in Richmond, to discover the guilty members by circulating among the ex-soldiers. Brown and Baldwin reported that one of the soldiers, Boyd Conyers of Monroe, Georgia, had confessed his guilt and had provided the names of the other participants. Upon receiving this information, Roosevelt sent it directly to the Senate. However, Foraker was prepared. The Senator held sworn affidavits from Conyers and several influential white citizens of Monroe, denying the story. Sheriff E. C. Arnold, who was present during Brown and Baldwin's interview with Conyers, stated that when the detectives failed to receive a confession out of Conyers, "Brown asked him to give the names of some of the baseball players and also the names of the most reckless and turbulent members of his company. This Conyers did ... and these names ... Mr. Brown ... says were fur-

45Tinsley, pp. 58-59.
nished him by Conyers as the ones participating in the shoot-
ing."46 Roosevelt spent $15,000 on this private investigation
and, outside of the Conyers story, could not present any fur-
ther evidence. But because of this secret investigation For-
aker was able to push his bill through Congress.

In December, 1908, Roosevelt stuck to his original posi-
tion in another message to Congress, but recommended that the
Secretary of War be empowered to reinstate any soldier within
a year if "he felt them to have been innocent."47 When the
second session of the Sixtieth Congress opened, Senator For-
aker introduced another bill calling for the creation of a
Board of Inquiry to reinstate the soldiers. Under presiden-
tial pressure, he agreed that the Secretary of War appoint
the members of the Board. The Senate passed the bill on
February 23, 1909, and the House of Representatives followed
suit four days later. Roosevelt ultimately signed the bill
on March 3, one of his last official acts.48

The Court of Military Inquiry began its investigation
on May 4 and continued it until April, 1910. On April 6 it
issued a report which concluded that the raid had been per-
petrated by a small group of the black soldiers but the guilty
members could not be found. No new evidence was discovered,

46 Congressional Record, 60 Cong., 2d sess., XLIII, p. 800; Tinsley, pp. 59-60.
47 Lane, pp. 138-139
48 Tinsley, p. 59.
and consequently the Court inquiry employed previous testimony and investigations. The Court qualified fourteen of the men for reenlistment, and by August 13, 1910, eleven of the fourteen had reenlisted. The official record of the Brownsville affair had closed.\footnote{Tinsley, p. 61.}

A period of sixty-six years elapsed before the Brownsville case was reopened. On September 28, 1972 the United States Army announced that the records of the 167 black soldiers discharged without honor by Theodore Roosevelt had been cleared. Army officials asserted that the disciplinary action in the case was the only documented case of mass punishment in its history. Secretary of the Army Robert F. Proehike declared the action "a gross injustice."\footnote{The New York Times, September 29, December 31, 1972.}

The Brownsville affair profoundly shocked the black community and Roosevelt's assertion of his constitutional power to dismiss the soldiers crystallized its opposition toward him. While those close to the administration did all in their power

\footnote{Historians have offered varied assessments of the Brownsville Affair. John D. Weaver, The Brownsville Raid contends that the evidence pointed to the innocence of the black troops. He argues that some local vigilantes, angered by the black soldiers' presence, staged a shootout. Ann J. Lane, The Brownsville Affair cautiously concludes that the case against the soldiers was not proved. Henry F. Pringle, Theodore Roosevelt: A Biography, pp. 458-464, is critical of Roosevelt and William H. Harbaugh, Power and Responsibility: The Life and Times of Theodore Roosevelt, pp. 303-308, condemns Roosevelt's action but is less sympathetic than Pringle for Foraker's defense of the soldiers. George E. Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt, 1900-1912, pp. 212-213, assumes the guilt of some of the soldiers and has no}
to supress the criticisms of Roosevelt, others gathered in lectures, meetings, conventions and societies to denounce the policies of the President on Brownsville. Black Americans, for the first time, openly criticized Roosevelt and threatened a "wholesale defection of Negro votes from the Republican party." 51

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criticism for Roosevelt's action. James A. Tinsley, "Roosevelt, Foraker, and the Brownsville Affray," concludes that there is doubt about the soldiers guilt and is critical of Roosevelt's methods. Rayford W. Logan, The Betrayal of the Negro, pp. 345-347, suggests that Roosevelt's dismissal of the black troops stemmed from a further desire to propitiate the South.

51 Thornbrough, "The Brownsville Episode and the Negro Vote," p. 469.
On election eve of 1904 Theodore Roosevelt decided to give up the Presidency upon the completion of his second term. This critical decision left the field wide open for Republican presidential hopefuls. Many Republicans believed that Roosevelt would receive the support of the party if he chose to run again in 1908. To most members, both conservative and progressive, any other candidate was considered "a poor second choice."¹ There were several prominent men who might be considered as serious candidates for the nomination. Charles Evans Hughes, the Governor of New York, and two of Roosevelt's cabinet members, Secretary of State Elihu Root and Secretary of War William Howard Taft, were among the frontrunners. Governor Hughes, however, showed an independent temperament and disagreed with Roosevelt's political patronage policy in New York. This forced him into an alliance with the President's enemies.²

Both Root and Taft were in basic agreement with the President's handling of domestic and foreign affairs. It seemed ap-


parent that either man, if selected, would continue his policies. Root, however, was in bad health, and was considered too close to Wall Street to carry on in the Rooseveltian image as "trustbuster." By 1907 the Secretary of State had become much too conservative on financial matters and his support of corporate interests. Secretary Taft was therefore the man chosen by the President as his successor. For two years Roosevelt worked to secure Taft's nomination and election. Taft was popular with the American people and he fully agreed with the President's policies, but he lacked the enthusiasm and ambition for the presidency. He often expressed the thought that he was not a politician, and only wished to be recommended for a position on the Supreme Court. Roosevelt, on the contrary, was determined to groom his man for the office of President. Since Roosevelt was also the head of his party, the reluctant Taft was assured the nomination at the Republican Convention.

Roosevelt and Taft both realized the necessity of controlling the Southern Republican delegates if Taft was to receive the nomination, and this involved a direct appeal to the black community. Taft wanted to appeal to southern racial sentiment as well, and in August, 1906, the Secretary delivered the "Key Note" address to the North Carolina Legislature in Greensboro. In his speech, Taft outlined his views on problems

\[3\text{Mowry, p. 227.}\]
that existed in the South. He stated that he would support judicial review of disfranchisement but would not give his consent to efforts to reduce Southern representation in the House. He indicated his disposition to acquiesce in the political situation which confronted Negroes, "subject only to the judicial rather than federal legislative action."  

