BLACK NATIONALISM REINTERPRETED

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the University of North Texas in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Mark Aaron Largent, B.A.

Denton, Texas

May, 1995
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Largent, Mark Aaron, Black Nationalism Reinterpreted. Master of Arts (History), May 1995, 90 pp., References, 57 titles.

Black nationalism responded to America’s failure to examine the effects of slavery’s legacy. Its aims represent those issues that were either unsupported by or in opposition to the goals of the civil rights leadership. In particular, the civil rights movement dismissed any claims that the history of slavery had a lasting effect on African-Americans. This conflict developed because of mainstream America’s inability to realize that the black community is not monolithic and African-Americans were differentially affected by slavery’s legacy. It is those blacks who are most affected by the culture of poverty created by America’s history of slavery who make up today’s inner-city populations. Despite successes by the civil rights movement, problems within lower-class black communities continue because the issues of the black underclass have not yet been fully addressed.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I began work on this thesis over two years before its completion. Originally entitled *What We Want, What We Believe*, I intended it to be the first comprehensive biography of Huey P. Newton (1941-1989), Minister of Defense for the Black Panther Party of Self-Defense.\(^1\) The attempt to achieve this goal was an utter failure.

Newton remained an enigma to me throughout my research. Despite his impressive accomplishments -- founding one of the most powerful black nationalist organizations in America, attaining international recognition for his work in establishing inner-city welfare programs, and earning a Ph.D. in sociology -- Newton died on the sidewalk in front of a crackhouse at the hands of the drug dealer he was trying to rob. While Newton's life story makes it apparent that his self-esteem had been crippled, I was unable to establish the source of his self-hatred. Even after gathering massive amounts of information about him, I was

\(^1\)Huey P. Newton (1941-1989) and Herman J. Blake, *Revolutionary Suicide*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973). *Revolutionary Suicide* is Newton's autobiography and is an excellent starting point for research on him or on the Black Panthers. At the time I started this research, no one had done a complete biography on his life. Since then there have been several published.
still left with one question that I could not answer: How could an apparently self-aware, educated leader overcome the severe poverty of his youth only to die in such a debasing manner?

I came to realize that my biography of Newton would not develop into anything significant unless I found an answer to this question. My continuing inquiry slowly turned away from Newton and toward addressing the larger question: What prevents members of the black lower class from enjoying the same upward mobility that its middle-class counterparts do? Additionally, what compels men like Newton to return or to be pulled back into the ghetto?

I began searching for histories that discussed blacks who appeared to have successfully negotiated their way out of the ghettos. Starting with the better-known African-American histories like John Hope Franklin’s From Slavery to Freedom and Lerone Bennett, Jr.’s Before the Mayflower, I found that statements about black economic stagnation prior to the 1960s-era victories of the civil rights movement held valid for only some inner-city blacks. These were those African-Americans whose childhoods instilled in them a

higher level of self-esteem, which appears to make them more capable of "getting out." But, an estimated 30% of the black population could not and still cannot escape from the poverty of America's ghettos.

My approach to these questions began with an examination of those blacks who were able to achieve upward mobility. African-American historians overwhelmingly agree that the victories achieved by the civil rights movement in the 1960s removed racial barriers to black upward mobility, creating a dramatic exodus out of the ghettos. Those that remained in the nation's ghettos appeared to lack the same abilities for escape that their now middle-class brethren possessed.

The November 1994 release of the controversial book, The Bell Curve, attempted to answer this question. The work's authors, Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, claimed to have found the answer to black economic stagnation in their comparisons of black and white IQ scores. These scholars argue that the 30% of the black community that makes up a large portion of America's lower class exist in this condition because they are intellectually incapable of social advancement and that this inferiority is genetically-based. My research offers historical insights of which they were clearly unaware.

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I argue in this thesis that lower-class blacks in this country are the cultural descendants of the most brutalized aspects of the American slave system, the plantation field hands. Previous scholars have shown that the field slave system created a culture in which the members exhibited pathologies developed as coping mechanisms. It is my contention that this culture continues to exist today and has been transferred to the inner cities. I will also argue that after the civil rights movement successfully removed racial barriers to black social and economic mobility, the cultural descendants of the upper echelon of the slave hierarchy possessed the traits necessary to leave behind lower-class blacks. For those that remained in the ghetto, the civil rights movement's victories did little to address their internal problems of low self-esteem, self-hatred, and the destructive cycle of poverty. One realizes the scope of the problem in the recognition that the dilemma of the black underclass has gone unaddressed because, if the civil rights movement were to admit that the history of slavery continued to affect some blacks, it would undermine their contention that all blacks were capable of upward mobility if the external barriers of discrimination were removed. It was

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"Stanley Elkins (b. 1925), in Slavery: A Problem in the American Institutional and Intellectual Life (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968) argued that field slaves exhibited pathologies similar to those of concentration camp prisoners. The cultures that developed from both of these situations, he claims, are the natural reactions of oppressed peoples."
black nationalism that addressed the problems that slavery bequeathed to poor African-Americans. This thesis will show that black nationalism is not simply a fringe movement within the civil rights crusade. Rather, it is the ideological manifestation of the black lower-class struggle to end the legacy of slavery.
CHAPTER II

THE SLAVE HIERARCHY

Historians of slavery have long noted the hierarchical nature of that institution. However, with the notable exception of black sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, American scholars failed to grasp the penetrating implications of that fact. The existence of a hierarchy of slaves and its transfer intact to the descendants of slaves provides the foundations for the immense social gap between lower- and middle-class blacks in America. To solve the problems that arise from this disparity within the black community the nation must first realize that they developed based on the brutal legacy of slavery.

The genealogical roots of the contemporary black middle class rest among the pre-Civil War freedmen and the upper echelons of slave society, namely, the house slaves, and artisans. The black residents of America's impoverished inner cities, on the other hand, represent the members of the culture created by slavery's most brutalizing aspects.¹

¹For excellent discussions of the role played by the legacy of slavery in shaping the lives of twentieth century blacks see Charles S. Johnson (1893-1956), Shadow of the Plantation. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934) and E. Franklin Frazier (1884-1962), The Negro Family in the United States. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1939). Both of these authors explicitly show the effects of field slavery and the legacy of slavery on the black family.
The physical demands of the field slave system and the psychological coping mechanisms that resulted from it created a culture of poverty in its victims and their cultural descendants. These lower-class blacks found themselves handicapped by poor nutrition, lack of stimulation in early childhood, lack of complex verbal interaction between parent and child, family dislocation, low self-image, and the lack of an intellectual tradition—all of which they inherited from their field-hand ancestors.\(^2\)

During the era of slavery, plantation field hands comprised an estimated seventy-five percent of the slave population and constituted its most physically and psychologically abused elements. Within this group, the field slaves who worked on large plantations fared far worse than those on smaller farms. Small plantations, lacking the high degree of labor specialization characteristic of the larger ones, engendered an environment of greater human

The focus of this thesis is the extension of these author’s theses to contemporary problems. The failure of current and previous scholars to make this extension is based on the reaction of the civil rights leaders against it. The civil rights movement feared such claims that slavery continues to effect the black community because they knew that these assertions would undermine their arguments that all blacks were ready for integration. This fact provides modern scholars with an understanding of why the works of such scholars as Frazier and C.S. Johnson were so violently attacked by the civil rights movement and why, eventually, such claims were no longer heard.

interaction between slaves and their masters. Slaveowners on smaller farms managed their slave laborers personally or in some cases worked in the fields side by side with them.\textsuperscript{3} Not surprisingly, the proportion of the total slave population who worked as field hands on the large, more impersonal plantations mirrors the nearly thirty percent of today’s black population who are seemingly unable to negotiate their escape from the bleak urban ghetto.

Nineteenth-century slave narratives uniformly observed that the greater the proximity to the home life of the master, the more humanely the slaves were treated. Thus, brute force played less of a role in managing domestic slaves and artisans than it did in controlling slaves who worked in the fields. Ex-slave Henry C. Bruce explained: "[field hands] took no interest in their master’s work...and went no further than forced by the lash..."\textsuperscript{4} The resort to coercion merely underscored the harsh nature of the field hands' agricultural work. Rice farming, for instance,


\textsuperscript{4}John W. Blassingame (b. 1940), \textit{The Slave Community: Plantation Life and the Antebellum South}. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972) p.39. For more evidence regarding the difference in treatment of house slaves as compared to field hands, see Stanley Elkins, \textit{Slavery and Leslie Howard Owens, \textit{This Species of Property: Slave Life and Culture in the Old South}}. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976). The works of both Elkins and Owens are excellent chronicles of the brutal circumstance under which field slaves existed.
demanded that these laborers work for days at a time sunk knee-deep in mosquito-infested water. On cotton plantations, slaves routinely suffered scarred and blistered hands as they struggled to meet the daily 150 pound cotton quota. Solomon Northup described his life as a cotton picker:

it was rarely that a day passed by without one or more whippings. The delinquent [who had not picked enough cotton] was taken out, stripped, made to lie upon the ground, face downwards, when he received a punishment proportioned to his offence. It is the literal, unvarnished truth, that the crack of the lash, and the shrieking of the slaves, can be heard from dark till bed time, on [this] plantation, any day almost during the entire period of the cotton-picking season.\(^5\)

Another former slave, William Wells Brown, explained that field hands "who tarried were whipped ten lashes from the "negro-whip" with a handle about three feet long and the butt-end filled with lead, the lash six or seven feet in length, made of cowhide with platted wire on the end of it."\(^6\)


The plantation owners encouraged the status differences that soon developed between plantation field hands on the one hand, house slaves, artisans, and free blacks on the other. Whites even went so far as to threaten unruly domestics with the specter of being sent into the fields if they did not reform their ways.  

Contrary to the Social Darwinists, who theorized that the slave hierarchy reflected a process by which the more intelligent slaves ascended naturally to the top of the slave institution, slave auction accounts reveal, with humiliating detail, a different story. Slaver traders would stimulate the purchasing appetites of potential buyers by parading the nude or scantily clad Africans emerging from the holds of the slave ships, to the rhythm of a drum or an accordion tune. The prurient interest plantation owners, male as well as female, took in poking, stroking, massaging the musculature and genitalia of potential slave purchases, exposed more about the sexually-repressed nature of early American society than it did about the biological intelligence of the slaves. To be sure, it was the male slave’s physicality, the female slave’s presumed fertility, 

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7Ira Berlin (b. 1941), Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974) p.273. See also Owens, This Species of Property, p.113.

and the particular labor needs of the plantation owner at
the time of purchase, not intelligence, that determined a
newly bought slave's position in the slave hierarchy of
field hands, domestics, craftsmen or artisans.\(^9\)

Not surprisingly, tensions sometimes arose among the
social divisions that were quickly calcifying within slave
society. According to Leslie H. Owens in *This Species of
Property*:

[domestics] did not have to start their work at
the first sign of dawn like other [field] slaves;
they were more likely to labor at their own pace,
and usually had longer rest breaks. They were
'slaves of significance' to the plantation's
operations, fully aware of their special status.
Animosities quickly developed between them and
other slaves during non-working hours.\(^9\)

Lunsford Lane, a fugitive slave from North Carolina
described what, by the nineteenth century, had become a vast
gulf between the circumstances of domestic slaves and
plantation field hands, explaining: "I, though sometimes
employed upon the plantation, belonged to the former, which
is the favored class."\(^11\) Another former slave, William
Wells Brown, summed up his status on the Missouri plantation
where he grew up:

\(^9\)Edward Kimber, "Observations in Several Voyages and
Taken from Winthrop D. Jordan (b. 1931), *White Over Black:
American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812*. (New York:

\(^10\)Owens, *This Species of Property*, p.138.

