

SPACE RACE: AFRICAN AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS RESPOND  
TO *SPUTNIK* AND *APOLLO 11*

Mark A. Thompson, B.A.

Thesis Prepared for the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

December 2007

APPROVED:

Jill Dupont, Major Professor  
Harland Hagler, Committee Member  
J. Todd Moye, Committee Member  
Adrian Lewis, Chair of the Department of  
History  
Sandra L. Terrell, Dean of the Robert B.  
Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

Thompson, Mark A. Space Race: African American Newspapers Respond to *Sputnik* and *Apollo 11*. Master of Arts (History), December 2007, 75 pp., bibliography, 54 titles.

Using African American newspapers, this study examines the consensual opinion of articles and editorials regarding two events associated with the space race. One event is the Soviet launch of *Sputnik* on October 4, 1957. The second is the *Apollo 11* moon landing on July 20, 1969. *Space Race* investigates how two scientific accomplishments achieved during the Cold War and the civil rights movement stimulated debate within the newspapers, and that ultimately centered around two questions: why the Soviets were successful in launching a satellite before the US, and what benefits could come from landing on the moon. Anti-intellectualism, inferior public schools, and a lack of commitment on the part of the US government are arguments offered for analysis by black writers in the two years studied.

This topic involves the social conditions of African Americans living within the United States during an era when major civil rights objectives were achieved. Also included are considerations of how living in a “space age” contributed to thoughts about civil rights, as African Americans were now living during a period in which science fiction was becoming reality. In addition, this thesis examines how two scientific accomplishments achieved during this time affected ideas about education, science, and living conditions in the U.S. that were debated by black writers and editors, and subsequently circulated for readers to ponder and debate. This paper argues that black newspapers viewed *Sputnik* as constituting evidence for an inferior US public school system, contrasted with the Soviet system. Due to segregation between the races and

anti-intellectual antecedents in America, black newspapers believed that African Americans were an “untapped resource” that could aid in the Cold War if their brains were utilized. The Apollo moon landing was greeted with enthusiasm because of the universal wonder at landing on the moon itself and the prowess demonstrated by the collective commitment and organization necessary to achieve such an objective by decades end. However, consistently accompanying this adulation is disappointment that domestic problems were not given the same type of funding or national commitment.

Copyright 2007

by

Mark A. Thompson

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to offer personal thanks and acknowledgments to many people. In no particular order, I would like to thank Laura Stern for offering me encouragement during my first graduate course, when she just as easily could have pointed out numerous flaws in my methodological approach. Also, for her continuing support in whatever I was undertaking despite the fact that I left medieval history behind. Guy Chet deserves praise for his ability both as a penetrating critic and as a supportive professor despite having to painfully observe my inexperience and rookie approach to history throughout my early time at North Texas. As professor of intellectual history at the University of North Texas, Donald Pickens introduced me to a world hitherto unknown to my senses. His recommendations of essential readings in American intellectual history opened up new vistas that allowed wider thinking for this project. Richard Lowe offered valuable experience with his understanding of publishing, professionalism, and the engaging peer-review method that constitutes history as a career. His seminar over the Civil War and Reconstruction was time spent most productively.

My committee members exhibited innumerable patience despite the unpleasantness of overseeing a thesis defense during the cherished summer months. Harland Hagler and J. Todd Moye served as secondary advisors on my committee and treated me with professionalism by spending valuable time critiquing my paper. My graduate advisor and mentor, Professor Jill Dupont, especially deserves credit for forcing me to keep staying with the recurrent themes about racism, science, and technology that consistently reappeared in our conversations. Even when I was repeating myself, she had confidence that something was simmering in my mind and

would eventually boil into something that is (hopefully) productive to the history profession and to life in general. Her intellectual stimulation was necessary in order to make me rethink and reread specific issues that inevitably come up with such a project. Her friendship and sound advice will always be appreciated and retained as a part of my personality. In addition, she suggested the title for this work, which hit the bulls-eye with its succinct, and simple—yet brilliant evocation of what this paper addresses specifically.

Finally, I need to acknowledge how important my family has been to me through these couple of years. While always urging me to “finish my degree,” they have simultaneously offered support and love that enabled me to achieve this next step in my career. It has been tough, I know, for them to “lose” their son while he was immersed in reading and research. However, my two sisters, Melody and Melissa, and my mom and dad cared enough about me to raise me to be kind, considerate, and passionate about whatever I do. So, I conclude with a slight variation of the “Are we there yet?” theme, by stating: It’s done!

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
Chapters	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. EGGHEADS FOR HIRE: AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS AS THE GREAT "UNTAPPED RESOURCE" .....	16
The Education Gap .....	20
The Entangling of Domestic and International Events.....	28
3. ONE SMALL STEP? <i>APOLLO 11</i> AND BLACK THOUGHT .....	45
Billions for What? .....	50
A Lover's Quarrel? The "Fear of Commitment" .....	57
4. CONCLUSION AND EPILOGUE .....	68
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	72

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* episode, “Far Beyond the Stars,” begins with Captain Benjamin Sisko, a black captain in command of a space station, falling into a trance. Instantly, he is transported back to 1950s America into an urban, metropolitan area. Captain Sisko finds himself as a struggling writer trying financially to stay afloat in the big city. One job consists of writing fiction for a journal that, by the editor’s choice, disallows minorities and women from participating in the annual group photograph. Due to the era Sisko finds himself transported into, his literary contributions to the journal must remain published without revealing his background lest the readers come to the realization that a black writer is responsible for writing competent fiction.

During one collaborative brain-storming exercise in which the small staff of writers choose their next assignment, one of the illustrators presents a drawing of Deep Space Nine. “I’ll take it,” says Sisko upon immediately casting eyes upon it. Sisko then proceeds to write the script for his next story using the sketch of Deep Space Nine as a springboard. All of this is happening while Benjamin Sisko—the actual Deep Space Nine captain—remains in the opening trance-like state he experienced at the beginning of the program; a “story within a story.” The rest of the episode narrates a tragic story of rejection and disappointment because he is unable to publish his blossoming science fiction story about a black captain commanding a space station in some far off imaginary world. Sisko is eventually fired after he persists in demanding that his vivid, imaginative tale receive publication.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> “Far Beyond the Stars,” episode of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, Season 6, DVD (Paramount, 2003; Originally aired Feb. 2, 1998).



After viewing this episode, I asked myself “Was there any science fiction written by African Americans who lived during the Cold War and who experienced “life under a cloud,” as twentieth-century historian Allan M. Winkler described American’s collective anxiety in a post-nuclear world?<sup>2</sup> I pondered whether the prophetic utterances of popular science-fiction originators like Mary Shelley, Edgar Allen Poe, Jules Verne, and H. G. Wells concerning humanity’s future of relying on science would appear similar to an African American writer living in the United States under Jim Crow restraints after the second World War. Was there a unique perspective that a black writer would present due to their differing circumstances from other ethnic groups living in the United States during the post-World War II era?

Two scholarly and frequently cited works describing the origins of science fiction as an established literary genre frequently begin with *Frankenstein* (1818) penned by Mary Shelley, the noted daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin. In *Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision*, Robert Scholes and Eric S. Rabkin assert that Shelley’s *Frankenstein* was “the first work of fiction that [had] all of the characteristics of the science fiction genre...”<sup>3</sup> Brian Aldiss began his massive *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction* with a chapter called, “On the Origin of Species: Mary

---

<sup>2</sup> Allan M. Winkler, *Life Under a Cloud: American Anxiety About the Atom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> Robert Scholes and Eric S. Rabkin, *Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 6. Scholes and Rabkin acknowledge that broader starting points in any literary genre could realistically take scholars back to the beginning of the first written record of ancient civilizations. They point out that Plato’s *The Republic*, the satires of Lucian (second century B.C.E.), the *Utopia* of Thomas More, and Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* are “sometimes included in genealogies of science fiction. . .” (6). However, Scholes and Rabkin concur that “science fiction is a distinctly modern form of literature . . . science fiction could begin to exist as a literary form only when a different future became conceivable by a human being (7).” It is not possible here to detail the various arguments for what constitutes a sci-fi work; numerous books and monographs have devoted considerable space.

Shelley.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly taking a broad and working definition of science fiction as “the history of humanity’s changing attitudes toward space and time,” I aimed to find out African American’s changing attitudes.