The Brownsville affair played a significant role in Taft's campaign for the Presidential nomination. As Secretary of War at the time of the dismissals, Taft was automatically linked with Roosevelt's decision. White Southerners wholeheartedly approved the President's action and this guaranteed support for his Secretary of War. On the other hand, the incident proved detrimental to Taft's chances of winning support from black Americans. It appeared that Senator Foraker would secure the Negro vote in payment for his defense of the black troops.  

Roosevelt was aware of the discontent of the Negro community over his decision to dismiss the troops. Though he would not change his position, he was concerned about the chances of a large defection of black votes. This would definitely hurt Taft's chances in 1908. The hostility expressed by the black press toward Taft's candidacy was due to Brownsville, though the dismissal was the President's order, with

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Taft merely following his chief's instructions. Roosevelt knew that his Secretary must be cleared of involvement in the decision.

Writing his son Kermit in October, 1908, Roosevelt expressed optimism about Taft's chances of winning the election: "The surface indications are certainly our way and I am inclined to think that we shall carry the election..." He contended that "the defection in the Negro vote ... is real" but would only be important "if the election is very close." In a letter to Charles Evans Hughes Roosevelt confessed that the Governor "will gain some votes that Taft won't ... some negroes and some misled and rather bigoted evangelical Protestants who object to Taft."6

Because of his involvement in Brownsville, Taft was opposed by such anti-administration papers as the Cleveland Gazette and the Boston Guardian, as well as by prominent Negro leaders such as W. E. B. DuBois and the Niagara Movement. It was therefore imperative for Roosevelt to claim responsibility for the decision and have Taft exonerated for his issuance of the dismissal order.7


6 Roosevelt to Charles Evans Hughes, October 14, 1908, Letters, VI, p. 1286.

Roosevelt at first was not aware that Taft suffered from the Brownsville decision. "I had always supposed that everyone knew that the whole Brownsville business had been carried on under my personal supervision," declared Roosevelt. "When I get angry my impulse always is to move up as close to my antagonist as possible; and if there was the slightest doubt on the subject I was exceedingly anxious that everybody concerned should know that I not only accepted but claimed the entire responsibility for the affair."

Roosevelt conferred with Henry C. Corbin over the problem of Brownsville and Taft's candidacy. Corbin, who was devoting his time to the Taft campaign following his retirement from the army, explained to the press that "any credit or blame in the affair "cannot in any way be laid to Mr. Taft." He asserted that Roosevelt issued the order to dismiss the troops and sustained that order in spite of Taft's request that it be suspended. To document his explanation, Corbin released the President's cable to Taft, ordering the Secretary of War to issue the dismissal. Corbin concluded: "Of course, the Brownsville Affair is going to be paraded in the campaign," but, "the colored vote ... will be for Taft." Roosevelt, concurring with Corbin's statement, announced that it was "absolutely correct."

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8 Roosevelt to John Hayes Hammond, August 8, 1908, Letters, VI, p. 1163.

Booker T. Washington was noticeably silent over the Brownsville incident. Failing to persuade Roosevelt to rescind the order of dismissal, the Negro educator believed that the best way to handle the affair was to ignore it and "watch the controversy slowly crumble." But as opposition mounted against the President, Washington was aware that it was also projected at him. He wrote to his friend, Charles Anderson: "... the enemy will, as usual, try to blame me for all this. They can talk; I cannot, without being disloyal to our friend, who I mean to stand by throughout his administration."

Washington was aware of the damage that might be done if opposition to the President led to a defection from the Republican party. The protests from the black community were jeopardizing his leadership and influence, but he was determined to offset them. One method was to continue recommending Negroes for patronage positions to the President. Roosevelt was also cognizant that by appointing blacks to office, he would be presenting evidence to Negroes that he was not against the colored race because of Brownsville. With the hope of winning black support, the President, upon conferring with Washington, made it known that he was considering the appointment of Ralph W. Tyler of Columbus, Ohio to the position of surveyor of the port.


of Cincinnati. Tyler was a part-time journalist and secretary to Robert Wolfe, owner of the Columbus *Ohio State Journal* and the Columbus *Dispatch*, both of which opposed Senator Foraker. The appointment of Tyler would also damage Foraker's political support in Ohio. But Roosevelt soon changed his mind about Tyler's appointment, after protests by white Republicans in Cincinnati. The President's son-in-law, Nicholas Longworth, protested that the naming of a Negro to a post in his district would mean his political ruin. Roosevelt also feared that the appointment would be detrimental to Taft's candidacy in Ohio. Tyler was subsequently appointed Fourth Auditor in the Navy Department "where his presence would not offend white voters and where, it was hoped, he would be useful in keeping Negroes faithful to the Republican party."  

Washington recommended other appointments to Roosevelt, and the President appointed two black lawyers, William H. Lewis of Boston, and S. Laing Williams of Chicago, as special attorneys for naturalization affairs in their respective cities. Washington also suggested to Taft that Negroes be allowed to qualify as bandmasters in colored regiments.  

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13Thornbrough, pp. 480-481.
Throughout 1907 and 1908 the black press continued to report news of meetings and petitions protesting the dismissal of the troops. In addition to the protests, Negro organizations were proclaiming their support for Senator Foraker, at Secretary Taft's expense. In the spring of 1908 the anti-Taft movement took organizational form with the establishment of the National Negro American Political League of the United States. Included in the League were representatives from the Afro-American Council, the Niagara Movement, and the Constitutional League. These three organizations had opposed Roosevelt's choice of Washington as spokesman for the black community. They were all in disagreement with the Negro educator's conservatism and with his willingness to compromise where the rights of Negroes were concerned. 14

The Afro-American Council, which replaced Fortune's de-funct Afro-American League in 1898, came under the control of Washington after the turn of the century and maintained a conciliatory and moderate tone. But as the repercussions of Brownsville mounted, Washington became concerned over his declining influence within the Council. A split between Washington and Bishop Alexander Walters over Brownsville led to the Council's support of Foraker. By 1908 Walters had joined the Niagara