\(^11\)Lunsford Lane, *Five Slave Narratives*, p.18.
[I was] a house servant—a situation preferable to that of a field hand, as I was better fed, better clothed, and not obliged to rise at the ringing of the bell, but about half an hour after. I have often laid and heard the crack of the whip, and the screams of the slave. . . .12

This division of labor partitioning the plantation field hands from house slaves, artisans, and freed blacks quickly evolved into a chasm of immense psychological proportions as well. Over time it solidified into a caste structure, resilient to upward mobility. Slave children characteristically inherited the status of their parents. House servants and craftsmen were often willing to go to extraordinary lengths to ensure that their offspring inherited their more privileged status, thus being spared the degradation of becoming field hands. Such fears penetrated to the core of the institution of slavery itself and fixated on the self-esteem lowering process that came to be known as "breaking in" or "taming"—a practice ostensibly reserved for plantation field hands. Edward Kimber, an Englishmen, observing colonial American practices, wrote in 1746:

[to be sure, a new Negro, if he must be broke, either from Obstinacy, or, which I am more apt to suppose, from Greatness of Soul, will require more hard Discipline than a young Spaniel.13


William Wells Brown offers one of the most poignant first hand accounts to be found anywhere about the "taming" of a field hand:

Cook [the overseer], from the time that he came upon the plantation, had frequently declared, that he could and would flog any nigger that was put into the field to work under him. My master had repeatedly told him not to attempt to whip Randall [who at six feet tall was the most valuable and able-bodied slave on the plantation], but he was determined to try. . .

[When confronted by the overseer] Randall stood silent for a moment, and then said, 'Mr. Cook, I have always tried to please you since you have been on the plantation, and I find you are determined not to be satisfied with my work. . . No man has laid hands on me, to whip me, for the last ten years, and I have long since come to the conclusion not to be whipped by any man living.' Cook, finding by Randall's determined look and gestures, that he would resist, called three of the hands from their work, and commanded them to seize Randall, and tie him [but they failed in their attempt].

One morning however. . . [Randall] was attacked by the overseer and his companions [one of whom] drew out his pistol, and fired at [Randall]. He was then taken to the barn, and tied to a beam. Cook gave him over one hundred lashes with a heavy cowhide, had him washed with salt and water, and left him tied during the day. The next day he was untied, and taken to a blacksmith's shop, and had a ball and chain attached to his leg. He was compelled to labor in the field, and perform the same amount of work that the other hands did. When his master returned home, he was much pleased to find that Randall had been subdued in his absence.14

In another instance, Brown described the case of a white "gentleman" who punished a slave named John by whipping him three times a week for two months:

[a] more noble looking man than [John], was not to be found in all St. Louis, before he fell into the hands of [the slavemaster]; and a more degraded and spirit-crushed looking being was never seen on a Southern plantation, after he had been subjected to this ‘taming’ process for three months.\textsuperscript{15}

Slaves living amidst such brutality absorbed that violence into their own lives. Jacob Stroyer in his slave narrative recounted childhood memories of another slave boy, Gilbert, who regularly took other slave children into the woods several times a week, stripped them, whipped them until their backs were scarred. Gilbert then threatened them with even more brutal punishment were they to squeal on him.\textsuperscript{16}

Traditional Southern folklore downplayed the role of violence in managing the institution of slavery, insisting that a slave constituted too valuable a piece of property to brutalize. But such mythologizing misreads basic human nature. Spousal murder and child molestation even in presumably more enlightened, contemporary America ought certainly to disabuse one of the notion that pride in family possession precludes irrational acts of violence. Violence lay at the core of the slavery institution, not necessarily for its own sake, but as the primary self-esteem-lowering instrument at the plantation owner’s disposal to reshape the otherwise prideful African into a subservient plantation

\textsuperscript{15}William W. Brown, \textit{Five Slave Narratives}, p.29.

\textsuperscript{16}Stroyer, \textit{Five Slave Narratives}, p.9.
field slave. Whippings were often used selectively, singling out the most obdurate field hands for punishment as a means of providing an example to the other slaves. It is, nonetheless, true that violence, while fundamental to the slave system, did not constitute the only means of managing plantation field hands. Over time, the more "enlightened" slaveowners came to recognize the effectiveness of paternalism over physical chastisement, in particular the nurturing of a strong sense of dependency among their slaves.  

Psychiatrists William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs commented:

[the ideal slave had to be absolutely dependent and have a deep consciousness of personal inferiority. His color was made the badge of that degradation. And as a final precaution, he was instilled with a sense of the unlimited power of his master. Teachings so painstakingly applied do not disappear easily.]

Later, they also detailed the process by which such dependency was achieved:

[the attack on their autonomy was relentless. Each day they were given the option to work or die, obey or die, and with each day the role, the identity of slave became more real. To live, for a black man, was to submit completely, holding back no part of himself, but yielding up all vestiges of humanity to the slave owner, or at least giving the appearance of doing so.]

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17Reidy, From Slavery to Agrarian Capitalism, p.44.


19Grier and Cobbs, Black Rage, p.143.
Relative to domestic slaves and artisans, the plantation field hands were forced into the greatest degree of dependency upon the slave owners for rations of food, clothing and shelter. According to Herbert G. Gutman in *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925*, one prominent slaveholder offered the advice: "Create in [the slave] a habit of perfect dependence on you..."20 This philosophy was observed in practice during the celebrated travels of Frederick Law Olmsted through the South. Olmsted concluded that the Southern strategy was to try to train the slave to work and yet "prevent him from learning to take care of himself."21

Marriage practices contributed to a further divergence in social mores and self-esteem between plantation field slaves and the upper echelons of slave society, inhabited by domestics who worked in the master’s home and slave craftsmen or artisans. While the slave marriage under any circumstance was not a legal entity, the plantation owner customarily arranged for clergy to sanctify the marriages of domestic slaves and artisans. In contrast, the slave owners treated the marriages of field hands more casually and these unions were not performed by clergy nor given the blessing

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of the church. Such marriages were characteristically celebrated with a simple wedding party of invited friends and the symbolic African cultural survival whereby the uniting couple would "jump over the broomhandle." The marriages of plantation field hands were far less stable than those of the house slaves, and it was among the field hands that families were most commonly broken up through the sale of wives, husbands, and children to different buyers. It sometimes occurred that a field hand might casually create an arrangement with two or more women at a time.

On some plantations, any ceremony marking the union of two field slaves was dispensed with altogether. David Blont, a former slave commented, "Dere wasn’t no marryin’ on de plantation dem days, and as one old woman raised all of de chillens, me and my brother Johnnie ain’t never knewed who our foks was."

While the upper echelons of slave society reflected mainstream Southern society’s disdain for illegitimacy, the

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23 Owens, This Species of Property, pp.201-202.

mores of the field hands represented a different set of pressures. Plantation owners not only encouraged pregnancies among the field hands, they even offered incentives in some cases for slave women to bear as many children as possible. On occasion, a slave woman would even be offered her freedom in exchange for bearing a large number of children to be left behind in bondage. Male slaves who worked in the fields were also encouraged to procreate even though they were restrained by the institution of slavery itself from supporting the families they produced. One field hand described the exercise of his 'slave masculinity' in the following terms:

I been marry once before freedom, with home weddin'. Massa, he bring some more women to see me. He wouldn't let me have just one woman. I have about fifteen and I don't know how many chillen. Some over a hundred, I'se sure. 25

According to W.E.B. DuBois in Black Reconstruction:

Child-bearing was a profitable occupation, which received every possible encouragement, and there was not only no bar to illegitimacy, but an actual premium put upon it. Indeed, the word was impossible . . . under the slave system. 26

The economics of slavery may have demanded as much, but the practice of slave breeding did not deter whites from


simultaneously purveying powerful sexual stereotypes of black promiscuity. Nor did such labels constrain plantation owners from contributing their own genes to the pursuit of slave proliferation as well, attested to by the large number of mulatto children appearing on the slave plantations as time passed.

Traditional Southern historians and even contemporary scholars like Fogel and Engerman, perhaps blinded by an understandable repugnance at the notion, denied that slave breeding ever occurred. However, too broad an array of historical sources, from plantation owner accounts, to newspaper advertisements, to slave narratives verify the practice of slave breeding. Its existence cannot be casually dismissed and its implications in shaping a different norm for the sexual behavior for field hands and their contemporary urban descendants must be squarely faced. DuBois noted that not only did this practice occur, but that it was performed with a considerable degree of selectivity. According to DuBois: "the deliberate breeding of a strong, big field-hand stock could be carried out by selecting proper males, and giving them the run of the likeliest females." Katie Darling, a female field hand, also noted the practice of selective slave breeding: "Niggers didn't court then like they do now. Massa pick out a portly man


[28]DuBois, Black Reconstruction, p.44.
and a portly gal and just put 'em together. Whawt he want am the stock."  

Historians August Meier and Elliott Rudwick claimed in From Plantation to Ghetto that slave breeding only rarely occurred. However, they then proceeded to acknowledge that a slave woman's fecundity determined her market value and planters routinely referred to females who had borne children as "good breeders." Newspaper advertisements of the period offer what is perhaps the most incontrovertible evidence that slave breeding was indeed practiced. The following classified advertisement appeared in 1796:

. . . they are not Negroes selected out of a larger gang for the purpose of a slave, but are prime, their present Owner, with great trouble and expense, selected them out of many for several years past. They were purchased for stock and breeding Negroes, and to any Planter who particularly wanted them for that purpose, they are a very choice and desirable gang.

In another case, a Charleston newspaper advertised the sale of a twenty-year-old slave girl who "is very prolific in her generating qualities, and affords a rare opportunity

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29Katie Darling, Interviewed near Marshall, Texas, Interviewer not identified, Life Under the "Peculiar Institution," p.70.

30August Meier (b. 1928) and Elliott Rudwick (b. 1923), From Plantation to Ghetto. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966) p.58.

for any person who wished to raise a family of strong, healthy servants for ... his own use."\(^{32}\)

DuBois cited the comments of southerners who described slave breeding practices in the border states:

[i]n the states of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee and Missouri, as much attention is paid to the breeding and growth of Negroes as to that of horses and mules. Further south, we raise them both for use and for market. Planters command their girls and women (married or unmarried) to have children; and I have known a great many Negro girls to be sold off because they did not have children. A breeding woman is worth from one-sixth to one-fourth more than one that does not breed.\(^{33}\)

Moncure D. Conway, the daughter of a Virginia slaveholder wrote in like regard:

[a]s a general thing, the chief pecuniary resource in the Border States is the breeding of slaves; and I grieve to say that there is too much ground for the charges that general licentiousness among the slaves, for the purpose of a large increase, is compelled by some masters and encouraged by many.\(^{34}\)

Andrew Jackson, an ex-slave, offered one of the most personalized accounts of slave breeding in practice:

Claypole [ordered] for us to 'get married,' according to Slavery, or in other words, to enrich his plantation by a family of young slaves. The alternative of this was to be sold to a slave

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\(^{32}\)Silberman, Crisis in Black and White, p.91.

\(^{33}\)DuBois, Black Reconstruction, p.44.