In a provocative article called “Black to the Future,” Mark Dery interviewed three cultural, African American writers. The origin of the article was premised on the question posed from Dery, “Why do so few African Americans write science fiction, a genre whose close encounters with the Other—the stranger in a strange land—would seem uniquely suited to the concerns of African-American novelists?” Dery continued:

This is especially perplexing in light of the fact that African Americans, in a very real sense, are the descendants of alien abductees; they inhabit a sci-fi nightmare in which unseen but no less impassable force fields of intolerance frustrate their movements; official histories undo what has been done; and technology is too often brought to bear on black bodies. . . . Moreover, the sublegitimate status of science fiction as a pulp genre in Western literature mirrors the subaltern position to which blacks have been relegated throughout American history.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Brian W. Aldiss with David Wingrove, *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction* (New York: Atheneum, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> Mark Dery, “Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delaney, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose,” the *South Atlantic Quarterly* 92:4 (Fall, 1993): 735-78, 735-36. With regards to the previous sentence, Delaney argues that he personally prefers this “sublegitimate” status accorded to sci-fi: “One of the most forceful and distinguishing aspects of science fiction is that it’s marginal. *It’s always at its most honest and most effective when it operates—and claims to be operating—from the margins.* Whenever—sometimes just through pure enthusiasm for its topic—it claims to take center stage, I find it usually betrays itself in some way (italics added, 745).” Dery also injects the word “Afro-futurism” to describe “Speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture. . . .” Yet, Dery asks, “Can a community whose past has been deliberately rubbed out, and whose energies have subsequently been consumed by the search for legible traces of its history, imagine possible futures? Furthermore, isn’t the unreal estate of the future already owned by the technocrats, futurologists, streamliners, and set designers—white to a man—who have engineered our collective fantasies. . . ? But African American voices have other stories to tell about culture, technology, and things to come. If there is an Afrofuturism, it must be sought in unlikely places, constellated form far-flung points.” Dery then lists various movies, music albums (Jimi Hendrix’s *Electric Ladyland*), computer games, and an “intergalactic big-band jazz” to argue his point. Dery implies that in the context of Western science-fiction, certain images, symbols, and predictions concerning the future have established certain fundamental roots of sci-fi thought. The concern about industrialization, the rise of science, etc. are historical-specific themes that suffuse the writers’ works, who happened to be of a European and “white” background. Therefore, any addition to that foundation will always build somewhat on those ideas that began from individuals of those eras, such as Shelley, Verne, Poe, Burroughs, and Wells in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, Dery also sees unique predictions of the future from African Americans coming into existence today, but in different mediums (comics, movies, records,

Since, however, this is a historical thesis and not a project for an American Studies department, I wanted to create a historically-viable method of presenting these inquiries while adhering to sources appropriate for such a venture. As such, I excluded any detailed examination based strictly upon science fiction novels and sought a different mode of operating.

What historical documents could I look at that directly related to the topic of science during the Cold War? I thought of how, as a kid, I was enthralled by the *Star Wars* films of George Lucas. I was also continually intrigued by two events that historians frequently catalog as bookends to a “space race” with the Soviet Union from 1957 through 1969. One was the launching of a small metallic satellite that was hoisted on top of a rocket October 4, 1957, and once in orbit around the earth began broadcasting “beeps” that earth-dwellers could listen to by picking up the frequency through an amateur radio. The second event was the *Apollo 11* mission in which a rocket broke through the earth’s gravitational pull and landed a separated lunar module containing two American men on the moon July 20, 1969.

I decided to investigate what African American periodicals said concerning these events. Concerning the moon landing, an editorial in *Ebony* magazine had an interesting opinion concerning the event one month after the completed mission:

Mankind today has proved that it can do just about whatever it wants to do. It can bring equality to all men in “one giant leap” if it really wants to. It can solve the problem of world hunger. It can eliminate war. But mankind won’t do any of these

---

etc.). Yet it still seems an open question whether themes predicated on the black experience in America have not contributed to these foundational elements of science fiction—particularly, during America’s “Golden Age” of sci-fi in the 1930s and 1940s. If as some literary theorists believe, writers draw on contemporary events and ideas when constructing their literature, then African Americans must be included in discussing the progression of science fiction and fantasy literature. I am also thinking here of Edmund S. Morgan’s connection of “freedom” for early white colonists with the reality of slavery in their midst. *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1975).

things, and so perhaps we should forget about trying to contact intelligent beings in outer space. After all, what can we say to them?<sup>6</sup>

I searched through more journals and magazines like *Crisis*, and *Negro Digest*, but found only a handful—literally—of pages commenting on both of these events. I then proceeded to examine major African American-owned and operated newspapers, because they were printed daily and more accessible to the public. I discovered that copious amounts of ink were spilled commenting on the implications of these two newsworthy items for the United States in general, and specifically for African Americans who lived within the United States during a time when inequalities in housing, public spaces, and voting practices were prominent throughout the country. For these reasons, I have limited my primary sources to African American-operated newspapers in the years 1957 and 1969.

It seemed worthwhile as a historian to find out how the space race impacted the twentieth century civil rights movement during its modern phase, which most historians agree began with the *Brown v. Board* decision in 1954 and concluded either with Martin Luther King's assassination or the inauguration of Richard Nixon as president in 1969. The space race similarly corresponds to these dates, beginning with *Sputnik's* launch in 1957 to the July moon landing of 1969. What impact did the various discussions and interests of these space-related subjects have on the topics selected and debated throughout the African American-operated newspapers? Did visions of traveling to outer space, visiting other planets, and finding new life forms intrigue black writers?

In addition to these general questions, this study is motivated by the following specific questions: What kind of consensus—if any—did the African American press

---

<sup>6</sup> "Giant Leap Forward?" *Ebony*, September 1969, 58.

reveal about the *Sputnik* launching by the Soviet Union in the months shortly after its launch October 4, 1957, and more than a decade later when the *Apollo 11* mission achieved success July 20, 1969, by landing humans on the earth's natural satellite? Was there concern about the use of funds marked by Congress for space and orbital research while "earth-bound" problems remained unresolved, such as housing discrimination, voting deprivation, and segregation in public spaces—including the continued segregation even after the *Brown v. Board* decision in 1954? Just weeks after their return home, during a NASA-arranged news conference addressing over 200 representatives from national and international media outlets, Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins were asked by one reporter to give their thoughts on space exploration as "a relative priority compared with the present needs of the domestic society and the world community at large." Armstrong responded:

Well, of course we all recognize that the world is continually faced with a large number of varying kinds of problems, and that it's our view that all those problems have to be faced simultaneously. It's not possible to neglect any of those areas, and we certainly don't feel that's it's our place to neglect space exploration.<sup>7</sup>

There are two historical fields that I am primarily working with that overlap: the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement. Both feature an abundance of numerous publications that have illuminated their histories.<sup>8</sup> Recently, the two have become

---

<sup>7</sup> "The First Lunar Landing: As Told by the Astronauts Armstrong, Aldrin, and Collins in a Post-flight Press Conference," Produced by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Office of Public Affairs, 1969.

<sup>8</sup> For the most recent survey of civil rights historiography, see Charles W. Eagles, "Toward New Histories of the Civil Rights Era," *The Journal of Southern History* 66, no. 4 (Nov. 2000): 815-48. Also see Adam Fairclough, "State of the Art: Historians and the Civil Rights Movement," *The Journal of American Studies* 24, no. 3 (1990): 387-98; Steven F. Lawson and Charles Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968*, With a Foreword and Introduction by James T. Patterson. Debating Twentieth-Century America Series (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998). For a survey of recent Cold War approaches to history, see Melvyn P. Leffler, "The Cold War: What Do 'We Now Know?'" *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (April 1999): 501-24; Older but helpful is Edward Crapol, "Some Reflections on the Historiography of the Cold War," *The History Teacher* 20, no. 2 (Feb., 1987): 251-62. The primary

intertwined to elucidate how international events affected domestic issues in the United States and vice versa. The works of Thomas Borstelmann, Mary Dudziak, Azza Salama Layton, and Brenda Gayle Plummer illustrate this trend.<sup>9</sup> In their indexes, the words NASA, *Sputnik*, space race, moon, *Apollo*, and other space-related terms are not found, although Dudziak has one page devoted to *Sputnik* and its influence, noting that *Sputnik*'s successful launch October 4, 1957, coincided with racial struggles in Arkansas concerning the admittance of nine African American students into racially-segregated Central High School in Little Rock. Dudziak argued that “the impact of the Little Rock crisis on world opinion was widely understood”:

US editorial writers and political figures regularly noted the negative impact Little Rock was thought to have on the nation's standing in the Cold War. The Soviet Union's extensive use of Little Rock in anti-American propaganda—often simply republishing facts disseminated by U. S. news sources—reinforced the concern that Little Rock redounded to the benefit of America's opponents in the battle for the hearts and minds of peoples around the world.<sup>10</sup>

“*Sputnik*, following Little Rock,” explains Dudziak, “was a second blow to U. S. prestige.” As a result, “When the initial shock of *Sputnik* had subsided, the task of

---

field I am working in involves the cultural and intellectual aspects of the Cold War. See Paul Boyer, *By the Dawn's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*, with a New Preface by the Author (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995; New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); Margot A. Henriksen, *Dr. Strangelove's America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. with a New Introduction by the Author (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1989; 1985); and Stephen J. Whifield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. The American Moment series, ed. Stanley I. Kutler (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996; 1991).

<sup>9</sup> See Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001); Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Azza Salama Layton, *International Politics and Civil Rights Policies in the United States, 1941-1960* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U. S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); John David Skrentny, “The Effect of the Cold War on African-American Civil Rights: America and the World Audience, 1945-1968,” *Theory and Society* 27, no. 2 (April, 1998): 237-285, for example.