14Lane, The Brownsville Affair, pp. 83-84. Washington often referred to his critics, especially members of the Niagara Movement, as "the enemy" and "the opposition." See Meier, Negro Thought in America, pp. 115-116, 171-189.
Movement in an effort to swing the Negro vote away from Taft.\textsuperscript{15}

The Niagara Movement, established in 1905 to oppose Washington's leadership, denounced Roosevelt's actions and endorsed Foraker. Washington's unwillingness to criticize the President publically on Brownsville induced many of his supporters to flee to the radical camp.\textsuperscript{16} At the 1908 conference in Oberlin, the Niagara Movement presented an address to the black community:

\begin{quote}
We say to voters: Register and vote whenever and wherever you have a right.... Remember that the conduct of the Republican party toward negroes has been a disgraceful failure to keep just promises. The dominant Roosevelt faction has sinned in this respect beyond forgiveness. We therefore trust that every black voter will uphold men like Joseph Benson Foraker, and will leave no stone unturned to defeat William H. Taft. Remember Brownsville, and establish next November the principle of negro independence in voting, not only for punishing enemies but for rebuking false friends.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

But this potential disaffection from the Republican ranks quickly dissolved. Senator Foraker failed to gain the presidential nomination, and once out of the race adopted a conciliatory tone, stressing the importance of party unity. Republicans throughout the country, when confronted with the Brownsville issue, called attention to the Democratic record in race


\textsuperscript{17}Quoted in Lane, \textit{The Brownsville Affair}, p. 79.
policy. Many Democrats endorsed Roosevelt's discharge of the black troops, and William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic Presidential candidate in 1908, defended the disfranchisement of Southern blacks. The Negro was definitely faced with a dilemma. A few leaders did support Bryan: Bishop Walters, William Monroe Trotter, the militant editor of the Boston Guardian and one of Washington's most severe critics, and W. E. B. DuBois, spokesman of the Niagara Movement. But on the whole, the black community had no other choice but to remain where they were politically. A majority of the Negro press had fallen in line with the administration and now supported both Washington and the Republican party. As one historian has asserted, the black community, "genuinely aroused and temporarily united, found no way to channel effectively its expressions of outrage and anger. Its leaders, initially unanimous in criticizing the President's action, ultimately succumbed to mounting pressures that urged return to loyal republicanism."^{18}

Negroes returned to the party of Lincoln but the Brownsville affair had left an indelable impression on their minds. In 1908 William Howard Taft quickly assumed his predecessor's accommodating and paternalistic attitude on the race question. Roosevelt assured Lawrence Abbott that the new President "will not make a Garrisonian issue on the question of Negro suffrage"

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and will "carry out the theory upon which I have acted" in regard to appointments. Upon leaving office, Roosevelt bequeathed to his successor his adviser on Southern and Negro policy, Booker T. Washington.

It did not take long for the black community to realize that they were to receive very little from the new President. In his Inaugural Address Taft spoke to the South and the Negro, declaring that he would not appoint Negroes when it was "objectionable to Southerners." Determined to continue the course of reconciliation, the President visited the South after his election and made several speeches, one of which he entitled "The Winning of the South." In this pronouncement he "reiterated the shibboleths of White Supremacy:" "the best friend that the southern Negro can have is a southern white man;" "the history of Reconstruction was 'painful;'" "the fear of federal enforcement of social equality was 'imaginary;'" and "there was nothing inconsistent between the Fifteenth Amendment and Southern safeguards against 'domination ... by an ignorant electorate' - that is, disfranchisement."

19 Theodore Roosevelt to Lawrence Abbott, October 6, 1908, Letters, VI, pp. 1276-1277.


Taft believed that Roosevelt had not advanced the cause of the Negro by appointing him in southern communities where his presence was bitterly resented. Writing to W. R. Nelson, he declared: "I am not going to put into places of such prominence in the South, where the race feeling is strong, Negroes whose appointment will only tend to increase that race feeling; but I shall look about and make appointments in the North and recognize the Negro as often as I can...."  

The Negro problem in the South was just as perplexing to Taft as it was to Roosevelt, but Taft believed that "in many of the States the Negro question is a mere ghost of a past issue." He did not "propose to raise it again except in a discussion with the negroes themselves as to their course in the matter." He wrote to a friend: "My own judgment is that the best thing for the negroes is to allow the present status to continue until the Republicans can control some of the Southern States, and this will bring about an equal enforcement of the laws of eligibility for voting."  

Taft initiated his southern policy by removing blacks from federal offices in the South. In Virginia he removed a postmaster who had held a position in Yorktown for more than

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twenty-five years, and who had enjoyed the support of a ma-
majority of the white citizens of the community. He substitut-
ed the son of a Confederate soldier. In South Carolina,
Taft secured the resignation of Dr. William D. Crum, whose
appointment as Collector of the Port of Charleston had repre-
sented the high-tide of Roosevelt's efforts to appeal to black
Americans in defiance of Southern and lily white sentiment.
Booker T. Washington was able to have Crum appointed as Min-
ister of Liberia, where the Charlestonian served until his
death in 1912.

Southern whites applauded Taft's policy of replacing
black officeholders, and white Republicans revitalized the
lily white movement throughout the South. In Texas, Cecil
Lyons, Republican National Committeeman, served notice on
all black officeholders in Texas that upon the expiration
of their terms they should not expect to be reappointed;
their places would be filled by white citizens. Similar in-


26 The New York Age, October 7, 1910; The Cleveland
Gazette, June 18, 1910; Willard B. Gatewood, "William D.
Crum: A Negro in Politics," Journal of Negro History, LIII
(October, 1968), 301-320; Pringle, The Life and Times of
William Howard Taft, I, pp. 389-390; Theodore Roosevelt to
For details of Crum's service as Minister of Liberia see
James A. Padgett, "Ministers to Liberia and Their Diplomacy,"
Journal of Negro History, XXII (October, 1937), 50-92.
cidents occurred in Louisiana and Florida. 27