\(^{34}\)DuBois, Black Reconstruction, p.44.
trader who was then in the vicinity making up a
gang for a more Southern market.35

The physically harsh and psychologically degrading
lives of the field hands engendered bitterness and intense
anger. However, these slaves had far fewer options than
house slaves and artisans for resisting the oppression of
slavery. To be sure, the ranks of successful runaways were
filled with domestic servants and skilled artisans as was
the leadership of slave revolts. There are several reasons
for this state of affairs. Ira Berlin points out in Slaves
Without Masters that even though teaching slaves to read and
write was illegal under Southern slave law, some of the
slave elite did become literate. He explains: "These blacks
had seen more of the world, had a wider range of experience,
and were not blinded by the narrow alternatives of
plantation life."36 Plantation field slaves, on the other
hand, often found insurmountable barriers to running away.
They could seldom pass themselves off as freedmen, because
their ungrammatical English gave away their real origins
within the lower echelons of slave society. In addition,
lacking knowledge of skilled trades made it impossible to
earn a living. Psychological factors may have played an
even greater role for field hands born into the institution.

33Andrew Jackson, Narrative and Writings of Andrew
Jackson, of Kentucky, (Syracuse, New York: 1847) p.8, taken

36Berlin, Slaves Without Masters, p.45.
The slave masters had through the "taming" of their field hands succeeded in inculcating a pervasive sense of powerlessness among these spirit-broken men and women. In that regard, Blassingame noted:

... most planters worked consistently to make [the slaves] submissive and deferential. While the lash was the linchpin of his regime, the slaveholder adopted several practices to assure the slave's submissiveness. A master started early trying to impress upon the mind of the young black the awesome power of whiteness: he made the slave bow upon meeting him, stand in his presence, and accept floggings from his young children; he flogged the slave for fighting with young whites. The ritual of deference was required at every turn: the slave was flogged for disputing a white man's word, kicked for walking between two whites on a street, and not allowed to call his wife or mother 'Mrs.'

With few permissible outlets for expression, the negative emotions of the field hand became transformed into a way of life that exhibited strong psychological elements of passive-aggression. An English traveller of the 1740s described the particular form resistance customarily took among field hands:

[in their day-to-day existence they often refused to cooperate: they malingered, they mistreated tools and animals, they destroyed the master's property.]

In destroying individual initiative and offering little incentive to work other than to evade the whip, slavery incubated "foot-dragging, work-evading patterns that were to

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37Blassingame, The Slave Community, p.160.

38Faragher, Out of Many, p.98.
remain as a cultural legacy long after slavery itself disappeared." Duplicity and theft were also pervasive patterns among antebellum slaves, and these too remained long after slavery ended.\textsuperscript{39} Cobb and Grier also noted:

[t]he journals of slaveowners tell of their exasperation when their slaves refused to work or worked poorly or broke farm tools. They attributed such behavior to 'poor moral fiber,' shiftlessness and stupidity. One wonders who is stupid, the slave who dawdles or the owner who expected him to do otherwise.\textsuperscript{40}

Controversy continues to surround the issue of slave child-rearing practices particularly among the field hands and their value-shaping implications for contemporary black ghetto life. According to Grier and Cobbs:

[i]t is reported that newly captured African women slew their children rather than have them reared as slaves. Their decision was a significant one for us, because the infanticide speaks clearly of her knowledge of the options--she must kill her child, for if she lets him live it is she who must raise him to be a slave. Once the mother opts for the child's life she assumes the task of conveying to him the nature of the world in which he will live and teaching him how to survive in it. In effect, she had to take the role of slave master, treat the child with capricious cruelty, hurt him physically and emotionally, and demand that he respond in an obsequious helpless manner--a manner she knew would enhance his chances of survival. She had to take particular pains to crush any defiant, aggressive traits. No maturity could be allowed; no independence could be encouraged. He must learn to treat himself as chattel, his body and person as valuable only as the owner placed value on them. He must learn to fear and exalt the owner and to hate himself. This last comment might well be repeated: in order to survive as a

\textsuperscript{39}Gutman, \textit{The Black Family}, p.29.

\textsuperscript{40}Grier and Cobbs, \textit{Black Rage}, p.91.
slave, the child had to learn to abandon the usual narcissistic investment of self; he had to be taught to hate himself.\(^4^1\)

Not surprisingly, a black mother would justify to herself the harsh punishment she delivered to a rebellious son with the comment: "I'd rather kill him myself than let those white folks get him. He's got to learn."\(^4^2\)

The psychological demands placed by slavery on plantation field hands necessitated, for the sake of survival, the creation of certain types of coping mechanisms: the mother's suppression of aggressive tendencies in her sons, malingering, dependency, masculinity defined in terms of sexual prowess rather than assuming responsibility for a family, violence among themselves, general destructiveness, the stifling of mental competency in favor of physical dexterity, and paranoia. Defenders of slavery latched onto these passive-aggressive or at times self-destructive behaviors exhibited by the demoralized plantation field hands in order to construct elaborate and presumably scientific theories of black inferiority. It was difficult for well-meaning whites to decipher the truth unless they realized that one of the most effective means of smearing a people was to identify pejorative characteristics that may for historical reasons be exhibited by a small minority within the larger ethnic group. Such traits would

\(^{4^1}\)Grier and Cobbs, _Black Rage_, pp.143-144.

\(^{4^2}\)Grier and Cobbs, _Black Rage_, p.144.
then be exaggerated and projected onto the group as a whole.
CHAPTER III

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONALIST'S
CONSTITUENCY

Emancipated by the Civil War, the former plantation field hands were forced into sharecropping, or debt peonage. Calls from Radical Republicans to provide each former slave with "40 acres and a mule" were ignored, and the ex-slaves became a landless peasantry. The distinction between the upper-class domestics and artisans and lower-class field slaves established by slavery did not fade under this new system. In fact, differences intensified. Former house slaves found domestic positions. Former slave artisans were able to translate their skills into a modicum of economic self-sufficiency. But lower-class blacks, whose skills lay in menial agriculture jobs, found themselves legally tied to a peonage system that increased their indebtedness with each year. Scholars Mary Frances Berry and John W. Blassingame write in Long Memory:

[f]reed without land, the poverty and ignorance of the black left him at the mercy of the Southern planter in spite of the efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau from 1865 to 1872. Almost immediately after the war the planter turned to sharecropping arrangements with black farmers. Through the mechanism of the plantation store, which charged
exorbitant prices for goods, the planters kept their black tenants in perpetual debt.¹

In *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery*, Leon F. Litwack wrote:

[sharecroppers]...worked the white man's land, planted with the white man's seeds, plowed with the white man's plow and mules, and harvested a crop he owed largely to the white man for the land, seeds, the plow and the mules, as well as the clothes he wore and the food he consumed.²

Writing in *The Voice of the Negro* in 1906, T.H. Malone declared, "there is in truth but little difference between the peonage of today and the actual slavery of the past."³ Malone went on to describe the life of a black sharecropper living in the first years of the twentieth century. Those who wanted to travel away from home had to report where he was going and how long he would be gone and "...if he overstays his time he is liable to be brought back handcuffed."⁴ Malone stated that the peon is worked from dawn till night, watched over by a foreman and whipped for not working quickly enough. The overseer of the slave system was replaced by the foreman of the sharecropping system.


⁴Malone from Berry and Blassingame, *Long Memory*, p.196.
system. Land owners paid their sharecroppers only at the end of the season in order to hold them to the land.

Legislative and judicial acts further bound black sharecroppers to the land. Peonage, debt and convict slavery, vagrancy laws, segregation, lynching, and mob violence removed even the semblance of freedom from the emancipated field hands. The failure of Reconstruction to redistribute land or effectively alter the conditions of ex-slaves created an environment where upward mobility for the black lower class was virtually impossible.

Even if a freedman was able to save enough money to purchase land, Southern land-owning whites were unwilling to sell land to blacks. In *From Slavery to Freedom*, John Hope Franklin writes:

[w]ith the destruction of the institution of slavery, whites looked upon land as their only important capital investment. They were reluctant to sell land to Negroes, whom they did not want to enjoy the power that came from the ownership of land in the South.⁵

The federal government proved reluctance to empower those freed slaves who had been agricultural workers with land. The opportunity for these people to create economic self-sufficiency was lost when the federal government proved unwilling to provide land to the freed slaves.⁶ *In Been in*

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⁵Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, p.398.

⁶Plans had been made to insure that at least some of the former slaves received land confiscated by the Union Army. According to Litwack in *Been in the Storm So Long*: "...Sherman issued Special Field Order No. 15, a far-
the Storm So Long, Litwack writes that the freedmen had sufficient reason to expect they would be granted "40 acres and a mule" because:

... many of them had overheard their masters talk in fearful tones about how the Yankees, if successful, would divide up the land among the blacks.7

Instead of enabling the ex-slaves to support themselves, the post-Civil War government created the nation's first welfare institution, the Freedman's Bureau.

Black ownership of farms remained incredibly low until after World War I. In 1890 blacks owned 120,738 farms and thirty years later that number had grown to only 218,972. The acreage on these farms remained extremely small. For example in Shelby County, Tennessee in 1910 blacks owned

[Document text]

reaching document that set aside for the exclusive use of the freedmen a strip of coastal land abandoned by Confederate owners between Charleston, South Carolina, and Jacksonville, Florida, granting black settlers "possessory titles" to forty-acre lots. Although intended only to deal with a specific military and refugee problem, the order encouraged the growing impression among the freedmen that their Yankee liberators intended to provide them with an essential undergirding for their emancipation. That impression gained still further credence when Congress made the newly established Freedmen's Bureau the custodian of all abandoned and confiscated land (largely the lands seized for nonpayment of the direct Federal tax or belonging to disloyal planters who had fled); ex-slaves and loyal Unionists could pre-empt forty-acre lots, rent them at nominal rates for three years, and purchase them within that period at a fair price (about sixteen time the annual rent). If the Bureau had implemented this provision, and if blacks had been able to accumulate the necessary funds, some 20,000 black families would have been provided with the means for becoming self-sustaining farmers." (pp.400-401)

7Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, p.401.
5,469 acres of farm land while white owned 195,020. In addition, almost nothing had been done to educate African-Americans in the use of modern agricultural methods. The result was low productivity on black-owned farms and a general ignorance of the problems of purchasing supplies and selling products.⁸

Blacks began migrating north and west to larger urban areas in massive numbers during World War I. This population shift carried the social and economic problems of rural and Southern blacks to Northern cities. Franklin writes that the migration of blacks northward also meant a loss of cheap labor for the Southern agricultural communities, which they attempted to stem with legal action:

[t]he Southern whites became visibly alarmed over the movement of the Negroes and the prospects of increases [in their migration to the North]. Various methods were resorted to keep Negroes on Southern plantations -- the enforcement of vagrancy and labor contract laws, the enactment of legislation imposing penalties for enticing laborers wary, and the establishment of systems ofpeonage by which Negroes were hired out by the county in order to pay the fine for a crime or to pay a debt. More tactful whites sought to persuade Negroes to remain by promising them good treatment and high wages.⁹

Berry and Blassingame write that these black migrants were largely drawn by economic forces:

[t]he sharp drop in European immigration, increased demand for war material, and the abandonment of jobs by whites enlisting in the

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⁸Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom. p. 398.