<sup>10</sup> Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 121.

rehabilitating American's image remained."<sup>11</sup> While Dudziak inspected U. S. State Department communiqués with foreign consuls and ambassadors serving overseas, she also utilized newspaper accounts in those other nations to provide a plausible argument that domestic issues impacted the beliefs of so-called "third-world" countries in how they perceived the United States during the Cold War.

Did the United States' failure at launching their competing satellite before *Sputnik* and the decade-later landing of the two American astronauts in July 1969 resonate as important topics of discussion for transatlantic nations? While that study still remains absent, this paper examines African American perspectives right here in the United States. There have not been monographs published documenting what the black newspaper generalizations were about *Sputnik* or the moon landing. Indeed, some black groups living in the United States thought of themselves as "third-world" citizens, though physical inhabitants of a major power.

A book that has had a noticeable impact on how I approach this topic is Paul Boyer's *By the Bomb's Early Light* (1985). Boyer examined the cultural impact that the atomic bomb had on American thought during the late 1940s and early 1950s. His introduction, written in the early 1980s, encapsulated my approach on this topic when he made the following observation that is pertinent to my project:

If a scholar a thousand years from now had no evidence about what had happened in the United States between 1945 and 1985 except the books produced by the cultural and intellectual historians of that era, he or she would hardly guess that such a thing as nuclear weapons had existed. We have studies of the evolution of nuclear strategy and some superb explorations of the political and diplomatic ramifications of the nuclear arms race, but few assessments of the bomb's effects on American culture and consciousness. We have somehow

---

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

managed to avert our attention from the pervasive impact of the bomb on this dimension of our collective experience.<sup>12</sup>

If the words “space race” are substituted for “nuclear weapons,” and if Boyer’s original emphasis on the general history of the United States from 1945 through 1985 is narrowed to concentrate on African American thought during the modern phase of the civil rights movement in 1957 (the launching of *Sputnik*) and later in 1969 (the moon landing), the focus of this paper will be revealed. While Boyer argued that the atomic bomb had a “pervasive impact” on the country’s “collective experience,” I simply ask the question: How pervasive—if at all—was the space race on African Americans’ collective experiences concerning civil rights in the years 1957 and 1969?<sup>13</sup>

Another question quoted from Boyer’s work illustrates my intent, as he talked about his childhood experience growing up during the Cold War: “So fully does the nuclear reality pervade my consciousness that it is hard to imagine what existence would have been like without it. It is as though the Bomb has become one of those categories of Being, like Space and Time, that, according to Kant, are built into the very structure of our minds, giving shape and meaning to all our perceptions.” Boyer then concludes by asking, “Am I alone in this feeling?” While Boyer’s answer was “I think not,” I do not assert such a position in this topic from the start.<sup>14</sup> I seek to discover if these two events were significant for African Americans during the post-*Brown* civil rights movement.

---

<sup>12</sup> Boyer, *By the Bomb’s Early Light*, xvii.

<sup>13</sup> I am aware of the difficulties involved in examining selected publications and decreeing that these findings represent a collective “mind” of a group. My intention is not to argue that newspaper columnists and editorialists represented the totality of an ethnic group. Rather, since this particular aspect of the Cold War and civil rights movement has not been documented, I intend to insert a useful springboard that might—when supplemented with other sources—serve other historians in linking the space race with other historical fields and disciplines.

<sup>14</sup> Boyer, *By the Bomb’s Early Light*, xx.



Undoubtedly, if one asks the question, “Why use these happenings and dates as my bookends,” my response is certainly not arbitrary. Both the successful orbit of the *Sputnik* satellite by the Soviet Union and the world-televised *Apollo 11* landing were not just seen as pivotal events via a nationalistic lens. As this study will show, there was recognition that something transcendent had taken place. In addition, another objection is that the history of documenting a group’s “thought” is dubious at best. I agree that one cannot extrapolate an individual’s personal likes, dislikes, motivations, and complexity of thought by conducting broad surveys. However, I do feel that this work will open up more specific and narrower issues for other historians, sociologists, and philosophers to delve into. As Peter Novick confessed in his work on the historical quest for objectivity, “I have inevitably raised more questions than I have answered. This is as it should be in a work that attempts to open rather than close a subject: to stimulate others to inquire into areas on which I have touched lightly, and to reconsider and revise my conclusions”<sup>15</sup>

Of course, the *Sputnik* launch and moon landing are two different events. The former was launched by the Soviet Union utilizing rocket technology that was earlier put into practice by Nazi Germany, while the latter interplanetary trek was achieved by the United States after a decade of research and tests overseen by the National Aeronautics Space Administration, which was created in 1958.<sup>16</sup> Yet, it is their significance as objects launched into the higher atmospheres of earth and beyond that

---

<sup>15</sup> Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession*, Ideas in Context, eds. Richard Rorty, J. B. Schneewind, Quentin Skinner, and Wolf Lepenies (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1, 17.

<sup>16</sup> Pulitzer-prize recipient Walter A. McDougall analyzes the institutional and political origins and development of the space race in his massive . . . *the Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age* (New York: Basic Books, 1985). Also see his “Technocracy and Statecraft in the Space Age—Toward a History of Saltation,” *The American Historical Review* 87, no. 4 (Oct., 1982): 1010-40.

intrigued me. What kind of influence did these events have with regards to imaginative possibilities during a time when a movement for the enlargement of civil rights that began after Reconstruction proceeded to increase?

Another theme found in historical monographs that overlap into the Cold War and Civil Rights fields centers on the black reaction to international events. Robin D. G. Kelley, a contemporary historian who has contributed immensely to twentieth-century studies, stated that in viewing group movements that advocate for the fulfillment of goals such as civil rights, there is a tendency for evaluating them “around whether or not they ‘succeeded’ in realizing their visions rather than on the merits or power of the visions themselves.”<sup>17</sup> It is these visions that I was also interested in locating during a time of space exploration that was triggered in 1957 by *Sputnik*’s launch, and not how effective these arguments were in their persuasive force.

While some historians treat the concern exhibited by blacks for international issues as emerging in the twentieth century, Kelley further points out how “for over two centuries, black writers and activists defined themselves as part of a larger international black community—an ‘African Diaspora.’” In that same article, collected as part of a special issue in 1999 for *The Journal of American History*, Kelley found himself “intrigued by recent discussions of how ‘globalization’ has pushed United States scholars to think beyond the nation-state. . . .” When Kelley started work on “exploring transnational perspectives coming out of African American history,” he was surprised by

---

<sup>17</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), ix.

the “extent to which black scholars . . . in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century paid attention to international contexts.”<sup>18</sup>

Brenda Gayle Plummer also has contributed to this discussion by arguing that the movement of Pan-Africanism articulated at the turn of the century by persons such as W. E. B. Dubois and Marcus Garvey marked a change in how African Americans viewed the entirety of their demands. Plummer says, “Pan-Africanism expanded Afro-American consciousness by rescaling questions of racial justice to global dimensions. It thus created the space necessary to holistically assess U. S. behavior in the international arena.” Plummer further states how work by historians and social scientists over black Americans in an international context “remains heavily concentrated on Africa and is often founded on scantily documented suppositions about Afro-American political behavior.” One related supposition, noted by Plummer and relevant to my study, is that “black commitments have always been utopian and rooted in eccentric modes of thought arising from poverty and oppression.”<sup>19</sup> As I intend to show, concern and interest in the space race originated not in some pathological handicap, but a general universal wonder and curiosity fueled by the scientific and empirical traditions of twentieth-century scientific pursuits. In addition, there was concern that the Soviet Union would develop the scientific technology that could enable them to achieve strategic victories in the Cold War. Plummer concludes by writing,

---

<sup>18</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, “‘But a Local Phase of a World Problem’: Black History’s Global Vision, 1883-1950,” *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3, The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History: A Special Issue (December 1999): 1045-1077, 1047.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 12, 1.

“Much complexity and diversity have thus characterized Afro-American thought on world affairs.”<sup>20</sup>

In selecting which black newspapers to research, I wanted to include significant newspapers by blacks in terms of distribution, content, and region. The most recent study of the African American press during the civil rights movement is *The Race Beat*, authored by award-winning journalists Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff. In it, the authors claim that “At no other time in U. S. History were the news media...more influential than they were in the 1950s and 1960s. . . .”<sup>21</sup> Roberts and Klibanoff state that four specific African American newspapers, the Baltimore *Afro-American*, *Chicago Defender*, *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, and *The Pittsburgh Courier* were founded and initially operated by four men who “pushed the outer limits of the debate [on black inequalities] and defined the journalistic tone for the more mainstream press.” It is these newspapers that “survived without conforming to the white press’s notions about separating objective news from subjective editorials.”<sup>22</sup>

These four were included along with other newspapers throughout the United States that were mainly urban and capable of reaching the African American communities which nurtured the newspapers in the first place. I do not intend to supplement this study to point out whether everything reported by the black newspapers was accurate. My interest is not whether this or that date was correct, such as when the black writers were reporting a new booster testing by the NASA crew. I wanted to discover what was included in the collective newspapers when reporting on the two

---

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>21</sup> Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 7.