In 1910 Taft asserted, in a letter to William G. Brown, that he remained firm in the view on Negroes that he had earli­er expressed. "In my inaugural address," he wrote, "I attempt­ed to foreshadow a policy of not making Southern appointments" to Negroes. "I have based the principle on the proposition that public servants, the discharge of whose official functions aroused public prejudice necessarily interfered with the effec­tiveness of their work and so the public was deprived of that which it was entitled to - an efficient service." He told Brown that he now had "another ground upon which this princi­ple can be sustained," and thought that maybe it "is a ground that is higher than the other." Taft reasoned that appoint­ment of Negroes to positions in the South, "instead of help­ing the race, retards the growth of that race in its associa­tion with the whites." To the President, the Southern white was the best friend of the Negro, and by appointing blacks to office, he would only jeopardize "the benefit that is to de­rive from the friendship and protection of the Southern whites." 28

The growing lily white sentiment, coupled with increased segregation of Negroes in several federal government buildings,

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turned many blacks against the leadership of William Howard Taft. \(^\text{29}\) William Monroe Trotter charged that Taft had done more to foster and "encourage race prejudice and race antagonism than any man in the history of the United States." \(^\text{30}\) The leaders of the National Negro Committee, precursor of the NAACP, met in the summer of 1909 and passed resolutions asking the President and Congress to "compel Southern states to abide by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments." \(^\text{31}\) Even the Washingtonians were disappointed with Taft. Fred Moore, editor of the New York Age, opened his column to anti-administration writers. \(^\text{32}\) Washington himself became somewhat disenchanted with the President, not so much because of his policies, but because Taft ceased to confer with him regularly. Though discouraged, Washington continued to stand by the administration.

As the election year of 1912 approached, the black community once again found itself in a serious dilemma. The Republican administration of William Howard Taft had neglected


\(^\text{30}\)The Boston Guardian, October 29, 1910; Meier, Negro Thought in America, pp. 113, 165.


\(^\text{32}\)The New York Age, January 27, March 10, 1910; Meier, Negro Thought in America, p. 229.
them, thus opening the possibility of deserting the party. But what alternatives were offered? The Democratic party was about to name Woodrow Wilson as its candidate, but Wilson was a Southerner. Theodore Roosevelt was to return from Africa to find the Republican party not to his liking, and, failing to recapture the nomination, to launch the Progressive Party with the hopes of attracting the support of disenchanted Republicans and Southern Democrats. And Taft was to receive the Republican nomination to round out the field. The black community was left to decide upon and support one of three candidates, each with a strong chance of winning the election. The determining factor would be the candidates themselves, and how they would appeal to the Negro.
CHAPTER VIII

THE LILY WHITE PARTY AND THE NEGRO: 1912

Theodore Roosevelt's entrance into the 1912 Presidential election presented a peculiar situation for the American people in general, and for black Americans in particular. The Republican party, under the leadership of William Howard Taft, had moved too far to the right of the political spectrum for many of its constituents. When Roosevelt returned from his trip to Africa he was dismayed at the conservatism of the party and at Taft's leadership. He attempted to sway the party toward what he thought was the progressive mood of the country. Failing to capture the nomination from the President, the Rough Rider bolted the Republican Convention and called for his supporters to gather in Chicago to launch the Progressive party. Thus, the election of 1912 became a three-way contest between Roosevelt, Taft and Woodrow Wilson.

The black community had returned to the ranks of the Republican party in 1908. The performance of President Taft, however, had proved to many Negroes that he was not concerned with their plight. But where were they to turn? The Democratic nominee, Woodrow Wilson, a Southerner, was viewed as possessing all the traits and prejudices of that section of the country. Many members of the black community therefore turned to Roosevelt and joined the Progressive ranks.
Upon Roosevelt's declaration of candidacy for the Republican nomination in February, 1912, his campaign managers organized black headquarters in the North and sent representatives to the South to convince Negro delegates to disregard their pledges to vote for Taft at the nominating convention. These representatives travelled through the South charging Taft with establishing the rule that no Negroes could hold office against the objection of Southern whites; removing almost every black officeholder from prominent positions; and encouraging Southern members of the Civil Service Commission to travel throughout the South seeking whites to apply for positions in the Civil Service normally held by Negroes.\(^1\)

The Roosevelt managers made progress in the South. The Jackson Evening News erroneously reported that Booker T. Washington was using his influence among black delegates from Mississippi to switch their allegiance from Taft to Roosevelt. Charles Banks and Perry W. Howard, the former a close friend of Washington, indicated that they were going to cast their ballots for Roosevelt despite instructions for the President. This led the Taft administration to believe that it would be difficult to hold the Mississippi delegates to their initial pledge.\(^2\) Senator Joseph M. Dixon of Montana, Roosevelt's cam-

\(^1\)The New York Age, May 16, 20, June 13, 1912.

ampaign manager in New York and Chicago, reported to the Colonel that he was "anxious to see the bubble pricked of 'a solid south,'" and believed it could be done. Writing to L. L. Wrenn, Dixon declared: "The reports from North Carolina are coming overwhelmingly for Roosevelt. We are going to get Texas sure, and ... many other places in the South like Tennessee and Kentucky, wherever there is a militant White Republican party...."^3

Booker T. Washington and his supporters were faced with a critical test of political loyalty when Roosevelt entered into the fight for the Republican nomination. Washingtonians had worked closely with both potential candidates. Washington chose to remain loyal to Taft during the contest. The President was in control of the Republican party and Washington believed that Roosevelt would not be able to undermine Taft's strength at the National Convention. Contrary to a statement printed by the Jackson (Miss.) Evening News, he exerted his influence in favor of Taft. Washington kept Fred Moore of the New York Age loyal to the administration, and sent editorials to Moore in behalf of the President's nomination. Washington also secured the support of W. Calvin Chase of the Washington Bee. When Roosevelt announced his candidacy, the Bee declared that the decision was unfortunate and doomed to failure. Chase contended that Taft was entitled to renomination by the Republican party by

3 Joseph M. Dixon to Theodore Roosevelt, February 11, 1912, Joseph M. Dixon Papers, University of Montana Archives, Missoula, Montana.