⁹Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, p. 399.
army created a vacuum for unskilled industrial workers which was filled by black migrants from 1915 to 1920.\textsuperscript{10}

In addition, a severe labor depression in the South in 1914 and 1915 caused wages to drop by as much as 75 cents a day. Environmental factors also provided incentives to leave, as 1915 and 1916 saw tremendous damage by boll weevils to cotton crops and the floods during the summer of 1915 left thousands of blacks destitute and homeless.\textsuperscript{11}

African-American institutions of the time heralded the migration as a positive move forward for blacks. In 1917 the newspaper, the \textit{Christian Recorder} wrote:

\begin{quote}
[i]f a million Negroes move north and west in the next twelve-month, it will be one of the greatest things for the Negro since the Emancipation Proclamation.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

Many blacks fled the South in hopes of escaping the violence that plagued them there.\textsuperscript{12} But, ironically, the centralization of large numbers of the blacks within the inner city intensified black-on-black violence as frustrations over their poverty-stricken lives continued to

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\textsuperscript{10}Berry and Blassingame, \textit{Long Memory}, p. 198.
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\textsuperscript{11}Franklin, \textit{From Slavery to Freedom}, p. 472.
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\textsuperscript{12}Taken from Franklin, \textit{From Slavery to Freedom}.
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\textsuperscript{13}According to Franklin in \textit{From Slavery to Freedom} (p.439), the last 16 years of the nineteenth century were witness to the highest numbers of violent incidents against blacks. "...[T]here had been more than 2,500 lynchings, the great majority of which were of Negroes, with Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana leading the nation." 
\end{flushright}
grow. As a consequence, riots in the North soon grew as common and as violent as they were in the South. In addition, average black poverty continued to rise nationwide. While the number of poor families in the United States declined by 30 percent between 1947 and 1963, the number of poor black families increased by 2 percent.

Elements within the Northern black communities began working to remove the external barriers that denied them upward mobility. The civil rights movement that emerged in the first decades of the twentieth century, began as a recognition that urban blacks otherwise capable of upward mobility were being impeded by racial stereotypes and discrimination. In order to overcome this discrimination, the newly emerging black middle class called for total social equality between blacks and whites.

In order to legitimately claim the equality of the races, civil rights leaders were forced to deny the lasting impact of the legacy of slavery of lower-class blacks. As such, they attacked any claims that slavery left a lasting

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15 Franklin in From Slavery to Freedom tells of several incidents of riots in Northern cities that were sparked by the actions by local authorities against blacks. (pp. 443-44)

16 Berry and Blassingame, Long Memory, p. 215.
impact on blacks. This simple fact has profound implications on the historiography of black studies. From Emancipation until the civil rights movement's seizure of control of the black agenda, scholars openly recognized the impact of slavery on the black community. But, from the late 1930s onward, civil rights leaders quickly discredited anyone who attempted to advance arguments that any African-Americans still suffered from the effects of slavery. Black sociologist, E. Franklin Frazier, writing in the 1930s was vehemently attacked for his stance regarding black social pathologies. In his landmark study, *The Negro Family in the United States*, he attributed certain social afflictions disproportionately represented within the black community to slavery, namely, self-hatred, dependency, illegitimacy, and illiteracy.  

The civil rights movement perceived of its effectiveness in terms of presenting the black community as a socially cohesive, unified front. However, that characterization was false, as lower-class blacks continued to suffer from the disabilities that they had inherited from their field hand ancestors. In March of 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then Assistant Secretary of Labor, issued a provocative report on the problems plaguing the black community, entitled *The Negro Family: The Case for National*  

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The civil rights establishment was quick to vilify Moynihan’s assertions that the black family exhibited strong matriarchal and maladaptive tendencies creating barriers to upward mobility within American society. These black leaders feared that such claims would only stoke the fires of racist claims that blacks "were not yet ready" for integration into mainstream American society.

Scholars like John Blassingame, Eugene Genovese and others rejected Moynihan’s conclusions as well as those of Stanley Elkins, who compared a perceived psychological deterioration of slaves to Nazi concentration camp victims. Blassingame and Genovese denied the capacity of the slave system to distort the black psyche in ways that would later lead to the kinds of pathologies reflected in lack of upward mobility, high rates of violent crime, and poor overall performance on intelligence tests. Elkins claimed that slavery "infantilized blacks" in the same manner the Nazi death camps produced such childlike behavior in some prisoners as giggling, pathological dishonesty, mendacity, fighting, and theft. Blassingame insisted that the Southern plantation was not organized in so rational a manner as "to crush every manifestation of individual will

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19Stanley Elkins, Slavery. p.111. "The [concentration camp] prisoners developed types of behavior which are characteristic of infancy or early youth."
or for systematic extermination" and that "the struggle for survival was not severe enough to crush all of the slave's creative instincts."\textsuperscript{20}

It is true that Nazi concentration camps, whose goals were the extermination of a people, differed from Southern plantations where violence functioned merely as a means to motivate a recalcitrant slave labor force. However, both the sociocultural arguments of Genovese and Blassingame in addition to extensive econometric data provided by Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman in \textit{Time on the Cross} fail to appreciate one critical factor: the differential nature of the slave experience.\textsuperscript{21} While those blacks existing as house slave, artisans, or freedmen were capable of maintaining a minimum level of personal autonomy and self-esteem, the slave system instilled in field slaves an intense self-hatred. So powerful was the destructive force of slavery against field slaves that it created a culture of poverty in its victims. Today, this culture is populated by those blacks who are incapable of negotiating their way out of the inner city. Others temporarily escape only to be pulled back into it. Such was the tragic case with Huey P. Newton, who despite a Ph.D. in sociology and prominence as co-founder of the Black Panthers, fell back into the cycle.

\textsuperscript{20}Blassingame, \textit{The Slave Community}, p.41.

of poverty, drug abuse and violence. The pattern of self-hatred that would lead to self-destructive behaviors was instilled in him as it was instilled in all lower-class blacks by the culture created as a coping mechanism for the brutalities of the field hand slave system.

Because of their need to deny the devastating impact of America's history of slavery on any blacks, the civil rights movement entered into an odd, unspoken alliance with American conservatives. Conservatives in America had long claimed that slavery was an evil albeit benign institution. Likewise, the civil rights movement, while claiming that slavery had been brutal, was unwilling to go so far as to admit that it was capable of leaving a lasting effect on elements within the black community.

Instead of accepting the existence of any continued internal problems among its constituency, civil rights leaders claimed that economic stagnation was due entirely to racial discrimination, namely external barriers to black social mobility. Therefore, they called for external changes to address the lack of black social and economic mobility. With the civil rights victories that began in the late 1950s and that continue well into the 1990s, the civil rights movement forced mainstream America to address the external impediments to black upward mobility and ignore any internal problems blacks may suffer as a result of the legacy of slavery in America.
The effects of the civil rights movement's victories were first visible in the early 1960s when great numbers of blacks left the inner city to live in suburban areas. Mirroring the black migration northward, this new exodus allowed many blacks to achieve the upward mobility that had eluded their ancestors. In leaving the nation's ghettos the black middle class exposed the previously concealed black underclass.

Burdened with the problems of self-hatred that were bequeathed to them by a culture of poverty, lower-class blacks could not take advantage of the victories of the civil rights movement. The partitioning of the black lower class from their middle-class counterparts created today's conception of the inner city: a rotten core inside the nation's urban centers.

The aims of the civil rights movement focused on removing external barriers to black mobility. As such it promoted affirmative action programs, equal opportunity plans, and the creation of laws against racial discrimination. While all of these initiatives were of great benefit to the seventy percent of the black population that could capitalize on the increased opportunities, they did little to help those inner-city blacks who had been socialized into poverty. Mired in internal problems relating to their ravaged self-esteem and living in misery perpetuated by the cycle of poverty, lower-class blacks
failed to benefit from the successes of the civil rights movement. While the civil rights movement did little for the black lower class, the civil rights leaders used the perpetual state of poverty in which the black underclass existed to seduce mainstream America into supporting the civil rights' agenda by claiming that doing so would solve these problems.

Eventually, the thirty percent of the African-American community that made up the black lower class began to develop their own programs and organizations in order to address their specific problems. Organized to address inner-city problems, these new organizations found themselves in direct conflict with the increasingly successful civil rights movement. By the 1960s, these black reformers came to be known as black nationalists. In Black Nationalism in America, authors John H. Bracy, August Meier, and Elliott Rudwick define black nationalism as:

...a body of social thought, attitudes, and actions ranging from the simplest expressions of ethnocentrism and racial solidarity to the comprehensive and sophisticated ideologies of pan-Negroism and pan-Africanism. Between these extremes lie many varieties of black nationalist, of varying degrees of intensity.22

Despite what appears to be a vast differentiation of ends and means, at heart all nationalists shared the same driving force: the empowerment of the black underclass.

While the long-term victories of both the nationalist groups and the civil rights movement were inherently linked by mainstream America's perception of the black community as a monolithic whole, their short-term advances would find them on opposite sides of many social issues.
CHAPTER IV

BLACK NATIONALISM

Civil rights leaders like W.E.B. DuBois quickly labelled another prominent black of the time, Booker T. Washington, a "traitor to his race." The unforgivable sin for which they castigated Washington was his intimation that slavery had indeed left its ugly imprint on the African-American community and on poor blacks in particular. The debate between DuBois and Washington may be better understood when one realizes that Washington had been born a slave on a Virginia plantation, unlike the Harvard-educated DuBois who descended from a long line of freedmen. This simple distinction had tremendous impact on the manner in which each man viewed the black community.

The majority of the black middle class dismissed as "accommodationist" Washington's apolitical ideology of vocational education and economic empowerment for the black masses. But, his thinking constituted the earliest articulation of black nationalist thought. It was not

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separatist, as black nationalism would later come to be perceived, but rather preoccupied with "doing for self." In preaching thrift, self-sufficiency, and respect for the protestant work ethic, Washington infuriated middle class black leaders by insisting that:

[porn and ignorance] have made [the Negro] untruthful, intemperate, selfish, caused him to steal, to be cheated, and made the outcast of society, and he has aspired to positions which he was not mentally and morally capable of filling.\(^2\)

These vices developed from such a powerful origin that simple reforms, such as instilling Christian morality, was not enough to overcome their effects. Alluding to the very real social problems the black lower-class descendants of plantation field hands faced, Washington commented:

[in the South we find it a pretty hard thing to make a good Christian of a hungry man. No matter how long the people have belonged to the church or how much they get happy and shout in church, the Negroes have after all a good deal of human nature and they are tempted to find something to eat before morning. This is human nature the world over and is not confined to the Negro. . . . In all this I simply mean to emphasize the fact that with all the mental and religious work, there will be no permanent progress unless we give attention to the material and industrial side.]\(^3\)

Washington's black middle-class critics feared that his self-deprecating remarks regarding blacks played into the hands of white supremacists. Because the members of the


black middle class have, since emancipation, fought for the removal of external discriminatory practices by attempting to prove themselves as capable as their white counterparts, Washington’s admissions were counter to their work. They were right in believing that white racists would use Washington’s words against him, but this understandable paranoia led them to deny the existence of the basic dilemma between the two socio-economic classes of black America. It was this fundamental problem that Washington faced: slavery bequeathed the black lower class with the social pathologies of dependency, low self-esteem, self-hatred, illegitimacy—all of which needed to be overcome before poor blacks could compete for equality with whites.

Washington’s critics reproached him for purportedly trading the social and legal equality of blacks in America for the simple promise of vocational gain. Here they erred. Instead, Washington perceived with unusual insight that poor blacks would face barriers to upward mobility so long as they carried the excess social baggage that they inherited from the slave plantation. Washington understood the scourge of slavery in ways few middle-class observers, black or white, ever did. He explained it thus:

"During slavery my people reasoned something like this: My body belongs to my master, and taking master’s chickens to feed master’s body is not stealing, and they are inclined to apply this same kind of logic to the mortgage system, and it is not hard for you to understand some of the results of that kind of reasoning. And then, too, it is not hard for you [to] understand something of the
moral condition of a people where mother, father, children, relative, strangers, of all sexes of the number of 4, 6, and even 10, eat cook, sleep, get sick and die in one room.  