<sup>22</sup> Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat*, 15.

space race events selected here. Thomas Sancton, a white New Orleans writer who eventually became managing editor for *The New Republic*, stated in 1943 that in these black-operated newspapers, one “will not find dullness very often.” However, at times “these columnists are inaccurate with fact and careless in their attitudes. But the white reader must be careful about what he allows to anger him, for there is a vast amount of raw, solid fact which they handle well within the bounds of accuracy. . . .”<sup>23</sup>

Plummer stated that after World War I, a growing urban market for black readership of newspapers and journals allowed a more honest reflection of black opinion to shine through: “Subscriptions and advertising replaced political subsidies as sources of revenue with two results: Afro-American newspapers could editorialize freely and could reflect more closely the views of readers.”<sup>24</sup> The black press does not help us strictly in viewing “black” issues, but national and international issues as well. Todd Vogel, who edited a collection of writings about the black press in the United States, brought this point out in saying that “the writings in the black press help us understand not just that community but the nation as a whole.” However, he acknowledges that while the comments expressed in the newspapers reveal an “approximate trail of dissent,” they do not fully display “how African Americans used these newspapers to debate in reading societies, conventions, and barber shops.”<sup>25</sup> It is also my hope that

---

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Sancton, “The Negro Press,” *The New Republic*, April 26 1943, quoted in Roberts, 17.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 25

<sup>25</sup> Todd Vogel, “Introduction,” *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Todd Vogel (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 4, 8.

analyzing African American newspapers during the space race will shed light on how the entire United States viewed these two events.

CHAPTER 2  
EGGHEADS FOR HIRE: AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS  
AS THE GREAT “UNTAPPED RESOURCE”

In October 1957 a small, metallic sphere that weighed roughly 185 pounds was lifted on a Soviet rocket and subsequently orbited the earth following an elliptical route that took approximately ninety-five minutes. Most historical accounts represent this event as highly significant. One recent writer called it the “shock of the century.” Paul Dickson, the author and an investigative journalist, offered this recollection:

For many of us born before the 1950s, the fascination and astonishment engendered by the launch of Sputnik remain fresh in our minds. Like many of my generation, I can recall exactly where I was when I heard about Sputnik’s launch. I was eighteen years old, a college freshman at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. A friend stopped me in the middle of the campus to say that he had heard about it on the radio. Instinctively, we both looked up. Within hours I would actually hear its signal rebroadcast on network radio...Not only could you hear Sputnik, but, depending on where you were, it was possible to see it with the naked eye on certain days...While standing in the middle of the college football field a week or so after the launch, I first saw the satellite shooting across a dark evening sky . . . I was electrified, delirious, as I witnessed the beginning of the Space Age.<sup>26</sup>

In the words of Edward Teller, known sometimes derisively by critics as the “father of the H-bomb,” the ability of the Soviet Union to launch the satellite successfully before the United States signified that the United States had lost “a battle more important and greater than Pearl Harbor.”<sup>27</sup> Civil rights historian Taylor Branch asserted, with some exaggeration, that “Overnight, nearly everything about America was deemed second-rate—its morals, its math teachers, even its road system.”<sup>28</sup> Notable twentieth-century historian James T. Patterson believed that “Nothing did more

---

<sup>26</sup> Paul Dickson, *Sputnik: The Shock of the Century* (New York: Berkley Books, 2001), 2, 3.

<sup>27</sup> Robert A. Divine, *The Sputnik Challenge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 1.

<sup>28</sup> Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 224.

during these years to excite such emotions than the successful launching [of the satellite by the Soviet Union...]"<sup>29</sup> Daniel Boorstin, the well-known popularizer of Americans as pragmatists, stated in his last of three volumes on "The Americans" that the launching of *Sputnik* was greeted with alarm: "Never before had so small and so harmless an object created such consternation."<sup>30</sup> Dickson built on Boorstin's space-time connection by pointing out that "for all its simplicity, small size, and inability to do more than orbit the Earth and transmit meaningless radio blips, the impact of Sputnik on the United States and the world was enormous and unprecedented."<sup>31</sup> Historian Allen Matusow said that *Sputnik* "struck a devastating blow at America's self-regard and sense of security. If the Russians had *Sputnik*, a host of commentators concluded, they probably had intercontinental ballistic missiles. If they beat us into space, they must be forging ahead in science, technology, education." After some Americans criticized their apparent secondary status behind the Soviet Union in scientific research, according to Matusow, "social criticism" became "fashionable again."<sup>32</sup> Was there social criticism offered by African Americans about the events of the space race?

Some individuals, however, interpreted the circling satellite in different ways. Indeed, Divine argued that not all commentators shared a pervading sense of common danger. Many scientists were more alarmed by the public overreaction to Sputnik than by the Soviet feat itself."<sup>33</sup> Walter A. McDougall, in his mammoth political and

---

<sup>29</sup> James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States: 1945-1974*. The Oxford History of the United States, ed. C. Vann Woodward (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 418.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel Boorstin, *The Americans: The Democratic Experience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 591.

<sup>31</sup> Dickson, *Sputnik*, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s*, The New American Nation Series, eds. Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1984), 9.

<sup>33</sup> Divine, *The Sputnik Crisis*, xvii.



technological history of the space race, maintained that “When the first artificial satellite...circled the earth in 1957, on-call philosophers of the press and politics contradicted each other, and sometimes themselves, on what the Space Age symbolized.” While to some people, *Sputnik* represented “the newest and most spectacular evidence of mankind's irrepressible, questing nature,” others believed that the “promise of space technology and its imponderable social, political and psychological effects was to *change* man’s nature. . . .”<sup>34</sup>

In examining what African American newspapers wrote and printed is not to assert that a person or collective group were either not impressed or wonderfully enraptured with a certain event of the space race. Likewise, a sentiment shared in a particular issue does not necessarily mean that this feeling of indifference or praise is constant. To hear and see the report on the news or radio about the launching of *Sputnik* might have caused intense admiration and glee for some people. However, on later reflection, like the editors and writers for the selected African American newspapers, they might decide, after the initial euphoria wears off, that these events pale in comparison with an issue broader in scope or importance. For example, on the domestic front, the need for better housing or more funds for stricter enforcement of civil rights legislation—such as the education-based judicial decision of the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which found racial segregation in the classrooms unconstitutional.

There is one overarching theme that characterized African American press thought when the discussion of *Sputnik* was included in their writings: an “education gap” existed in the United States. This idea was consistently voiced and the writers

---

<sup>34</sup> McDougall, . . . *The Heavens and the Earth*, 4.

provided two major reasons why this perceived inferiority was actualized. First, the public school systems were not sufficiently emphasizing math and science in order to train future engineers and scientists. Second, there existed a “specter of anti-intellectualism”—as Richard Hofstadter discussed in his *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*:

The launching of the *Sputnik* by the Soviets precipitated one of those periodic surges of self-conscious national reappraisal to which the American public is prone. The *Sputnik* was more than a shock to American national vanity: it brought an immense amount of attention to bear on the consequences of anti-intellectualism in the school system and in American life at large. Suddenly the national distaste for intellect appeared to be not just a disgrace but a hazard to survival.<sup>35</sup>

Hofstadter says that this newfound concern with education in the math and science departments “did not immediately cause the vigilante mind to disappear, nor did it disperse anti-intellectualism as a force in American life.” According to Hofstadter, the concern caused by Russia launching an artificial satellite first helped to produce in the public mind a passion for “producing more Sputniks, not for developing more intellect.” But, the environment in the United States did eventually change, such that by 1958 the “specter of anti-intellectualism” being seen as a “dangerous and national failing,” became interesting for people to discuss.<sup>36</sup> While this paper does not address the argument by Hofstadter that beyond 1958 the “specter of anti-intellectualism” was gradually withering away, black columnists did find unfortunate the belief that “eggheads” were not wanted for hire.

---

<sup>35</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 4-5.

<sup>36</sup> Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism*, 5.