4 Dixon to L. L. Wrenn, March 6, 1912; Dixon to T. M. George, March 6, 1912, Dixon Papers.
every rule of reason, and went on record as standing "unequivocally and uncompromising for his renomination." The editor asserted that he would do all that was within his power to "bring about such results."\(^5\)

Ralph W. Tyler, author of the famous editorial "The Brownsville Ghouls," continued to support the President. Using the same methods employed during the 1908 campaign, Tyler wrote a series of editorials to influence the black community to vote for Taft. His most influential article appeared in the Washington Bee and was entitled "A Crisis." Tyler began by noting that in the Republican Convention of 1908, a resolution had been introduced in favor of reducing the representation of the South in the convention, but had been defeated "because Taft had opposed it." He urged the black delegates selected to attend the 1912 convention to "stand loyally to those instructions they had received from their legislature." If not, he warned, they would "lend credibility" to white newspaper charges that black Southern delegates were for sale. The editorial concluded by declaring that deserting Taft would "hasten a Crisis that would reduce Southern representation in the Republican convention," thereby eliminating all blacks from future conventions.\(^6\)

\(^5\)The Washington Bee, March 2, 1912.
\(^6\)The Washington Bee, June 8, 1912.
While Washington and his supporters were working among Negroes on behalf of Taft, the President made efforts to gain black support. He invited five black Presidential appointees to the White House to discuss the "Negro Question." His policies in the South, lynching, Jim Crow street cars, and segregation in the government bureaucracy were reviewed. Taft stated that he deplored mob violence and declared that his statement on Negro appointments in the South, contained in his Inaugural Address, had been misinterpreted. The delegation requested that the President restate his Southern policy "so as to leave no room for ambiguities or doubt" among black Americans.  

Taft increased his activities to capture the Negro vote. In an address at Howard University, he asserted that he favored higher education for blacks and condemned lynching. The President, however, made it clear that Negroes could expect little in the way of anti-lynching legislation from his administration, contending that the courts could not "enforce laws against lynching unless public opinion was on its side." He was furthermore convinced that lynching resulted from the "slowness of justice to operate," and matters could only be improved by making the courts "more expeditious."

7 Those present were William H. Lewis, Assistant Attorney General, Ralph W. Tyler, Auditor of the Navy, Henry Johnson, Recorder of the Deeds, James C. Napier, Register of the Treasury, and Whitefield McKinlay, Collector of Customs at Georgetown.


9 The Washington Bee, April 13, 1912.
The pre-convention fight between Taft and Roosevelt for delegates continued throughout the spring. Senator Dixon was assured that Roosevelt would carry North Carolina and Texas. Ormsby McHarg was sent to the South to gather support among those Southern Republicans who feared losing their jobs through the defeat of Taft. In the Senate, the Roosevelt faction started to investigate the use of political patronage in the South by Taft and to block all appointments that were of a "political nature." Meanwhile President Taft ordered William B. McKinley to "comb Dixie for Roosevelt men" in the state Republican organizations and remove them from office.

The fight over black delegate votes surfaced during the primaries in Maryland and Ohio. In Maryland, Roosevelt forces were able to carry the state through what opponents called the "illegal manipulation of the Negro vote" in Western Maryland and Baltimore County. However, in Ohio, the former President found the black community hostile to his political ambitions because of Brownsville. In an address in Springfield, Roosevelt, reversing his earlier position, sought to nullify this

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10 Spencer B. Adams to Joseph M. Dixon, March 5, 1912; Dixon to Cecil Lyon, telegram, March 6, 1912; Dixon to Hiram B. Worth, March 11, 1912, Joseph M. Dixon Papers.


12 Mowry, p. 267.
opposition by stating that his dismissal of the black troops came only after the recommendation of his former Secretary of War. He told his audience, composed primarily of Negroes, that Taft was as guilty of the dismissals as he and that "Mr. Taft should be held responsible for his action, too." To counter Roosevelt, Taft sent an Ohio Congressman to the state with Mingo Sanders, one of the dismissed Negro soldiers, to campaign in his interest. Despite this effort by the President, Roosevelt defeated him in Ohio by a sizable majority.

When the Republican National Convention opened in Chicago, there were sixty-six black delegates present, mostly from the South, and an overwhelming majority was instructed to vote for Taft. These black delegates played a crucial role as a balance of power in the fight for the nomination. In two of the major struggles - the selection of the Temporary Chairman and the seating of contested delegations - they voted with the President. Taft received fifty-eight of the sixty-six black votes. In exchange for this support, the President promised that he would change his policy of appointments in the South and stated that black and white Republicans would work together

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13 The Cleveland Gazette, June 1, 1912.
14 The Washington Bee, August 10, 1912.
15 The New York Age, June 20, 1912; The Cleveland Gazette, June 22, 1912; "The Delegate Contest at Chicago," Independent, LXXII (June 20, 1912), 1386-1387.
to remove lily whitism. The Republican Convention closed with Taft securing the nomination and Theodore Roosevelt and his supporters bolting. In August the Progressive Party nominated the ex-President as its candidate for President.

Roosevelt was aware of the fact that a third party constituted a threat to Southern Democratic solidarity. From the beginning he asserted that the Progressive was a National party and declared that its appeal was made "equally to the sons of the men who fought under Grant and to the sons who fought under Lee, for the cause we champion is as emphatically the cause of the South as it is the cause of the North." He was, above all, anxious to break the solid South. "Really if I could carry one of the eleven ex-Confederate States," he wrote, "I should feel as though I could die happy."  

Roosevelt leaders in the South advised the Colonel that a strong, permanent Progressive party could be built in the South only if it were organized upon a "lily white" basis. John M. Parker, Roosevelt's chief Southern supporter and adviser, offered his suggestion in a letter to the Rough Rider: "... this should be a white men's party, recognizing the superior ability of the white man and his superior civilization,

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16 The New York Age, June 27, 1912.

attained through countless centuries of struggle and endeavor, peculiarly fitting him to lead and direct, as during all of this long period, the negro has been perfectly content to remain the ignorant savage devoid of pride of ancestry or civic ambition. The South cannot and will not under any circumstance tolerate the Negro, and my firm belief is that a plan on these lines, diplomatically arranged would be productive of immense good."  

18 Julian Harris of Atlanta, the son of Joel Chandler Harris and editor of the popular *Uncle Remus's Home Magazine*, expressed the desire to have a Progressive "Lily White" Party in the South. It was his contention that establishing the party on this basis, would create an outlet for those white Southerners who vote Democratic because the only other choice was "Black Republicanism." Harris believed that a Progressive lily white party would benefit the black community because "the Negro's best friend is the Southern white."  