The stark difference of Washington’s approach compared to that of the other civil rights leaders was illustrated in the stance he took regarding the segregated railroad companies. While W.E.B. DuBois and his newly developed National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) demanded unquestioned equality on railroad facilities, Washington urged blacks to keep themselves clean and neat while traveling so as to remove any grounds for criticism of their integration into these white facilities. 

In Washington’s view, whites would continue to view both lower- and middle-class blacks as inferior until the social problems associated with their slave past were addressed. Hugh Hawkins, author of Booker T. Washington and his Critics: The Problem of Negro Leadership, explained:

Washington was convinced that the Negro must prove himself, must demonstrate tangibly and concretely that he was worthy of the blessings of liberty. He must destroy the stereotype which years of slavery had fixed in the minds of even his friends and eliminate each of the negative slave characteristics which still clung to him.  

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6 Hawkins, Booker T. Washington and his Critics, p.51.
Washington's ideological successor, Marcus Garvey, took the matter of the impediments to black self-esteem a step further. Garvey preached that as long as the world perceived Africa as an enslaved continent, the descendants of that land, even in diaspora, would also be viewed as slaves. Garvey wrote:

"By redeeming our Motherland Africa from the hands of alien exploiters and founding there a government, a nation of our own, strong enough to lend protection to the members of our race scattered all over the world, and to compel the respect of nations an races of the earth... Until the Negro reaches this point of national independence, all he does as a race will count for naught, because the prejudice that will stand out against him even with his ballot in his hand, with his industrial progress to show, will be of such and overwhelming nature as to perpetuate mob violence and mob rule, from which he will suffer, and which he will not be able to stop with his industrial wealth and with his ballot."

Both Garvey and Washington believed that poverty and the oppressive nature of slavery had distorted the black man's sense of morality. "Hungry men," Garvey said in a collection of epigrams, "have no respect for law, authority or human life."

Garvey propelled Washington's argument forward by ridiculing the civil rights movement and its campaign for forced integration. He declared:

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8 Garvey, Philosophy, p.13.
Some Negro leaders have advanced the belief that in another few years the white people will make up their minds to assimilate their black populations; thereby sinking all racial prejudice in the welcoming of the black race into the social companionship of the white. . . . This belief is preposterous. I believe that white men should be white, yellow men should be yellow, and black men should be black in the great panorama of races, until each and every race by its own initiative lifts itself up to the common standard of humanity, as to compel the respect and appreciation of all, and so make it possible for each one to stretch out the hand of welcome without being able to be prejudiced against the other because of any inferior and unfortunate condition."

Garvey developed his concept of pan-Africanism by expounding direct links between black Americans and Africa, thus removing the history of slavery as the foundation of black history. Garvey's new ideology preached the united rule of Africa under the leadership of Africans, in the belief that it would empower the race both at home and abroad.

By viewing themselves as transplanted Africans (hence, African-Americans), blacks were able to develop a new sense of history, one that transcended the emasculating, denigrating heritage of slavery. His work rejected the white perception and black acceptance of slavery as the basis for racial distinction. While the white perception provided the intellectual underpinnings for black inferiority, he believed that the passive acceptance by blacks of this schema contributed to their problems. Whites

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*Garvey, Philosophy, p.25.*
ignored the sophisticated past of African civilizations such as Ghana, Mali, Songhay, and Great Zimbabwe, and they co-opted Egypt as a "white" culture. Blacks only knew of Africa through the stereotypes of primitivism and savagery fed them by whites.

Often depicted in the press wearing a military-style uniform adorned with metals, gold braids, and a large, plumed hat, Garvey's image was regal, disciplined -- that of a commander-in-chief -- all qualities revered by, but denied to ghetto blacks on account of their slave heritage. Although his costume may appear ridiculous, it allowed him the necessary distinguishing features to be viewed by lower-class blacks as above the problems of the ghetto. Later nationalists would borrow from this and develop a paramilitary style of dress and discipline.

Like Marcus Garvey's pan-Africanism, the Nation of Islam, brought to the fore in the 1960s by Elijah Muhammad, also offered a means by which "Negroes" could define themselves in terms that transcended their slave past. More commonly known as the "Black Muslims," this nationalist organization offered a creative re-interpretation of the Islamic religion intended to redress the issues of low self-esteem, which were prevalent in the black ghetto. As far back as the beginning of this century we find references to the propaganda campaign whites directed against blacks. For
example, in a letter to a colleague, Booker T. Washington wrote:

> [f]or centuries he [the Negro] has been taught by precept and example that everything great has its origin in the white man and that Negro is a synonym for dishonesty, degradation and incapacity. He has been taught that the devil is black, the devil’s angels are black, that sin is black, and that it is a sin to be black.\textsuperscript{10}

Despite the victories of the civil rights movement, these conceptions of blacks remained strong. By the late 1950s, the Nation of Islam was showing success in attacking the self-esteem problems that developed out of racism. Often viewed as a bastardization of orthodox Islam, the Black Muslims drew from the imagery of the traditional Islamic world to create its own narrative to rectify the problems of black self-perception. These nationalists challenged the intellectual racism still prevalent within American society by inventing their own racist ideology, one that would combat the prevalent myths about black inferiority.

Although clearly mythical, claims of the naturalness of black inferiority has been "proven" many times over by the West’s scientific community. These pseudo-scientific claims were further reinforced by the creation of elaborate myths, such as the biblical story of Ham’s Curse. Instead of allowing themselves to be viewed as the denigrated citizens depicted in the bogus scientific theories, the Nation of

Islam concocted its own version of the "creation," where blacks, not whites, become the natural, original citizens of the Earth. Turning the tables on the racist status quo, the Nation’s leader, Elijah Muhammad, relegated whites to the status of mutant creations of a mad scientist, claiming that:

[about sixty-six hundred years ago, when seventy percent of the people were satisfied, and thirty percent were dissatisfied, among the dissatisfied was born a "Mr. Yacub." He was born to create trouble, to break the peace, and to kill. His head was unusually large. When he was four years old, he began school. At the age of eighteen, Yacub had finished all of his nation’s colleges and universities. He was known as "the big-head scientist." Among man other things, he had learned how to breed races scientifically. . . .

From his studies, the big-head scientist knew that black men contained two germs, black and brown. He knew that the brown germ stayed dormant as, being the lighter of the two germs, it was the weaker. Mr. Yacub, to upset the law of nature, conceived the idea of employing what we today know as the recessive genes structure, to separate from each other the two germs, black and brown, and then grafting the brown germ to progressively lighter, weaker stages. The humans resulting, he knew, would be, as they became, lighter and weaker, progressively also more susceptible to wickedness and evil. And in this way finally he would achieve the intended bleached-out white race of devils."

However farcical the Black Muslim version of history may have appeared to whites, prominent black writer James Baldwin pointed out quite rightly that, "the theology of the Muslims is no more indigestible than the more familiar brand

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asserting that there is a curse on the [black] sons of Ham."^{12}

Like the militaristic imagery used by Marcus Garvey, the Nation of Islam leaned heavily on para-military allusions in the creation of the "Fruit of Islam," an internal police force. The need for its creation responded to the emasculating effects of slavery from which the black lower class had never completely recovered. In addition to the military training, the Nation offered classes to teach its members how to dress for a job interview, how to save and invest money, how to sell products, how to eat healthfully, and how to be on time.^{13} For middle-class blacks, who had been socialized into upward mobility, lessons on promptness and personal grooming were demeaning. But, they were just the prescription for many of the ills of the black underclass.

In attempting to redress the self-hatred and low self-esteem issues of the black lower class from a theological viewpoint, the Black Muslims became all too easily bogged down in the intensely paranoid scapegoating of Jews, so-

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^{12}James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*. (New York: Dell, 1969) p.41. In the Biblical story of Ham, God curses Ham because he failed to render aid to his father, Noah, when he found him drunk and naked. Some Biblical scholars have claimed that Africans and as such blacks are the descendants of Ham and are thus likewise cursed.

called "Uncle Toms," and the white establishment. To cite one example, Black Muslim spokesman, Louis Farrakhan, once declared before a University of Toledo audience that whites support black-on-black crime as a means of harvesting donated organs for white transplant patients. Farrakhan said: "When you’re killing each other, they can’t wait for you to die. You’ve become good for parts."\[^{14}\]

Contributing to the denunciatory campaign against Jews, Farrakhan’s national assistant, Khalid Abdul Muhammad, claimed in another instance: "Who are the slumlords in the black community? The so-called Jew . . . Who is it sucking our blood in the black community?"\[^{15}\]

The Black Muslim resentment of Jews emanated from several sources, all in some way related to the black slave experience. It was inevitable that the Nation of Islam would reject the 1960s coalition forged between the black, middle class-led civil rights movement and American Jews. Not only did the Black Muslims reject the civil rights agenda but the anti-Israel, Middle-Eastern flavoring of their newly adopted Islamic religion provided an opportunity to vent growing resentment of Jewish businesses operating in

\[^{14}\]Selwyn Crawford, "Farrakhan Irks Organ Donation Coordinators Experts Say Blacks Gain Most from Transplants." The Dallas Morning News. May 4, 1994, p.35A.

\[^{15}\]Judith Lynn Howard, "Farrakhan Supporters Say Nation not a Fringe Group; Message Appeals to Frustrated Blacks, Observers Say." The Dallas Morning News. April 1, 1994, p.1A.
the black ghetto. The experience of being poor and oppressed in America engendered insecurities and free-floating anxieties both from members of the lower classes and those leaders who sought to empower them. Hostile interchanges between Black Muslims and Jews often degenerated into a competition for victimization status juxtaposing the Holocaust against American slavery. Black Muslims believed that Jews who had suffered intense anti-Semitism in Europe as a persecuted "race" were perhaps too quick to adopt the more privileged racial classification of "white-ness" upon reaching American shores. These blacks accused Jews of attempting to escape anti-Semitism by, in some cases, absorbing the anti-black prejudices that went along with their upgrade in status from the "Jewish race" to the "white race". The nationalists vilified Jews with slander, half-truths, and a paranoia verging on the pathological. Black Muslim leaders claimed that Jews financially backed the slave trade and that a Jewish conspiracy kept inner-city blacks poor.

The Nation of Islam's claims about a Jewish conspiracy are patently false. The criticism of Jews for their role in the slave trade distorted the historical record. That is, chronicles of the time support the belief that Jews traded in slaves prior to the fifteenth century. However, their involvement dropped significantly after the sixteenth century, as they became the subjects of increased
persecution in Europe. Whatever involvement Jews may have had in the slave trade, the Black Muslim attacks lacked perspective. That Farrakhan failed, for instance, to consider Jewish involvement to that of the African coastal states of Ashanti, Dahomey, and Oyo, whose economic viability rested on their vast slave-raiding apparatus demonstrated the limit of his viewpoint. The slave trade certainly marked a low point in human history. But, setting aside the pivotal role played by European Gentiles in this gruesome endeavor, Jews surely could not be held to higher standards of morality than the African slave-raiding societies themselves, about which Farrakhan and his followers have been deathly silent.