## The Education Gap

The African American newspapers collectively voiced the opinion that to neglect black students as an untapped resource of intellectual and scientific brainpower would be a foreign policy disaster for the U. S. during the Cold War. In addition, this was a chance to actively promote a mental characteristic—abstract thought and theoretical science—that was viewed by some white citizens as “unnatural” to certain ethnic groups—specifically of African origin.<sup>37</sup> Yet, whatever the specific details formulated by educators and congressional policy makers, a renewed interest in critiquing schools and educational curriculum was indeed one effect induced by *Sputnik*. Richard Pells sums up the impact of *Sputnik* on the nation’s educational priorities:

Russia’s dramatic launching of two unmanned space satellites touched off a feverish controversy in America about whether the nation’s students were retarded in science and engineering. As a result, education became a government priority. With the passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1958, federal funds for student loans and scholarships, supplemented by allocations from state and local agencies as well as from private foundations, enormously expanded the country’s financial investment in its schools.<sup>38</sup>

James Patterson, in his *Grand Expectations*, explains how Eisenhower, although essentially unworried about what *Sputnik* meant to the Cold War, “did bend a little. In 1958 he supported establishment of the National Aeronautics and Space Agency. . . . He also recommended federal aid to promote American know how in science and

---

<sup>37</sup> For racial thinking about African Americans by European Americans, see George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Wesleyan University Press, 1987; New York: Harper Row, 1971). Although Fredrickson examines the nineteenth century, his work sheds light on the origins of when “race-thinking emerged for the first time as a central current in Western thought.” Earlier accounts of racism in the colonial period are viewed by Fredrickson in his study as “protoracist” because they do not demonstrate, in addition to the acknowledged racial differences, an ideology of racism as “a rationalized pseudoscientific theory positing the innate and permanent inferiority of nonwhites” (xvii). Physical differences were noted but what earlier colonists perceived as mental and spiritual attributes were not viewed in immutable terms. For an interesting reversal of roles, see Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

foreign languages.” This resulted in the approval by Congress in 1958 of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). According to Patterson, “This was a historical break with twentieth-century practice, which had assigned educational spending primarily to states and localities.”<sup>39</sup>

There has been only one monograph strictly devoted to the passage of the NDEA. Barbara Clowse examined the legislative process that resulted in the NDEA and argued that *Sputnik's* successful orbit launched an “educational crisis, fueled by persistent criticism” in America that allowed for a reconsideration of federal intervention into spheres of education. Clowse also pointed out that this critical examination of education standards did not arise *sui generis* on October 4, 1957. During the postwar years, but before *Sputnik*, “various critics and reformers had produced a substantial body of opinion about shortcomings of American education, especially the baneful effects of Progressive Education.” Then, when *Sputnik* happened, “this criticism seemed confirmed.”<sup>40</sup> According to historian Ronald Lora, even back in 1949, the “National Education Association argued that Communism and furious preparations for war were the major realities around which educational policy must revolve. . . .” While *Sputnik* helped accelerate this discussion, “by the early 1950s defense needs had coalesced with the need to restructure American education, a process that took more than a decade to consolidate.”<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, 201.

<sup>39</sup> Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 420-21.

<sup>40</sup> Barbara Barksdale Clowse, *Brainpower for the Cold War: The Sputnik Crisis and National Defense Education Act of 1958*, Contributions to the Study of Education, no. 3 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), 28, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Ronald Lora, review of John L. Rudolph, *Scientists in the Classroom: The Cold War Reconstruction of American Science Education* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), *The Journal of American History* 90, no. 3 (Dec. 2003): 1081-82.

There was discontent exhibited by African American columnists and editorialists, but also anger and sorrow over missed opportunities; the great “untapped resource” of young, black intellectuals and future scientists left to dry out on the porch, unused and unwanted by the nation in its present battle against Communism due to a neglect of math and science in the classrooms. In an article entitled “School News” printed one month after *Sputnik* in the *New York Amsterdam News*, writer Sara Slack reported that “The most significant benefit from the struggle for outer space supremacy has been to the Negro and Puerto Rican parents who have seen ‘feet-dragging’ New York school authorities implement an action program within 20 days.” Of particular importance to this apparent rejuvenation of officials was the announcement that “science will be taught in elementary schools for the first time in New York’s history, beginning September 1958.”

This theme of benefits that were accumulated thanks to efficient organization and the ability to achieve concrete objectives, only once all heads came together in unity, was pleasantly surprising to the columnist. In referring to the *Brown v. Board* decision mandating desegregation of public schools, Slack gushed sarcastic praise for the New York school board: “Mighty fast moving for a system of school heads who can’t carry out a U. S. Supreme Court order within the 1,278 days since May 17, 1954.”<sup>42</sup> In the same paper, New York Councilman Earl Brown lamented that “Although the Russian Communists were kicking people around” and “putting them into slave camps,” they were simultaneously “pouring brains and wrath into science, particularly, and education generally.” By contrast, the democratic-professing United States was offering itself as a paragon of paradox:

Their [Soviets] political system enabled them to toss a guy into jail or stand him up and shoot him without benefit of justice, if they wanted to. Unlike ours, they could do what they pleased and, so far, get away it. In the meantime, what were we doing? Low-rating the Russians and kicking colored folk around. We were damning the Reds because they were not democratic and practicing simultaneously, insofar as the U. S. Negro is concerned, what we condemned them for doing. So finally we had our Little Rock. The Russians politely reminded us that Little Rock was a blot on our escutcheon. We smirked and asked, in effect, so what? And then came sputnik.<sup>43</sup>

The impact of this metallic shining ball, according to Councilman Earl Brown, “exploded many myths.” While forcing Americans to believe in the “hard fact” that the Soviet Union has “more know-how about science than we, at least in regard to satellites,” the launching of *Sputnik* also “caused our ego to vanish like an exploding star.” An article printed by the *Chicago Daily Defender* similarly bemoaned that because of the successful launching of the world’s first artificial earth satellite, “Americans have been ‘up in the air’ over an apparent lag in this country’s development of scientists.” Showing a concern for the United States institutions in general and for schools specifically, the article pointed out that back in 1954, “Fisk University launched a ‘down to earth’ workshop for high school science teachers. The *Defender* continued by describing the significance and background of this program:

This workshop paved the way for Fisk’s being chosen by the national Science Foundation as one of 15 leading colleges and universities in the nation to operate foundation-financed in service training programs for high school teachers of science. The Fisk program is called “Basic Concepts in Chemistry” and meets for three hours every Saturday. Teachers come from cities and towns as far away as 130 miles for the course which can be credited toward a graduate degree.<sup>44</sup>

The bulk of the article was devoted to the director of the program, Dr. Samuel P. Massie. The emphasis in the schools at Fisk, according to Massie, was in “mathematics

---

<sup>42</sup> *New York Amsterdam News*, November 23, 1957, p.28.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>44</sup> *Chicago Daily Defender*, November 30, 1957, p.21.

as well as chemistry.” This is because “you cannot teach science without being a mathematician.” Weighing in on the *Sputnik*-induced debate on why there existed in the U. S. a perceived shortage of teachers and inadequate devotion to science and math, Massy placed the blame mostly on “the shoulders of scientists themselves. By making the subjects of science, which are really commonplace, appear mystical and mysterious, we may have created a monster in the eyes of young people and frightened them away from these subjects.”<sup>45</sup>

A group of students at Morehouse College heard Benjamin F. Scott of the Nuclear-Chicago Corporation in November 1957. According to the *Daily Defender*, Scott addressed students with multiple lectures under the titles, “Science As A Profession” and “Opportunities in the Field of Science.” It was reported that Scott, who earned a B. S. degree from Morehouse in 1942 and a M. S. from the University of Chicago, stressed “the importance of broad cultural background for men going into the sciences.” It was also reported that Scott lectured about the role of the scientist in the near future; how it was conceivable that the United States “may be run by a scientist or a clique of scientists.” Should that scenario arise, echoing C. Wright Mills’ critique of the “power elite,” “we would be better off if such men were versed in the humanities as well as the sciences.”<sup>46</sup> A column by Charles Wartman thought it wise to recognize that “if the race for the development of scientists and other trained people is to get off the ground, we must once and for all be done with the wearisome business of trying to limit the educational opportunities of American citizens on the basis of color.”<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *CHI*, November 23, 1957.

<sup>47</sup> *Michigan Chronicle*, October 19, 1957, section 1, p.6.

A reoccurring column was titled “Science Made Easy: The Fundamentals of Rockets and Space Science.” The author, David M. Warren offered an explanation of how rockets operated, the mysteries of outer space, and other items. There was no mention of the Cold War or competition amongst the two superpowers’ educational strategies; all the information was strictly about science. For example, in January 1958 Warren opened a column by explaining that the “three-stage rocket used by Russian scientists to blast Sputnik I into orbit around the earth was actually three separate rockets joined together.” After the first two rockets complete their task of lifting the satellite into the necessary altitude to achieve orbit around the earth, stage three’s rocket begins to burn: “Stage three’s engine produces a more effective thrust, since there is not atmospheric resistance to overcome in outer space.” After achieving a maximum speed of 18,000 miles per hour, “the satellite is gently pushed out of the nose of stage three and both continue in their orbit around the earth.” Included in these articles were definitions of rocket and space terms, such as “solar system,” (“The sun and all the heavenly bodies that revolve around it”) and “photon propulsion” (“Propelling a rockets through space by the thrust of light beams”).<sup>48</sup> The inclusion of these scientific sidebars aimed at younger students reinforced the image of a United States that is dangerously lagging behind in schools. Perhaps students could receive the neglected information that their public schools have not been providing from their daily newspaper.