19 Roosevelt remained silent over the issue raised by his advisers. He did not wish to take a conspicuous stand for fear of alienating the Negro voters in the North. However, late in July the Progressive state conventions in Georgia, Florida, Alabama and Mississippi selected two separate delegations, one


white and one black, and both arrived in Chicago for the national convention claiming to be the legitimate representatives of the party. Roosevelt was suddenly forced to take a definite position on the issue.  

In a widely publicized letter to Julian Harris, Roosevelt outlined his policy concerning the Negro and southern politics. Believing that "the Progressive movement should be made ... in the interest of every honest, industrious, law-abiding colored man, just as it is the interest of every honest, industrious, law-abiding white man," Roosevelt declared that "the surest way to render [it] impotent ... would be to try to repeat the course ... followed by the Republican Party ..." in the South. "In the Republican National Convention," he asserted, "the colored members have been almost exclusively from the South, and the great majority of them have been men of such character that their political activities were merely a source of harm, and of very grave harm to their own race." Roosevelt continued:

The action of the Republican machine in the South ... in endeavoring to keep alive a party based only on negro votes ... has been bad for the white men of the South, whom it has kept solidified in an unhealthy and unnatural political bond ... and it has been bad for the colored men of the South.... There has in the past been much venality in Republican National Conventions in which there was an active contest for the nomination for President, and this venality

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has been almost exclusively among the rotten-borough delegates, and for the most part among the negro delegates from these Southern States in which there was no real Republican party. ... in the Convention at Chicago last June, the breakup of the Republican party was forced by these rotten-borough delegates from the South. In the Primary States of the North the colored men in most places voted substantially as their white neighbors voted. But in the Southern States, where there was no real Republican party, and where colored men, or whites selected purely by colored men, were sent to the convention, representing nothing but their own greed for money or office, the majority was overwhelmingly antiprogressive.

Roosevelt concluded that the Progressive party would appeal
"to the best white men in the South [who] shall create a situation by which the colored men of the South will ultimately get justice." On the other hand, the Progressive party would appeal for support from the better class of Negro voters in the Northern states and welcome them to the Progressive convention as delegates.21

Roosevelt's position on Negro delegations was a direct result of the outcome of the Republican nominating convention. He resented the role that Southern delegates had played. Representing states that would give the Republican party no electoral votes, they had, by remaining loyal to Taft, deprived Roosevelt of the presidential nomination. Roosevelt further believed that the party had failed to win popular support in the South because of its racial identification. By making the Progressive party in the South "lily white" Southern Democrats would be

21 Theodore Roosevelt to Julian Harris, August 1, 1912, Letters, VII, pp. 584-590. This letter is also contained in Link, ed., "Correspondence Relating to the Progressive Party's 'Lily White' Policy in 1912," pp. 481-488.
offered an alternative. Furthermore, by opening the door for Northern black delegates, Roosevelt believed that this would secure black support in the North, where the Negro voted counted. It was left to the Progressive provisional national committee to decide whether the white or Negro delegations would be seated at the convention. When the committee met, Roosevelt's plans of exclusion of Southern black delegates were followed. The committee passed a motion which permitted each state organization to determine the legality of contested delegations. A motion which concurred with Roosevelt's position on black participation was also carried.22

In the fight over delegate seating, the committee ruled in favor of excluding Negro delegations from the South. The contest in Florida was so bitter that the state was allowed to go unrepresented. The fight in Mississippi was also particularly bitter. Prior to the convention Perry W. Howard, a Negro from Jackson, had written to Senator Dixon asking whether the Negro delegation would be seated at the convention. Dixon replied: "It would not be possible to admit as delegates men elected by any of the old Republican organizations. The new convention will not be a wing of the Republican party but will be representative of the Progressive thought in both the old Republican and Democratic parties; in other words, it will be

22Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement, p. 269.
a new deal from the beginning." When the Southern Negro delegates were refused their seats at the convention, they appealed to the credentials committee. After a heated controversy in that committee, the delegates were refused their seats by a vote of 17 to 16.

Efforts were made to introduce a plank into the Progressive platform dealing with the "Negro Question." The proposal, demanding the repeal of discriminatory laws and a guarantee for the Negro's right to vote, was drafted by W. E. B. DuBois and was carried to the convention by Joel Spingarn, an official of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Despite the efforts of Spingarn, Henry Moskowitz, and Jane Addams to have the resolution adopted, the convention refused to accept the plank and the Progressives adjourned on August 8 without reference to the "Negro Question" in their platform.

Reaction of the black community to the Progressive convention was immediate. The New York Age, once Roosevelt's most fervent supporter, editorialized that his exclusion of Southern black delegates was only an "elaboration of a position

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23 Perry W. Howard to Joseph M. Dixon, July 12, 1912; Dixon to Howard, July 14, 1912, Dixon Papers.


that he had always held." Editor Fred Moore conducted a symposium seeking black opinion throughout the country on Roosevelt's action. Perhaps the general attitude was best expressed by Ralph W. Tyler, who offered the mildest criticism. Tyler believed that Roosevelt's position "invited renewed oppression of blacks from their old uncompromising enemies in the South," and that the exclusion of the Southern black Progressives was "more cruel than any disfranchisement laws enacted by any Southern State." 26

Influential Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal and AME Zion Church cautioned their congregations against joining the Progressive party. Bishop Alexander Walters of the AME Zion Church and President of the National Colored Democratic League declared that the Progressive party was "nothing but the wail of an unscrupulous man, drunk with a mixture of ambition and malice and determined to kill the party that thwarted his will." Walters warned blacks that Roosevelt was neither a progressive nor a reactionary, but "anything and everything that suited his purpose for the time being." 27

A mass meeting in celebration of the 121st Anniversary of the Haitian Revolution was turned into an anti-Roosevelt rally when Reverdy C. Ransom, editor of the AME Review, denounced the ex-President's action and promised to fight against him.