If one is capable of seeing past the Nation of Islam's blatant anti-Semitism and the deep insecurities from which it originated, it becomes clear that the very essence of the black Muslim movement reflected the need to confront in particular the emasculating legacy of slavery. Its programs self-consciously adopted the highly patriarchal influences of the Middle East in an attempt to address the matriarchal culture of the black ghetto, characterized by female-headed households, and men who viewed their masculinity almost solely in terms of impregnating women. Exposing inner-city blacks to the patriarchal values of traditional Islam, it

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disempowered black women. The Nation admonished its followers:

[t]he women of the Nation are expected to be good, chaste and dutiful housewives; they accordingly dress in floor-length gowns and head-scarves for modesty and are trained in various domestic arts, including Mr. Muhammad's own increasingly crotchety revelations about nutrition.17

Not surprisingly, civil rights' and women's groups perceived such statements as a major step backward in the struggle for equality of the sexes; and, viewed in the cultural context of mainstream America, it was. Because of this opposition, combined with the low earning capacity of inner-city males, black men found it virtually impossible for them to assume traditional patriarchal roles in supporting their family responsibilities.

Malcolm X stood as a giant in the Black Muslim movement for many reasons. The remarkable power of his charismatic personality had provided the Nation with incredible growth in the early 1960s. Intellectual honesty eventually prompted him to break away from the mythology, anti-white racism, anti-Semitism, and propaganda of female subordination. He had begun to see these claims as a constraint on the capacity of the Black Muslims to effectively address the social problems of lower-class blacks. However, Malcolm X's unwillingness to continue

preaching Black Muslim orthodoxy served only to alienate him from the organization he had helped build, and then shorten his life. Officially breaking from the Nation of Islam in 1964, Malcolm X made a pilgrimage to the Muslim holy city of Mecca and returned to created a new nationalist organization with the intention of leaving behind the obvious faults of the Nation.

Drawing from the strong male imagery intrinsic to Muslim philosophy and from his experiences traveling through Africa and the Middle East, Malcolm X began attacking those elements of American society that had emasculated the American black male. In a speech delivered at Oxford University in 1964, Malcolm X described America by telling the English students:

... I live in a society whose social system is based upon the castration of the black man, whose political system is based on the castration of the black man, and whose economy is based upon the castration of the black man. ¹⁸

Obvious parallels can be seen between Malcolm X's claims that America has figuratively castrated black men and the writings of psychologists Price and Cobbs. Their work, Black Rage, identifies the contemporary effects of this emasculation. The authors draw analogies between the "breaking in" process for slaves and America's treatment of black men by American society today.

Linked with Malcolm X's later conversion to orthodox Islam was his acceptance and promotion of pan-Africanism. From his experience with the Black Muslims, he insisted that blacks in America suffered from a sort of brainwashing, which resulted from the racist interpretations of history formulated during slavery that left out the accomplishments of Africans. "History," Malcolm wrote in his Autobiography:

> [h]istory has been so "whitened" by the white man that even the black professors have know little more than the most ignorant black man about the talents and rich civilizations and cultures of the black man of millenniums ago.18

He believed, like Marcus Garvey before him, that the remedy, in part, could be found in pan-Africanism. With this foundation, Malcolm X created the Organization of African-American Unity (OAAU) both to help develop pan-Africanism in America and to develop the links between Africans and American blacks. Malcolm X centered the organization around the issues important to his lower-class black constituency. As such, the OAAU's agenda included voter registration; school boycotts; rent strikes; housing rehabilitation; programs for addicts, unwed mothers, and kids otherwise in trouble; a war on organized crime; and a black cultural revolution "to unbrainwash an entire people."20

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Despite his death at the hands of a group of assassins, Malcolm X's voice was not silenced. Inspired by his personal honesty, passion, and intelligence, a generation of young African-Americans accepted nationalism as the proper course for lower-class black empowerment.

Many of the later nationalists brought with them new solutions to the social and psychological problems of race. Stokely Carmichael asserted that white racism must be met with Black Power. The book, which he co-wrote with Charles Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, stated, "[the concept of Black Power] ... is a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community."\(^{21}\)

Carmichael was among the first to openly promote the label of "black" in describing the descendants of Africans brought to the United States as slaves. Previously the term "black" had been applied to African-Americans by Europeans in a pejorative sense, as it was synonymous with evil and death. Within the black community, the word had also come to have negative connotations, often used as an epithet to be flung at one's enemies, implying ugliness and stupidity. Carmichael believed that the "Black is Beautiful" slogan

would empower African-Americans by transforming a negative self-definition into a proud, empowering one.

The foundations of Carmichael's program lay in his promotion of black self-determination at home and abroad. Instead of demanding the integration of existing institutions and organizations, he called for the creation of all new ones that would allow blacks in America complete control of their own lives. Much like the Nation of Islam's adoption of Islam's rigid social hierarchy or Malcolm X's pan-Africanism, Carmichael sought to create a new black community that would provide the moral foundations for individual black accomplishment by addressing the core of fundamental self-esteem problems through the promotion of black self-determination.

The goal of self-determination and black self-identity -- Black Power -- is full participation in the decision-making processes affecting the lives of black people, and the recognition of the virtues in themselves as black people. ²²

Nationalists argued that the local police department stood as the one institution that was the most successful in denying black self-determination. They metaphorically compared these police departments to the patrollers, the whites employed by slave owners more than a century before to watch over the field hands. Plantation slaves feared and hated the patrollers (often referred to in the slave

²²Carmichael and Hamilton, Black Power, p.47.
narratives as "patterrollers") even more than they did their masters. One ex-slave, W.L. Bost, commented:

...the patterrollers they keep close watch on the poor niggers so they have no chance to do anything or go anywhere. They just like policemen, only worser, 'cause they never let the niggers go anywhere without a pass from his master... I remember how they kill one [stubborn] nigger whippin' him with the bullwhip.23

During the time of slavery, blacks in the South were unarmed and unorganized. In such a state, one armed patroller could easily match twenty slaves.24 After emancipation and the great migration, police officers replaced patrollers in the minds of urban blacks, exacerbating their feelings of being barricaded in the ghetto. The perceived inability to protect themselves forced inner-city blacks to endure the police departments' abuse of power.

Tapping into black resentment against police brutality, the Black Panther Party founders, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, galvanized black ghetto support for their movement by organizing patrols of armed black men to protect their Oakland, California, neighborhood from the excesses of the police. The concept of armed self-defense quickly caught on


24Williamson, New Perspectives, p.188.
and by 1970 wings of the Black Panther Party had sprung up many American cities. Their ideological underpinnings echoed the thinking of the black Martinique psychiatrist Franz Fanon, whose book, *Wretched of the Earth*, proclaimed that aggression targeted at the oppressor as a means of combatting the self-hatred and low self-esteem created by the environment of oppression was therapeutic. In the case of inner-city blacks, the neighborhood police officers symbolized their oppression.

The Black Panther Party also responded in dramatic fashion to the previously unaddressed masculinity problems of low-income black men. The Panthers turned the sometimes comical histrionics of militarism displayed by previous nationalist organizations into an open show of force that terrified white Americans, especially because it came so soon after the destructive riots of 1968. The nation was presented with armed black men, organized into a paramilitary force, dressed all in black, and capped with the signature Panther beret. While the Panther image

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25Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Black nationalists found great comfort in Fanon’s. They believed that his descriptions of anti-colonialist sentiment applied to blacks in America. The following passage illustrates the parallel: "While the settler or the policeman has the right the live-long day to strike the native, to insult him and to make him crawl to them, you will see the native reaching for his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive glance cast on him by another native; for the last resort of the native is to defend his personality vis-à-vis his brother. Tribal feuds only serve to perpetuate old grudges deep buried in the member." (p.43)
melodramatically responded to the low self-esteem problems of its constituency, many whites were at first puzzled by and then deeply resentful that this new image of the black man belied the traditional image of humility and deference.

Given the genealogical ties between poor inner-city blacks and the plantation field hands under slavery, it was not surprising to find Huey Newton openly espousing identification with the lowest echelon of slave society, stating, "the Black Panther Party are the field blacks..." But, rather than focusing on the psychological toll that slavery took on the field hands through constant physical and emotional abuse, he romanticized the field hands' spirit and resiliency. Drawing from this he promoted the belief that the ghetto was not a place from which one needed to escape, as the civil rights leaders claimed. Instead, he revelled in the spirit and soul of "the brother off the block".

In mobilizing grass-roots support for his movement, Newton capitalized on the tensions created by the differences between the civil rights movement and earlier nationalists, impelling them to focus on the gross differences between lower- and middle-class blacks. He declared:

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The black bourgeoisie seem to be acting in the role of the house Negro. They are pro-administration. They would like a few concessions made, but as far as the overall setup, they have a little more material goods, a little more advantage, a few more privileges than the black have-nots; the lower class.\(^\text{27}\)

The rhetoric of the Black Panther Party is filled with references to their descendancy from field slaves. Their claims do not prove a literal link. Rather, by suggesting that the black underclass shares a common culture, Newton and the other Panthers sought to create a sense of alliance among members of the black lower class. This alliance would separate them from whites as well as from the middle-class black bourgeoisie that was dominating the African-American community's agenda. In a 1968 interview, Newton was asked to tell the interviewer more about himself. His answer expressed the commonality he saw within the members of the black underclass:

I think that before the Black Panther Party that my life was very similar to that of most black people in the country. I'm from a lower class, working class family and I've suffered abuses of the power structure and I've responded as black people are responding now, so I see very little difference in my personality than any other black person living here in racist America.\(^\text{28}\)

From its inception, the Black Panther Party preoccupied itself with pumping up the black male ego. The party's masculine displays of force, which played into America’s

\(^{27}\)Foner, *Black Panther*, p.51.

\(^{28}\)Bracy, Meier, and Rudwick, *Black Nationalism in America*, p.536.
deepest fears of black male retaliation for centuries of oppression, angered the police departments and frightened white America. Not surprisingly, the 1970s found most of the party’s male leadership either dead, in exile, or in jail. The Panther’s pre-occupation with masculinity issues diminished as control of the organization fell into the hands of several key black women like Elaine Brown, Ericka Huggins, and Phyllis Jackson. Although they were also concerned with self-esteem issues, the women were far more willing and anxious to address pragmatic concerns such as the education of inner-city children, sickle-cell anemia testing, and free food programs. With the black masculinity issues in the background, this new female leadership moved the organization from gun-toting revolutionaries to welfare-promoting social democrats. Thus what appeared to be a massive shift in the party’s agenda, was simply the organization’s leadership refocusing its efforts to better affect the legacy of slavery on the black lower-class.

CHAPTER V

THE ROOTS OF DISCORD: SCIENTIFIC RACISM AND THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND BLACK NATIONALISM

Black nationalists targeted certain pathologies of inner-city blacks in their ideologies of black self-improvement. Ironically, white supremacists identified these same traits and used them to justify the conditions of the black lower class and continue their discriminatory practices. It should now be apparent that the pathologies infecting the inner cities were formed by slavery's especially brutalizing impact on plantation field hands and their descendants. These problems were not biologically determined. But, in attempting to overcome them, nationalists were forced to face the existing dogma of black inferiority that had developed concomitantly with slavery.

Science, or more appropriately pseudo-science posing as authentic scholarly research, has long been the most powerful weapon employed by those who insisted that the lower-class status of many blacks resulted from biological inferiority. The subjectivity of scientists beginning in the eighteenth century in their attempts to "prove" black inferiority mirrored the nation's need to justify slavery in a democratic society. Scientists set out to develop
theories of race to rationalize their societies' racial
discrimination. They based their endeavors specifically on
the behaviors of low self-esteem and self-hatred exhibited
by plantation field slaves. What were coping mechanisms for
surviving the harshness of their slave condition, were
exaggerated into the stereotypes of black inferiority, which
were applied to the entirety of the black community.