Reprinted in the *Minneapolis Spokesman* was a speech before the Anti-Defamation League’s Executive Committee, by Benjamin R. Epstein of the B’nai B’rith. Epstein stated that “America stands to lose out in the scientific race with Russia unless it erases racial and religious discrimination from the campuses of its colleges and

---

<sup>48</sup> *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 1, 1958, magazine supplement, p.4.



universities.” This is important to America because the “national welfare requires that every qualified youth, regardless of race or creed . . . must be given the opportunity to become part of our trained scientific manpower pool.”<sup>49</sup>

In the same issue were excerpts from NAACP Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins, speaking before the Commonwealth Club of California, November 1. Wilkins reiterated what others writers have said; namely, that “this is a new and dangerous world.” Describing the Cold War as “a test of survival for the West,” Wilkins believed that the *Sputnik* satellite literally and figuratively “casts a shadow not lightly to be brushed aside.” What, then was the answer to remove the United States from the ominous shadow of Soviet expansion and scientific domination? Wilkins believed in the great “untapped resource” of African Americans segregated by Jim Crow Laws. “Can we meet,” he asked, “the challenge of Moscow in the sciences and in war with a country divided upon race and color? Can we afford to deny to any boy or girl the maximum of education, that education which may mean the difference between democratic life and totalitarian death?” The tone of Wilkins’ speech and selection of words does not strike historians who work in this Cold War period as surprising. Yet, he seemed eager to throw black youths’ talents and skills into the effort for the “campaign for survival.”<sup>50</sup> It is difficult to ascertain whether this was mere rhetoric and cheerleading in order to deflect unwanted attention from the federal government or a sincere belief that education served as a weapon during the Cold War.

---

<sup>49</sup> Associated Negro Press (ANP), “Erase College Bias or Risk Losing Science Race, Rabbi Urges,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, November 8, 1957, 6.

<sup>50</sup> Roy Wilkins, “Will Fight to Enjoy What’s Justly Ours,” reprinted in *Baltimore Afro-American*, November 23, 1957, 4.

One editorial linked the theme of American education specifically to its Cold War counterpart in the schools of Russia, noting the apparent superiority of the Soviet school systems by observing how the United States “is in a great dither because more Russian than American school children are studying science.” Emphasizing how the “basis of science is mathematics,” the writer concluded that “we’ll never catch up unless mathematics is put back in the curricula as a required subject.”<sup>51</sup> A staff writer for the *Afro-American* referred to a “relatively small random sample poll of high school pupils in the Baltimore City area” to summarize that

Science was at a low ebb on the education chart for two main reasons. Most pupil reaction to questions concerning careers in science centered around the ‘complexity’ of the field and ‘discrimination’ in private industry to colored persons with scientific backgrounds.” Many youngsters felt that chemistry, physics, mathematics and necessary co-related subjects to science were ‘dull and boring.’ Other children felt that even if they pursued careers in science, it wouldn’t be profitable due to what some of them termed ‘the race barrier.’<sup>52</sup>

An article’s headline in the *Baltimore Afro-American* ran: “‘Mississippiitis’” Blamed for U. S. Lag in Science.” Referring to recent accusations by NAACP Field Secretary Medgar Evers that Mississippi and other southern states were to blame for America’s “present-day scientific dilemma,” the article quoted Evers as saying, “There isn’t a single state supported school in Mississippi where a colored person is permitted to take engineering or study in the advance sciences.” As a result of this inequity, “many potential colored scientists are never allowed to develop their capabilities.”<sup>53</sup>

In that same issue, an editorial was entitled, “Old Thinking Now Outmoded.” The key question posed by the staff was “How did we manage to fritter away our acknowledged

---

<sup>51</sup> Editorial, “Bring Back Math,” *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Baker E. Morton, “Writer’s Poll Shows Low Pupil Interest in Science,” *BAA*, November 30, 1957, 3.

superiority in the scientific and mechanical fields?” Pointing out sadly that “While we were forming mobs to drive an Autherine Lucy from an Alabama campus, the Russians were compelling ALL children to attend the best possible schools.” If there was one key advantage that the Soviet Union understood, it was that “they were clever enough to recognize that skin color has absolutely nothing to do with innate ability and that no one segment of the human family has a monopoly on brains.” So, while it is “old thinking” that was chiefly responsible for the United States “lagging behind,” only “new thinking” can allow the U. S. to “catch up and reclaim our long-held lead.”<sup>54</sup> Of course, this attack on Mississippi is not new. In a document written chiefly by Dubois constructed to be presented at the United Nations, he conveyed these sentiments by stating that “It is not Russia that threatens the U. S. so much as Mississippi.”<sup>55</sup> Here, it must be pointed out that students of all ethnic groupings might have felt similarly. This study is not able to perform a comparative historical work, but other work can be done. This question was reportedly put to “some 200 pupils during the past month” and that “All of the pupils expressed a fondness of mathematics and problem solving.”<sup>56</sup> This cannot reveal anything, but the posing of the question and the inclusion of this into the general *Sputnik* atmosphere is interesting.

### The Entangling of Domestic and International Events

Dudziak’s argument that domestic racial problems reported by foreign newspapers became a concern to the federal government of the United States is

---

<sup>53</sup> ““Mississippiitis” Blamed for U. S. Lag in Science, *BAA*, November 16, 1957, national edition, p.1.

<sup>54</sup> Editorial, “Old Thinking Now Outmoded,” *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>55</sup> *An Appeal to the World: A Statement on the Denial of Human Rights to Minorities in the Case of Citizens of Negro Descent in the United States and an Appeal to the United Nation for Redress* (New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1947), quoted in Borstelmann, 77.

reinforced through this work. African Americans reporting on *Sputnik* were aware that discrimination against blacks at home, risked deflating the image of the U. S. abroad. In an international column entitled “World on View,” writer Chas. H. Loeb pointed out how President Eisenhower “did a bit of covering up in spite of his announced intention of ‘laying all of the facts before you.’” Loeb was referring to the decision not to allow the satellite program to be conducted solely by the Army. It has been argued that Eisenhower’s decision to allow competition within the separate military branches for the development of the rocket technology necessary to send objects into outer space prevented the United States from launching a satellite before the Soviet Union. Loeb instructed his readers how Eisenhower “alleged that there might have been inter-service rivalry responsible for the lag and waste in our missiles program.” The “covering up” that Loeb indicated earlier, was his opinion that “there was—and to a great extent still is—this fierce inter-service rivalry. He [Eisenhower] also failed to point out some of the inter-citizen rivalry that is costing us dearly in prestige in the world.” What kind of inter-citizen rivalry did Loeb hope to illuminate his readers with? “We speak of the bitter hassle between segregationists and integrationists in this country, and of the whole passel of legal and illegal tricks being fomented by Southern officials to deprive Negro citizens of their basic rights.” Continuing the theme of not letting blacks contribute to the cultural and intellectual Cold War, Loeb rhetorically asked, “Who can say that it was not the institution of the Jim-Crow school that has deprived this nation of the black scientist who might have solved the technological kinks delaying our satellite launching?”<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Cleveland Call and Post*, November 16, 1957, section D, p.2.

Another newsworthy event happened one month before *Sputnik* was launched. At Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, nine African American youths confronted a hostile, local crowd that initially prevented them from attending. All of this transpired under the watchful eye of Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus. One notion offered by African Americans was that the United States' apparent lag behind Soviet ingenuity was directly attributed to racial segregation and Jim Crow laws throughout the country. While race-determined exclusions occurred in multiple locations of the United States, focus by the black literature in the latter part of 1957 was predominantly fixated on the South. This may be attributed to the recent news events in Little Rock and the new Civil Rights bill signed by Eisenhower in 1957. It may also have to do with the perception that education was denied only to southern blacks. For example, a writer in the *Chicago Daily Defender* pointed out how the refusal of admittance of Amos Leroy Willis to the College of William and Mary in Virginia, is "a practice in the South which is partly responsible for Soviet Russia being ahead of the United States in the launching of missiles and the man made moon and other satellites in recent months."<sup>58</sup> However, as shown in Davison Douglas's *Jim Crow Moves North*, segregation was also practiced in the North.<sup>59</sup> The citing of the Little Rock scenario that had unfolded one month ago, where nine African American students were denied entry at Central High School in Arkansas, appeared often in black newspapers. The timing of the event allowed African Americans to denounce the handling of the situation by Gov. Faubus for smearing America's image to "neutral" countries that might swing to either of the great powers

---

<sup>58</sup> *CHI*, November 9, 1957, p.2.