26 The New York Age, August 15, 1912.
27 The New York Age, October 12, 1912.
"just as hard as he had fought for him at the Republican National Convention." And outside the black community protest was expressed against Roosevelt. The Independent declared: "A bull is an unwelcome apparition in a china shop, and the Progressive party convention gave no kindlier welcome to the negro question ... we condemn Mr. Roosevelt ... for refusing the square deal for whites and blacks alike in those states in which the white citizens shut out the colored citizen from the ballot."29

By appealing to Southern white convictions, Roosevelt hoped to win enough votes away from the Democratic ranks effectively to break the solid South. However, many white Southerners did not believe that the Colonel was sincere in his policy of North-South racial discrimination. They viewed it simply as an effort to gain Southern Democratic support on the one hand and Northern Negro votes on the other. This was precisely what Roosevelt desired. Typical reaction was expressed by the Nashville Banner: "The great Bull Moose leader has summarily ejected the black mooses that hail from the sunny land of Dixie from his herd."30 Southern Democrats had not forgotten that only a few years ago, Roosevelt appointed Crum in Charleston, closed the post office in Indianola, and entertained

28 The New York Age, October 17, 1912.
Booker T. Washington at the White House. Roosevelt campaigned hard in the South throughout the month of September and on his "swing around the circle" tour of the Southern states he was received enthusiastically, proving that he was popular with the Southern people. However, the Colonel discovered in November that "people often shout one way and vote another"; he received only a small minority of votes in the South.  

The black community had always remained loyal to the Republican party, but in 1912 there appeared to be a disaffection with the party leadership. Black leaders were now seriously considering the Democratic party. Following the election of 1908, Alexander Walters and William Monroe Trotter had re-christened the National Negro-American Political League as the National Independent Political League. The Independents worked closely with the Colored National Democratic League, of which Walters was president. W. E. B. DuBois resigned from the Socialist party after realizing that Eugene Debs could not win. He denounced President Taft for his "abject surrender" to racism and called him the worst Chief Executive in half a century. "Any colored man who votes for Mr. Taft," DuBois warned, "will do so on the assumption that zero is better than minus 1." The Crisis editor also viewed the Progressive party as having no respect for Negroes because of its Lily White

31 Link, "Theodore Roosevelt and the South in 1912," p. 323.
32 August Meier, Negro Thought in America, p. 187.
33 The Crisis, IV (1912), 180-181; Rudwick, W. E. B. DuBois, p. 159.
faction in the South. There can be no doubt that DuBois was further disturbed over the Progressive refusal of his proposed Negro suffrage plank.

Woodrow Wilson, the Democratic nominee in 1912, made a bid for the large Negro vote in the North. He personally recognized the National Independent Political League and acquired the services of Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of the New York Evening Post and grandson of William Lloyd Garrison, as his advisor on the race question. He told Villard that if elected, he would be President of all the people. Wilson further stated that he would denounce lynching but believed that he as President, could not help the Negro in this matter and did not wish to give the impression that he could. Speaking to a delegation from the United Negro Democracy of New Jersey, Wilson declared:

I was born and raised in the South. There is no place where it is easier to cement friendship between the two races than there. They understand each other better there than elsewhere. You may feel assured of my entire comprehension of the ambitions of the negro race and my willingness and desire to deal with that race fairly and justly.34

Despite these overtures from the Democratic nominee, the black community as a whole was suspicious of Wilson and the Democratic party. They feared that a Democratic majority in

34Quoted in Link, "Negro as Factor in Campaign of 1912," p. 88.
Congress and an administration controlled by white Southerners would only follow their predecessors in ignoring the black race. They were aware that a white Democratic Southerner, James K. Vardaman, was elected to the Senate in Mississippi in 1911 on the platform of modification of the Fourteenth and repeal of the Fifteenth Amendments. But above all, the Negro feared that Woodrow Wilson was a Southerner who had "inherited all the usual baggage of southern racial prejudice."\(^{35}\)

Wilson received only a small vote from the black community in the election of 1912. The only editorial support for the Democratic candidate from the black press came from DuBois's Crisis and Trotter's Guardian.\(^{36}\) The Cleveland Gazette, a decidedly radical paper, had supported Bryan in 1908 but in 1912 believed that Taft was the "least of the three evils" that had a chance of winning. Together with the Washington Bee and the New York Age, the Gazette conducted extensive editorial and cartoon campaigns against Wilson and Roosevelt and in favor of Taft. W. Calvin Chase of the Bee asserted that "Roosevelt had gone further than anyone else in the propagating of anti-Negro sentiment in the country." The New York Age wondered how "it will be possible for a single self-respecting Negro ... to vote for ... Wilson." The Age stated that the Democrat, "by

\(^{35}\) Link, "Negro as Factor in Campaign of 1912," pp. 86-87.

inheritance and absorption ... has most of the prejudices of the narrowest type of Southern white people against the Negro."^7

In November, 1912, Woodrow Wilson was elected President, receiving forty-one per cent of the fifteen million votes casted. Roosevelt finished second with twenty-seven per cent of the popular vote and Taft placed third with twenty-three per cent. the remainder of the vote was divided among the Prohibition, Socialist, and Socialist-Labor parties.^8 Wilson received more Negro votes than any other Democratic presidential candidate prior to 1912 had received. On the other hand, Roosevelt's proscription of Negro support in the South turned most of the militant blacks in the North away from voting the Progressive ticket. Taft, securing the support of the Washingtonians and thus a majority of the Negro press, received a large black vote. Historians have differed in their estimation of which candidate received the majority of Negro support between Roosevelt and Taft. The black community, however, did not

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^7The Cleveland Gazette, August 10, 17, September 28, October 26, November 2, 1912; The Washington Bee, August 10, 1912; The New York Age, July 11, 1912; Meier, Negro Thought in America, pp. 188-189.


^9For example, August Meier states that 60 per cent of the Negro vote went to Roosevelt and Arthur S. Link assumes that the majority of Northern Negroes remained loyal to the Republican party and voted for Taft. See Meier, Negro Thought in America, p. 188; Link, "Negro as Factor in Campaign of 1912," p. 99.
hold the balance of power in the election, contrary to DuBois's belief. The entrance of Roosevelt into the race and the subsequent split within the Republican party assured Wilson's victory in 1912.

Theodore Roosevelt's efforts to break up the solid South by the formation of a Southern Progressive Lily White Party failed to gain the Southern Democratic vote and only helped to alienate many blacks in the North. He had hoped to secure support from Southern progressives and liberals but ultimately failed when Wilson emerged as a liberal Democratic presidential contender. To many liberal and progressive Southerners, Wilson was the true progressive and Roosevelt an "opportunist" and a "demagogue."41

Roosevelt sincerely believed that the white Southerner offered the best leadership for the Negro in politics in the South. He stood by his convictions of the importance of doing justice to the Negro who possesses "the intelligence, integrity, and self-respect which justifies the right of political expression in his white neighbor."42 He further believed that his policy would gain the confidence of the white man in the

40 Rudwick, W. E. B. DuBois, pp. 159-160. DuBois believed that the 500,000 black votes would hold the balance. After the election he estimated that 100,000 voted for Wilson.