The stereotypes applied by scientists and laymen alike
to African-Americans were not even new. The terminology of
science's new ideology of race represented a creative
adaptation of the ethnic bigotry that the diverse European
nationalities in America had historically flung back and
forth at one another. Even the notion of "darkness" as it
related to complexion was a relative term. One prominent
lecturer of the time, Josiah Clark Nott, made a name for
himself touring the South with his talks on a science he
coined "niggerology," also asserted that the instability of
the French government was due to the turbulent "dark men" in
the nation. He railed:

[that the government of France would be wise]
simply to chop off the head of every demagogue who
was not a blond white-man. . . . Dark-skinned
races, history attests, are only fit for military
governments. It is the unique rule genial to
their physical nature: they are unhappy without
it, even now, at Paris.1

1Thomas F. Gossett (b. 1916), Race: The History of an
Idea in America. Dallas, Texas: Southern Methodist
Historically, deprecatory stereotypes were not merely launched at the diverse European ethnicities, they were also employed to rationalize class distinctions within the same nationality. In studying Russian serfs, Hannah S. Goldman observed that nineteenth-century Russian writers portrayed the white serfs as callous, shiftless, dishonest, lazy, hypocritical, and stupid.²

The British historian J.H. Plumb (b. 1911) noted that the class stereotypes of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England matched that of the American slave:

\[\text{[e]ven the Sambo mentality can be found in the deliberately stupid country yokel or in the cockney clown of later centuries. So, too, the belief, as with Negroes, that they were abandoned sexually, given to both promiscuity and over-indulgence.}^1\]

However, many of the slurs used against black slaves had been dredged from the cesspool of anti-Semitism prevalent in Europe during that period. According to Thomas F. Gossett in Race: The History of an Idea in America, Jews were frequently regarded as loathsome creatures who had bad physical, mental, and moral characteristics that they apparently inherited and passed on to their descendants.


They were also thought to be lecherous and possess a peculiar and unpleasant odor.4

By 1797, the Encyclopædia Britannica, reflecting the social attitudes of the times and drawing on presumably scientific data offered the following description of "Negroes":

[v]ices the most notorious seem to be the portion of this unhappy race: idleness, treachery, revenge, cruelty, impudence, stealing, lying, profanity, debauchery, nastiness, and intemperance, are said to have extinguished the principles of natural law, and to have silenced the reproofs of conscience. They are strangers to every sentiment of compassion, and are an awful example of the corruption of man when left to himself.5

Fundamental to the theoretical construct of black inferiority was the conviction articulated by John Bachman, a South Carolina minister, that "in intellectual power the African is an inferior variety of our species. His whole history affords evidence that he is incapable of self-government."6 Maintaining the precept of Africans' primitiveness was so critical to scientific racism that Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 precipitated a major intellectual crisis. Because Egyptians were a well-mixed population ranging in skin color from swarthy to black, French scholars had traditionally categorized the ancient

4Gossett, Race, p.12.
5David Brion Davis, Slavery and Human Progress, p.132.
6Gossett, Race, p.63.
Egyptians as "Negroid." However, according to Edith R. Sanders:

Napoleon’s scientists made the revolutionary discovery that the beginnings of Western civilization were earlier than the civilizations of the Romans and the Greeks. . . . Nevertheless, the Egyptian expedition made it impossible to hide that seeming paradox of a population of Negroids who were, once upon a time, originators of the oldest civilization of the West."

To avoid the otherwise necessary change in racial assumptions, a new theory evolved quite simply shifting the Egyptians from the Negroid to Caucasoid racial category. However, this was merely the beginning. Further archaeological discoveries uncovered the existence of states that once thrived in sub-Saharan areas of Africa inhabited by indisputably black-skinned, kinky-haired peoples physiognomically indistinguishable from the plantation field slaves laboring in America. New intellectual gymnastics were employed that simply dismissed the archetypically "Negroid" appearance of inhabitants of ancient West African empires such as Ghana, Mali and Songhay. European and American historians of the nineteenth century tagged these populations a southern branch of the Caucasian race. Such classifications can still occasionally be found in world history textbooks. Many scholars of the period were not

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motivated by malicious intent. Rather, their conclusions were tainted by intellectual biases that they were unaware they possessed.

After the institution of American slavery became legally codified, the transfer of ethnic stereotypes to black slaves accelerated. This process reflected the socio-psychological needs Americans of European descent felt to justify slavery after having established their new nation on democratic principles where presumably "all men are created equal." The only way to avoid the emotional discomfort of their hypocrisy was to convince themselves and the world that blacks were not quite human.

In the mid-nineteenth century Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), one of history's more prominent biologists, argued that God had created blacks and whites as separate species. Agassiz was not alone in believing that blacks and whites (Negroids and Caucasoids) had descended from two separate families. Many of his contemporaries supported a theory called polygeny, which was the belief that Negroids, Caucasoids, and Mongoloids represented the ancestors of three separate strains of hominoid. Polygeny established three different types of human classifications. Other theories would soon follow that would attempt to valuate each of the groups in relationship to one another.

For an excellent discussion of the role of polygeny in the development of the concept of race, see Gossett, Race, p.62-66.
Slavery's supporters took much comfort in the assertion that science did not consider blacks and whites the same sort of humans. Because biblical demands of charity and equality were not expected to extend across species boundaries, whites were under no moral obligation to question slavery's brutality against blacks. The argument also quieted many abolitionists. After all, science and scientists objectively reported the truth and all of Christianity's love and sentimentality could not overcome its impartiality.  

In the last half of the nineteenth century craniometry, the belief that skull size corresponds to intelligence, grew popular in the scientific community. Led by Paul Broca (1824-1880), the followers of this pseudo-science believed that by measuring the radius of the head or by determining the volume of the brain cavity one could surmise a person's intelligence. Craniometry attempted to scientifically establish a hierarchy of human superiority.

Samuel George Morton (1790-1865), working in the mid-nineteenth century, established a racial hierarchy based on seemingly empirical knowledge. He measured the cranial

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Stephen Jay Gould (b. 1941), *Ever Since Darwin: Reflections in Natural History.* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1977) p.243. Gould has developed as the predominate scholar in the study of race and science. His discussion of Agassiz's legitimization of racial prejudice is found in a short essay called "Racist Arguments and IQ." That essay has had considerable influence in the development of this chapter.
capacity of several hundred skulls and organized the results according to race. He found that modern Caucasians had, on average, the largest cranial capacities, followed by Malayans, then Negroids, then Native Americans. Today the ridiculous nature of both Broca's and Morton's work is clear, especially after it was disclosed after his death that Albert Einstein had an incredibly small brain.

In 1872 Ernst Heinrich Haeckel (1834-1919) introduced the theory of recapitulation, which later came to be known as the biogenetic law. It stated, in brief, "Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny." Haeckel believed that the development of the individual recounts the entire evolutionary history of the stock to which the individual belongs. For instance, for a time during its growth, the human fetus has gill slits, which Haeckel claimed was the stage in which human development represented it fish-like ancestors.

Such a theory had incredibly powerful effects when it was synthesized with the belief in a natural hierarchy of

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beings. In doing so, scientists were led to claim that a natural order of being could be established by showing the level of evolution that a race had achieved. D.G. Brinton (1837-1899) was the first to integrate race and recapitulation successfully by purportedly finding evidence of "white juvenile" characteristics among black adults. In 1890 he wrote:

[t]he adult who retains the more numerous fetal, [or] infantile ... traits is unquestionably inferior to him whose development has progressed beyond them. Measured by these criteria, the European or white race stands at the head of the list, the African or negro at its foot.13

By the 1920s Brinton's concept of black inferiority via the retention of juvenile characteristics had collapsed. It was replaced with L. Bolx's (1866-1930) contention that humans evolve by retaining the juvenile characteristics of their ancestors. Therefore, inferiority could be proven by collecting evidence to show that blacks did not retain enough of their juvenile characteristics. In 1926 Bolx wrote:

[i]n his fetal development the negro passes through a stage that has already become the final stage for the white man. If retardation continues in the negro, what is still a transitional stage may for this race also become a final one. It is possible for all other races to reach the zenith of development now occupied by the white race.14

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Despite overwhelming evidence of its fallacy, both concepts of recapitulation remained accepted theories well into the 1950s. As late as 1956 we find it in a text authored by E. Witschi (1890-1971) titled The Development of Vertebrates.

Today there remains no reasonable doubt about the fundamental fact that developing vertebrates pass through series of stages which in general recapitulate the evolutionary progression.\textsuperscript{15}

The science of race ignored the ideal of objectivity to justify even the most ridiculous claims. Stephen Jay Gould (b. 1941), a critic of science's role in perpetuating racism, asserted:

\texttt{From a rich body of data that could support almost any racial assertion, scientists selected facts that would yield their favored conclusion according to theories currently in vogue.}\textsuperscript{16}

In entering the twentieth century the IQ test became the newest tool in legitimizing a racial hierarchy. Beginning with World War I, the United States Army began testing soldiers. The Army psychologists concluded that the racial and ethnic variations in the test scores reflected the supposed intellectual inferiority of blacks and immigrants. Research by later psychologists found that the differentials in scores stemmed from the cultural biases

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} E. Witschi (1890-1971), The Development of Vertebrates. (Philadelphia: No publisher given, 1956) p. 6. Taken from the bibliography of Oppenheimer, "Recapitulation," p. 56, 59.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Gould, "Racism and Recapitulation," Ever Since Darwin, p.216.
\end{itemize}
within the tests rather than from innate differences in the intelligence of tested groups. The Army ended the testing only a few years after it was begun.\(^\text{17}\)

The validity of IQ testing was again raised in the middle of the twentieth century. Sir Cyril Burt (1883-1971), the official psychologist of the London County Council, was responsible for the administration and interpretation of mental tests in London's schools. Upon retiring from the position, Burt accepted an influential chair of psychology in Britain at University College in London. During his retirement years he published a number of works reporting on the IQ scores of identical twins raised apart. Scientists believed that if IQ could be proven an element of genetic heritability and not an environmental influence, then the question of racial superiority could be easily answered. Burt found that, despite being raised in very different environments, the difference in IQ scores between the separated twins was extremely minute. In fact, the variation was so small that the average correlation between pairs for IQ remained unchanged to the third decimal place, a statistical impossibility.\(^\text{18}\)

Other researchers began looking closely


at the studies, among them Leon J. Kamin (b. 1927), who was
the first and most vocal critic of Burt’s work.\textsuperscript{19} After
Burt’s death in 1971, investigations were undertaken that
discovered he had fabricated much of his data on the twins
and their IQ correlations. Later proof was found that Burt
had even gone so far as to invent his two collaborators,
Margaret Howard and J. Conway.\textsuperscript{20}

Gould is one of the IQ test’s best-known critics. His
landmark work on the subject, \textit{The Mismeasure of Man},
chronicled science’s influential and sometimes absurd
attempts to claim the existence of a natural hierarchy of
the races.\textsuperscript{21} Showing his apparent disdain for the measure
of intelligence, he wrote in another of his works,

{\textit{more recently, the IQ test has been (mis)used to
infer genetic differences in intelligence among
races (Arthur Jensen and William Shockley) and
classes (Richard Herrnstein) -- always, I must
note, to the benefit of the particular group to
which the author happens to belong.}}\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19}W.F. Bodmer (b. 1936) and L.L. Cavalli-Sforza (b.
1922), \textit{Genetics, Evolution, and Man.} (San Francisco: W.H.
of Man}, p.234-236.

\textsuperscript{20}Gould, \textit{The Mismeasure of Man}, pp. 235-236.