<sup>59</sup> Davison Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North: the Battle over Northern School Segregation, 1865-1954*, Cambridge Historical Studies in American Law and Society (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

during the Cold War. Due to the image some held in America of Russian scientists staying busy with the perfection of rocketry and satellites, the antics of “Faibus and all like him look pitiful in their maniacal boasting and acting.” Like anti-abortion activists of contemporary times, who sometimes defend their position by arguing that no one knows whether the next aborted child might have been the next scientist or doctor to find a cure for cancer, the *Defender* writer posed the question: “For even Faibus knows that maybe the brain of one of nine colored kids he kicked around has the answer to the universe in it. Who can tell?”<sup>60</sup>

Dr. Frank S. Horne delivered a message to the Second Congregational Church in Holyoke, Massachusetts, Oct. 21. Horne was Executive Director of the NYC Commission on Intergroup Relations. His speech sounded an urgent call to recognize that during that last two weeks “America has been confronted with two of the most important challenges in its history—one, a little moon, the other Little Rock.” Expressing the hope that a persistent effort would be directed at exploring outer space, Horne continued that “it is difficult to reach for the stars while our feet are still bogged in the primordial mud.” The impact of *Sputnik* was sounding much like what the other newspapers were saying: “Little Sputnik . . . raced into our lives at unimaginable speed to challenge the scientific and educational supremacy of our nation. In its wake came a hurried introspection by our molders of public opinion.” What was the solution offered by Horne? “The locus of Sputnik’s orbit lies in the favored position the Soviets have given to scientific training.” What followed was an indictment of what sounds similarly to the critiques of mass culture adopted by the Frankfurt School that originated in

---

<sup>60</sup> *CHI*, November 9, 1957, p. 2.

Germany. Horne's eloquent diatribe against a spoiled society is worth reprinting in its extended form:

They [Russians] have drafted brains and enticed them with high rewards for service to the highest ideals of their state. In free America, we cannot draft brains in the service of ideals we feel to be more human. We do, however, know how to stimulate through incentive. But a nation which pays homage to the idols of glamour and wealth and material accomplishment; a nation which devotes more attention to academy awards than Nobel prizes; a nation in which an educator or a pure scientist must apologize for being an "egghead," can expect its share of delinquency in its search to find the ultimate truths.<sup>61</sup>

Horne looked at the domestic front to explain the larger internationalist picture. "If we are to single out the answer to 'Why' perhaps the best example lies in Little Rock." In looking at Little Rock, Horne said that the actions of Arkansas governor Orval Faubus to restrict 9 black children from entering Little Rock High School, revealed how certain regions of the United States were getting their priorities mixed up. Yet, it was not just the South. Believing that Faubus "summoned every force at his command" in order to "defy morality," Horne stated that this "inability to face the issue squarely is symptomatic of a national ill, North and South. It is an illness that feeds upon a superiority complex. An illness that forces us to cling to the warped credos of racial and ethnic supereminence as the certain means to security." This allowed potential "recruits" (future black scientists) for the Cold War to remain stricken by the illness "that was generated by the "separate—but equal" thesis."<sup>62</sup>

The readers of African American newspapers also expressed their opinions, asserting their voices through the "letters to the editor" sections. In one titled, "U. S. Lost Leadership," a reader whose ethnic background remained unknown said that "We have been so busy 'hating the colored man,'" that "to date we cannot even get something like

---

<sup>61</sup> Dr. Frank S. Horne, reprinted in *BAA*, November 2, 1957, ps.7.

Sputnik off the ground.” The same reader ironically noted that “For the first time in history, the white man must crawl on his belly and beg another nation (the Russians) not to destroy us because they have the upper hand.” The reader concluded by lamenting how foolish Americans have been “dishing out prejudice and now we have awakened too late.”<sup>63</sup> A Dr. Gordon B. Hancock talked about how he had “contended through many years that the Russians must not be underrated” and in like fashion “the colored man must not minimize the struggle ahead before integration is a fact.”<sup>64</sup>

A member of the Minneapolis School Board issued a statement during the first part of November. In it, Frank Adams cautioned against letting the “Russians drive us into losing our sense of values.” There were immediate issues that “earth-bound people” wanted to address. Issues like the treatment of “cancer, mental illness, crippling, painful arthritis” are just some of these concerns. Adams suggested that our “crash programs” would be more successful and useful if we “took first things first and started a real crash program for education.” Why did he mention education? According to “Reports from the Office of Education in Washington, D. C.,” there had been evidence of a “steady deterioration at almost every level of American education,” partly because of “overcrowding” and “low teacher pay.” Also, class size was deemed as contributing to the problem. Contrasting Russia’s alleged teacher-pupil ratio of 17 students to every teacher, the average size in Minneapolis, according to Adams, was “about 32.”

The problem voiced by other African American writers was this great “untapped resource” of future African American scientists and engineers. Imploring officials not to overlook the “critical shortage of technicians and skilled mechanics,” Adams

---

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Bouncing Bentley, “U. S. Lost Leadership,” *BAA*, November 16, 1957, p. 4.



recommended a utilization of using “our greater material resources and this means using all our people.” This theme was reinforced: “This nonsense of second-class citizenship for minority groups has got to come to a halt. We need the working hands of all our people.”<sup>65</sup>

Employing the ironic tone of some African American writers regarding the professed ideals of the documents of America’s founding, with the actual experiences as lived, breathed, and viewed by blacks, one *Dallas Express* editorial prefaced its column by mentioning how then Vice-President Richard Nixon informed the San Francisco audience to which he was speaking that the launching of the satellite “demonstrates that this nation cannot afford to permit any of its citizens to receive a second-class education.” Wryly commenting on this rhetorical flourish by the future President of the United States, the editorial emphasized plainly how “Nothing more true has ever been spoken.” However, the plight of “American Negro citizens” is that “Sputnik now makes it necessary for this nation to give all the answers which the safety of Americans demands.” However, the stumbling block was “die-hard segregationists” who would “rather see the United States captured by the Russians” than to witness the tearing down of the walls in education.<sup>66</sup>

A former Superintendent of the Houston Schools, Dr. W. E. Moreland, apparently believed that the United States education system was “going backwards,” and that unpleasant bit of news would not “help us to catch up with the Russians’ Sputnik.” He

---

<sup>64</sup> Dr. Gordon B. Hancock, “What is Our Answer,” *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> “Veteran’s Officer Adams: Urges No U. S. Panic Because of Sputnik; Education Our Answer,” *MNS*, November 15, 1957, 1.

<sup>66</sup> Editorial, “What Sputnik Demonstrates,” *Dallas Express*, November 2, 1957, 10.

was commenting on the battles over curriculum in that district.<sup>67</sup> Two weeks later, in the same *Dallas Express*, an article quoted former Governor of Oklahoma, Raymond Gary as saying: “We will win this war in the schoolrooms and laboratories of our nation.” In addition, America will have a difficult time “keeping up with the Bolsheviks [even] if we throw segregation out of the window. With segregation we don’t have a chance.”<sup>68</sup>

The African American press clearly recognized the opportunity of using the newly-emerging framework of the space race to attack segregation and try to build on the *Brown* decision. Calling the editor of the “race-baiting” *News and Courier* of Charleston, South Carolina, Thomas R. Waring, the “high priest of segregation” with all of its accompanying “discriminations and inequalities,” one writer maintained it was “ridiculous and foolish” for individuals who “claim to be intelligent, to try to make other people believe that we can catch up and go ahead of the Russians in private schools, which have not yet even been established.” “The truth is,” continued the editorial, “we have not been able to keep up with the Russians in the segregated public schools...but if we expect to survive in the race with the Russians, we had better not let Tom Waring do the re-tooling.” Apparently, Tom Waring was wanting to “abolish the public schools” in order to set up “segregated private schools for the different races.” The column concluded by praising the Soviet school system: “Their system of integration has put them ahead of the American system” which is characterized chiefly by its exclusion of blacks “from so many of the educational opportunities.”<sup>69</sup>

There was also the issue of how the Russians treat their citizens, as opposed to the South. Commenting on how the Russian dog “Laika” was sent up into space inside

---

<sup>67</sup> Carter Wesley, “The Publisher’s Corner,” *DAL*, November 30, 1957, 10.

<sup>68</sup> “Governor Gary Spots Program,” *DAL*, December 14, 1957, 10.

a capsule with the canine eventually dying, the article related how “Soviet Union leaders have been hit verbally hard by the poorest of dog lovers and members of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.” However, the Soviets responded by gleefully replying that at least “they did not do as much harm to the dog as some Americans administer to Negroes in some Southern states.”<sup>70</sup>

Another column in the *Oklahoman Eagle* titled “The Truth Must Come Out,” by Rev. Ben H. Hill, claimed that Russia “demonstrated to the world not only an enduring cohesion as a nation, but a progressiveness in the field of science” that for the time being at least, “puts her at the top of the heap in power and intellectualism among the nations of the earth.” The biggest imperative the nation had not heeded? “Never underestimate your opponent.”<sup>71</sup> Had America underestimated the talent and intelligence of its great untapped resource? Speaking for the Associate Negro Press (ANP), Dean Gordon Hancock’s piece was entitled “The New Moon.” “The time is at hand,” he declared in a style that suggested readers might conceivably hear trumpets announcing the forthcoming, dire message, “when this country can no longer be safe in belittling and disparaging Russia’s progress in science and technology.” It is because “Democracy is locked at present in mortal strife with communism” that “it is never safe to underrate the opposition” which in this case, Russia, poses a threat to the extent that it “outstrips this nation in science and technology.” Hancock concluded with a humorous metaphor that while Russia “shows the world a new moon, this country shows its disgraceful Little Rock situation.” Again, alluding to the education theme,

---

<sup>69</sup> Editorial, “Sputnik Makes Segregationists Look Foolish,” *DAL*, December 21, 1957, 10.