42 Theodore Roosevelt, "The Progressives and the Colored Man," Outlook, CI (August 24, 1912), 909-912.
South. However, by the summer of 1913, Roosevelt realized the futility of expecting his policy to attract Southern support. Writing to O. K. Davis he confessed: "I think that the results ... show that as yet we are not making the slightest headway among the Democrats of the South. We have just got to face that fact."43

The black community found itself in a peculiar situation with the election of 1912. With the administration of William Howard Taft, the Republican party completed its policy of abandoning the Negro. Roosevelt had shown consideration early in his first term but decided to follow a different course in his second. Taft took over where Roosevelt had left off in appealing to the white South. And now a Southerner and a Demo­crat, Woodrow Wilson, was in the White House. Despite the op­timism voiced by DuBois and Walters concerning Wilson's poten­tial recognition of blacks, the Democrat was to follow the poli­cies of his predecessor and the Negro was to be forgotten. Early in his administration, Wilson endorsed segregation of black em­ployees in the Treasury and Post Office Departments.44 As the Wilson years progressed, the black community, once again dis­illusioned, drifted back to the Republican party. Not until


the Neal Deal coalition would blacks permanently leave the party of Lincoln. With the fall of the Republican party in 1912, and the defeat of Theodore Roosevelt, the age of accommodation, the "Age of Booker T. Washington" had come to an end.
CHAPTER IX

THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND THE NEGRO: CONCLUSION

The "Negro problem" was a persistent one for Theodore Roosevelt throughout his years in the White House. In his search for a solution he was at different times opposed by Southerners and Northerners, Negroes and whites, liberals and conservatives, moderates and extremists. During his first term of office he succeeded in winning the affections of Northern and Southern blacks by inviting Booker T. Washington to dinner at the White House, appointing William D. Crum to the Charleston Collectorship, and closing the post office in Indianola, Mississippi. These events aroused considerable optimism among black Americans and Negro leaders referred to Roosevelt as "our President."

Although many Negroes applauded Roosevelt and felt indebted to him during his first years in office, the President's interest in them was strictly realpolitik. He invited Washington to dinner to discuss not the condition of the Negro in the South but political patronage. Roosevelt's selection of Washington as political advisor on Southern and Negro policy was part of an effort to maintain Northern black support and win over the old Bourbons who accepted Washington as the spokesman for the black community but who were, unfortunately for Roosevelt, not in control of Southern politics.
His appointment of William D. Crum was an attempt to undermine the strength of Mark Hanna and the Lily White Republicans in South Carolina. It was no coincidence that Crum was the top Negro Republican in Charleston. And in Indianola, Roosevelt closed the post office because the white population that intimidated Mrs. Minnie Cox defied the authority of the Federal Government by forcing the resignation of a presidential appointee.

Roosevelt's main objective in recognizing the merits of those "occasionally good" and "well-educated" Negroes like Washington, Crum and Cox was political: to reform the Republican party in the South. In attempting to make the party one of blacks and disillusioned white Democrats, he contributed to Southern antipathy on the Negro question. White Southerners viewed Roosevelt's appointment policy as an attempt at establishing social equality in the South and "Negro domination" in Southern politics. Subsequently, Roosevelt alienated Southern whites and failed to break the powerful hold of the Democratic party in the South. His second term in office was spent trying to assuage those white Southerners who had been offended by what Roosevelt came to realize were a couple of rash acts.

Although Roosevelt showed signs of allowing blacks to participate in the political process during his first years in the White House, he failed to alleviate the serious problems that affected Southern Negroes. Disenfranchisement con-
stitutions were adopted in Alabama and Virginia; "Jim Crow" became the established social system throughout the South; and lynch law took its toll in the number of deaths of Southern blacks. The President failed to take any constructive action in dealing with these problems. After his victory in 1904, Roosevelt ignored these occurrences and became obsessed with gaining the support and admiration of the white Southern population.

To stress the importance of sectional reconciliation, Roosevelt toured the South and avoided making reference to disfranchisement or lynching. His Lincoln Day address in 1905 marked a public reversal on the Negro question by accepting the Southern argument on the cause of lynching and admonishing blacks for harboring their own criminals. He was silent following the race riot in Atlanta in 1906 and backed away when Southern moderates requested a formal investigation into the affair. In Brownsville, Texas, he summarily dismissed 167 black soldiers from the United States Army for alleged participation in the "Brownsville shootup." In 1912 Roosevelt entered the Presidential race as leader of the Progressive party and excluded Southern blacks from participating the party's convention, thus forming a "lily white" party in the South.

Roosevelt's racial ambivalence imposed strict limitations on what he could accomplish as President. In regarding the Negro as inferior he denied the belief in "equality of man." In recognizing those blacks of "property, education, and char-
acter" he limited his attentions to black statesmen who were in substantial agreement with his paternal racial philosophy. Booker T. Washington, in the eyes of the President, was the ideal model for black advancement. Those Negroes who disagreed with Washington's accommodating approach in race relations and fought for civil and political rights were proscribed by Roosevelt.

The "Negro problem" was not solved during Roosevelt's administration. The Washington dinner, the Crum appointment, and the Indianola Post Office incident were merely aberrations, certainly not the normal course of events during Roosevelt's presidency. Although he conducted a vigorous campaign on behalf of the Negro in his private correspondence, Roosevelt's public achievement in race matters was minimal. He refused to exploit the full potentialities of the executive office in the interest of racial statesmanship. Perhaps he was aware that the office of President was not conducive to the championing of unpopular causes.

Roosevelt sincerely believed that the "Negro problem" was a political problem and not a moral one. Any moral consideration should be left to the moralist and reformer. He shared the belief among other statesmen in the Progressive era that lynching and race riots were direct examples of disorder in society and wished to bring it under control. His desire for order and harmony between the races appealed to the Progressive mind on race relations. Nevertheless, he
accomplished little in his attempt at racial harmony. He was very hesitant in using his office and exerting strong executive leadership in race matters.
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