\textsuperscript{21}Gould, \textit{The Mismeasure of Man}. As is the case with
\textit{Ever Since Darwin}, Gould’s \textit{The Mismeasure of Man} had
considerable influence on the development of this chapter.
It is arguably the most complete work yet done of this
subject.

\textsuperscript{22}Gould, \textit{Ever Since Darwin}, p.238. It is interesting
to note that Gould singles out Richard Herrnstein as one of
those who employs intelligence testing to infer genetic
differences in intelligence among the races. Herrnstein,
almost two decades after Gould wrote this, co-authored \textit{The}
Gould correctly recognized the connections between each of the arguments that claim proof of a racial hierarchy. He also understood the danger presented by not comprehending the fact that each new claim was not an independent creation, but rather a new chapter in an age-old school of thought. In *Ever Since Darwin*, Gould wrote:

> [p]eople who are unaware of this historical pattern tend to accept each recurrence at face value: that is, they assume that each statement arises from the "data" actually presented, rather than from the social conditions that truly inspire it.\(^{23}\)

The latest chapter in this genre of scientific racism is seen in *The Bell Curve*, by Richard Herrnstein (1930-1994) and Charles Murray (b. 1943).\(^ {24}\) *The Bell Curve's* argument centers on the statistical "proof" that black IQ's are lower

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\(^{24}\)Herrnstein and Murray, *The Bell Curve*. It is interesting to note that a heated debate has gone on between Stephen Jay Gould and the duo of Herrnstein and Murray concerning the data collected by Sir Cyril Burt. Gould devotes an entire chapter of his book, *The Mismeasure of Man* to debunking Burt. He even went so far as to call Burt, "...a sick and tortured man." (p.236.) Murray and Herrnstein directly respond to Gould in *The Bell Curve*, stating that the University of Minnesota's twin study published in 1990 proves that Burt's work was not fraudulent. (p.12) Their attack on Gould centers on the popularity of his work. Later in the book they attempt to make his arguments appear pedestrian by stating, "[Gould's *Mismeasure of Man*] successfully cemented the perceived wisdom about IQ in the media." (p. 296)
than whites and consequently the number of blacks living under the poverty line is justifiable. The implications of such a contention are powerful. If blacks are naturally less intelligent, then the expensive welfare programs that are weighing down the American economy need to be revamped. In addition, they assert that the affirmative-actions programs supported by federal and state governments alike should be dropped, as the forced integration of the workforce will only result in its substandardization.

One of the principle flaws in The Bell Curve's argument lies in its authors' definition of race. They state:

[t]he rule we follow here is to classify people according to the way they classify themselves. The studies of "blacks" or "Latinos" or "Asians" who live in America generally denote people who say they are black, Latino, or Asian -- no more, no less.25

25Herrnstein and Murray, The Bell Curve, p. 271. It is interesting to note here that while the authors contend that they are referring to people based on ethnicity (what people label themselves) and not on race, they fail to capitalize the word black. If they were referring to someone as belonging to the race black, it would not be capitalized. But, since ethnic groups are to be capitalized (see The Chicago Manual of Style, 14th, Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1993, section 7.33-7.35), when someone is considered a member of the ethnic group, Black, the word should be capitalized. The same would also hold true for White, since they are claiming it is an ethnicity. While The Bell Curve capitalizes such widely-accepted ethnicities as Latino, Hispanic, Jewish, and Asian, it does not ever capitalize the words white or black. It is the opinion of this author that neither white nor black are acceptable as ethnic groups.
Herrnstein and Murray readily admit that they have difficulty defining the social groups they are trying to generalize:

[w]e frequently use the word ethnic rather than race, because race is such a difficult concept to employ in the American context. What does it mean to be "black" in America, in racial terms, when the word black (or African-American) can be used for people whose ancestry is more European than African?26

The difficulty faced by The Bell Curve's authors results from the fallacy of the scientific foundation for whiteness and blackness. While they bury their arguments' weaknesses under a mountain of statistical data, one simple, elusive fact impedes their claims--no matter how scientific, how factual, or how believable their assertions are, no amount of rhetoric can overcome the fact that the divisions of black and white are not scientifically-based.27 Both white and black, be they ethnic groups or races, are historical constructs. The book's authors, a psychologist and a political scientist fail to realize that their subject groups are not the rigidly defined categories that would be required in a legitimate scientific endeavor. As a historical construct, neither classification is encoded on

26Herrnstein and Murray, The Bell Curve, p. 271.

27The Bell Curve's authors invite readers who may be uncomfortable with the book's immense amount of statistical information to read only the chapter introductions (about 30 pages out of over 800). "You can get a good idea of what we have to say by reading just those introductory essays." (p.xix)
the genes of its members and no test could ever objectively arrange people to fit into one of them. Therefore, the results found by Murray and Herrnstein are not biologically-based, rather they are environmentally-based. Gould appropriately points out that race (or ethnicity as The Bell Curve calls it) is simply the result of geographic variability, not genetic differentiation.\textsuperscript{28}

Additionally, the book’s contention that the black community has undergone a natural filtering process reflects a total ignorance of the history of slavery. In examining racial categorization and welfare recipients the author’s contend:

\begin{quote}
[Adding cognitive ability explains away much of the disparity in welfare recipients among blacks, whites, and Latinos. . . . . The disparity between blacks and whites -- 30 percent of black women receiving welfare, compared to 12 percent for whites -- is still large, but only half as large as the difference not adjusted for IQ.\textsuperscript{29}]
\end{quote}

Murray and Herrnstein failed to realize that the category into which a slave was placed was not determined by his or her intelligence. Instead, it was the result of the labor needs of the plantation at the time of his or her purchase. Subsequent history has shown that the class structure of contemporary African-America was forged by the hierarchy of the slave system. Thus, when Herrnstein and

\footnote{\textsuperscript{28}Gould, "Why We Should Not Name Races," Ever Since Darwin, p.233.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{29}Herrnstein and Murray, The Bell Curve, pp.330-331.}
Murray identify cognitive ability as the principle determinant for class, their assertion ignores the role of history in creating the black lower class.\textsuperscript{30}

Even general claims that initially appeared beneficial to African-Americans served to dehumanize the race. Assertions of the black man's heightened sexual prowess, enlarged genitalia, physical fortitude, and increased bodily endurance and strength go back several centuries. Like the negative stereotypes, these seemingly beneficial claims are also age-old and were inherited from previously persecuted social groups like Jews and European ethnic minorities.

The above-average strength ascribed to black men was merely a reference to animal-like characteristics, employed by pseudo-scientists to claim that Africans were lower on the evolutionary ladder than Europeans. European culture had long claimed that heightened sexual prowess is the mark of the devil, low morality, or other moral deprivations.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{30}The authors claim to find evidence that links cognitive ability with class, but they readily admit, "With the facts in hand, we cannot distinguish between the role of the usual historical factors that people discuss and the possibility of ethnic differences in whatever other personal attributes besides IQ determine a person's ability to do well in the job market. (The Bell Curve, p. 328)

\textsuperscript{31}See Norman Cohn (1915), Europe’s Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt. (New York: Meridian Books, 1975). Joseph Klaits (1942), Servants of Satan: The Age of European Witch Hunts. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985). Additionally, both of these authors cite numerous examples in which the color black is linked with the concept of evil. For instance, often the devil appeared in the form of a black man or wore all black clothing.
Because of the social distortions created by the institution of slavery, claims of low morality and increased physical strength among lower-echelon black males became self-fulfilling. In developing the practice of slave-breeding, plantation owners themselves created the environment that they condemned slaves for living within. The physically larger slaves were forced to propagate with one another and the slave owners insured that male field hands felt only the most minimal bonds to the females they impregnated by denying the traditional male role of caring for their families. The result of centuries of claims by science that blacks are "naturally" inferior was the creation of an environment in which the emerging civil rights movement was forced to deny claims of the lasting effects of slavery. The nationalists' agenda to empower the black underclass came in direct conflict with this and, as such, the civil rights movement was compelled to deny the nationalists' demands.
Slavery created a rigid class hierarchy within the black community with domestics, artisans and freedman in the upper ranks and field hands at the bottom. The slaves’ initial placement within the hierarchy was capricious because the labor needs of the plantation owner determined their position. Intelligence was not a factor. Rather, the Africans off-loaded from slave ships not even speaking English, were evaluated by the potential buyers on the basis of their physical strength and, in examining their genitalia, their perceived reproductive abilities. Those slaves possessing significant musculature were purchased for plantation field work. The plantation field hands were the most physically and psychologically abused of all the slaves. Their struggle to survive created a culture filled with the pathologies of its members. The class hierarchy that developed in this setting soon calcified, and those slaves in the higher echelon of slave society, recognizing the constant degradations inherent in the life of a plantation field hand, worked to insure that their offspring would inherit their own privileged positions.

This hierarchy persisted into the post-civil war era. The former-field hands became sharecroppers because, as a
landless peasantry, they were unable to obtain land that would have provided them with self-sufficiency. The former house slaves, artisans, and freedmen were able to find urban employment. This social division within the African-American community transferred intact to the cities, particularly in the North and West with the massive migration of blacks from rural to urban areas during and after World War I.

Black nationalism developed among those blacks that were socialized into social stagnation by the culture created under the field slave system. Its goals addressed survival mechanisms incubated during slavery that developed into the pathologies of self-hatred, reflected in black-on-black violence, dependency, illegitimacy, and drug abuse.

Contemporary scholars like Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein, authors of *The Bell Curve*, insist that the problems of the inner city are a consequence of the biologically-based cognitive inferiority of African-Americans. Such scholarship fails to comprehend the historical nature of black inner-city poverty.

Rather than recognizing that nationalism defined the aspirations of a separate social class within the black community, American society customarily labeled nationalism a fringe group of the civil rights movement. Dramatic differences in agenda--i.e. the civil rights movement's push for integration in contrast to the nationalists' promotion
of separatism as a means of promoting black self-esteem--were casually dismissed or completely ignored.

The fault in mainstream America's approach to solving racial problems lies in a misunderstanding of the black community's dualistic nature and a misreading of black nationalism's motivations. This is, in some ways, a consequence of the civil rights movement's success in dictating the black community's political and social agenda. Considering the cultural, social, and economic disparities between middle-class blacks, who make up the civil rights movement and the generally underclass black nationalist constituency, it comes as no surprise that the civil rights movement's articulation of black needs prevailed. In losing the battle for control of the black community's agenda, the black underclass temporarily lost the ability to solve their problems.

This thesis makes it clear that America has two distinct racial problems. The first relates to the descendants of the upper echelons of the slave society, who represent the bulk of the civil rights movement's constituency. They demand integrationist approaches to the problems of racial discrimination. Civil rights' goals, despite their claims to represent the black community in its entirety, are geared toward those middle-class blacks whose upwardly-mobile values allow them to take advantage of such programs. The second problem is suffered by the black-
underclass members of the culture of poverty that was created under slavery. They may benefit indirectly from civil rights’ initiatives, however as this thesis has shown, their problems go much deeper.

By recognizing and appreciating the differential nature of the slave experience and the subsequent creation of two very distinct social groups within the black community, this thesis has made it apparent that civil rights solutions do not necessarily provide the cure for the ails of the inner city. Nationalism clearly identifies the source of inner-city problems as stemming from the self-hatred inculcated in lower-class blacks by the brutality of slavery. But, in this reinterpretation of black nationalism, it should also be evident that its leaders are themselves too impaired by the lingering effects of slavery on their own lives to negotiate the underclass’s escape from the ghetto.
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