<sup>70</sup> “Protests to Sputnik Dog Travel Brings Back Timely Reply,” *Oklahoma Eagle*, November 7, 1957, 1.

<sup>71</sup> Rev. Ben H. Hill, “The Truth Must Come Out,” *OKE*, October 10, 1957, 6.

Hancock insisted that the U. S. “cannot hold the Negro back with one hand and successfully foil the efforts of the communists with the other.” Employing the either/or mentality of the Cold War, Hancock contended that “Either this country must let the Negro go or succumb to the triumph of Communism.”<sup>72</sup>

Writing a month later in his same column, Hancock congratulated the nation somewhat: “We are beginning to take seriously the ability of the Russian scientists.” Admitting that it was smart to “give science a more preeminent place in our curricula” but that “the great scientists we produce tomorrow will not help us today,” he argued—foreshadowing the criticisms lobbed by some civil rights groups in 1969—that “lavish spending of our billions and our current emphasis on more scientific training will not guarantee the survival of our nation as we know it.” So what was his prescription? It consisted of recognizing a lack of belief displayed by citizens throughout the United States:

The strength of Russia lies in the fact that Russians believe in communism. And until we believe in democracy as fervently and as enthusiastically as the communists believe in communism, we are at a great disadvantage in this struggle for survival and in our competition with communism . . . . Should communism prevail in this country the Negro will have most to lose for the South will still have its segregation, judging from the ability of the South to have its way in the matter of race relations...The Negro’s hope therefore lies in the perpetuation of our democracy; for it is with us even as it was with the Israelites in Egypt, a change in dynasties made little or no change in the unhappy lot of the Israelites, for Pharaohs always arise who know not Joseph.<sup>73</sup>

Another provocatively-titled editorial was titled “America’s Big Blunder.” In it, the writer believed that America was “becoming the butt of an international joke.” Why should a nation “founded upon the principles of democracy and brotherly love” spend

---

<sup>72</sup> Gordon B. Hancock, “Between the Lines,” Los Angeles *Sentinel*, October 24, 1957, section A, p. 6.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, December 19, 1957, section A, p. 2.

enormous amounts of fruitless energy “debating over an issue which has no place in its borders . . . racial segregation.” While these issues are looming over the heads of governments like a storm cloud,

Russia has taken the lead in the field of rocket and missile research. And while the nation is bickering over whether it should extend full citizenship to black members of its breed or allow tradition to rule, Communist Russia has launched its second man-made moon. All we have done and all we continue to do is talk democracy. But the other nations of world [*sic*] cannot hear us—because what we are doing at home speaks too loudly.<sup>74</sup>

In an interesting editorial called “Dupe or Drummer?” the writer brought the readers’ attention to a “prominent American columnist” named David Lawrence who contributed an article conveying the impression that the “recent coup in the field of science” by the Russians did not indicate that the Soviet Union was “superior to America.” The editorial went on to state that Lawrence, “by a tremendous stretch of the imagination and a feverish play on words,” was trying to “assuage America’s wounded ego by arguing that this [Russian] progress can’t last.” The editorial stated that it was the opening paragraphs of Lawrence’s column that left them “in a quandary about Mr. Lawrence and his deductions” concerning the Cold War assessment. The article sarcastically printed that David Lawrence “would have to be one of these (dupe or drummer) to have come up with the following quote:

The Communist tyrants have flung into outer space a symbol of cruelty which typifies the plight of the imprisoned people for the Soviet Union. No matter what scientific knowledge the new “Sputnik” may bring, it affords no hope to the tens of millions of persons in Soviet Russia. Their liberties are almost as tightly incarcerated as is the dog sealed in the metal container whirling around the globe. In contrast, throughout America Tuesday in counties and cities and states wherever elections occurred, the people of the United States went to the polls.

---

<sup>74</sup> Editorial, “America’s Big Blunder,” *OKE*, November 7, 1957, section A, p. 1.

Without coercion or intimidation, they by secret ballot selected their rulers. They can remove them at the next election if they choose.<sup>75</sup>

The editorial closed humorously with the statement that “We are not in a position to question Mr. Lawrence’s statement about the tightly incarcerated liberties of the Russian people, but we are on solid ground when we say Mr. Lawrence is either a ‘dupe’ or a ‘drummer’ when he describes the breadth of the liberties available to the American people.” The article finished by stating that if the writer was unaware that “there were tens of thousands in America who could not march to the polls on last Tuesday . . . he’s a dupe.” With the “tyranny of racism extant both North and South,” Lawrence would be a “‘drummer’ palming off goods he doesn’t believe in himself” if he were to “deliberately sell this untrue version of Liberty in the United States to the world.”<sup>76</sup>

Another article in the *Oklahoma Eagle* asserted that “Arrogance is one of the many evils peculiar to many people who live in and run these United States.” In the current situation, one can find evidence that “the average American thinks that the whole wide world revolves entirely around these United States.” Evidence for this was found in the fact that “Americans call their baseball champions the World’s Champions” and it is equally not uncommon for travelers to “drive through some small American town and notice a little run-down stand that boasts of serving the World’s Longest Hot Dog.” After *Sputnik* was launched some Americans were “bold enough to assert that though somebody else put the thing in orbit, we would learn more from it than the people who were ingenuous [sic] enough to get the thing off the earth.” While a lot of people in the U. S. “worry about a dog [Laika] circling the earth in outerspace,” they

---

<sup>75</sup> Editorial, “Dupe or Drummer,” *OKE*, November 14, 1957, section A, p. 2.

have little care or concern for “Negroes in their struggle to be recognized as first-class citizens here and now on this earth in these United States.”<sup>77</sup>

An interesting article appeared in the November 23 edition of the *Cleveland Call and Post*. Authored by Art Sears, Jr., and announced as an “open, Post-Sputnik letter to the scientific leaders of the United States,” the article sought to establish a meaningful dialogue tongue-in-cheek with the scientific community of America. This was mainly, according to Sears, because the scientists were “virtually the only group which hasn’t been attacked as the cause of our being asleep when sputnik sputtered forth.” Due to the admirable foresight of these technically-trained heroes to maintain vigilance when all other sectors of society seemed in a stupor, Sears jokingly believed that they “might have the necessary clear heads to think over the musings which follow.” These musings were presented in a lengthy two-page article that discussed the “40 to 100 potential ‘star’ science students in five senior high schools” located in the East Cleveland area. Adjacent to Sears column was a full-page photo of four African American students “Watching an experiment for preparation of acetamide,” as the caption below read. Referencing the same East Cleveland area of high schools, Sears claimed that “In at least one instance a youth has been described as a ‘genius.’” This untapped Einstein “can work out mathematical formulae in his head before the instructor can record the finished problems on the blackboard.” Lest the scientific leaders were not entirely satisfied, Sears continued: “He is equally adept in physics, chemistry and related fields. His ambition? To become a doctor.”<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> J. Castina Jackson, “Think With Me,” *OKE*, December 12, 1957, section A, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> *OKE.*, November 23, 1957, p.2C.

James L. Hicks epitomized the argument about eggheads being neglected, writing in the aftermath of the 1952 and 1956 Presidential elections, which witnessed the Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower successfully challenge the Democratic candidate, Adlai Stevenson. Entitled, “Secret Weapon,” and addressed as “an open letter to my government,” Hicks asserted that there was a need for “secret weapons” and for “eggheads” to challenge Soviet domination in the Cold War: “You need a secret weapon today and you need it badly.” Hicks reminded “Uncle Sam” that he served during World War II as a soldier, but now “I’m a little too old to pick up a gun today and go slogging through mud, blood and water.” Nevertheless, despite his current inadequacy in providing physical feats of prowess, “I’d still like to help, Uncle Sam. And so I thought I’d sit down and write you a letter and try to point out at least one secret weapon which you apparently have not thought of.” What was this top-secret device alluded to by Hicks that could possibly turn the tide against Communism? “What you need today Uncle Sam is electronic engineers and scientists—eggheads who can throw rockets at the moon and make them stay up there in space like the Russians—who seem to have plenty of them.” Furthermore, Hicks adroitly segued into his leading question:

Ever wonder why you are short on engineers, Uncle? Well, let me just give you a hint. Do you know that about three fourths of the Negro people live in the South? You know that, huh? Well did you know that after you get south of the engineering school at Howard University in Washington, D. C. there is not a single school where a Negro egghead can go and be trained to throw rockets at the moon—or be a moondog trainer? Negroes have none of their own and whites won’t let them in those owned by the state.<sup>79</sup>

Hicks finished his request for recruiting “15 million potential engineers” by pleading, “It’s time to stop bowing to bigots like Talmadge and Faubus. It’s time to look

---

<sup>79</sup> NYA, November 9, 1957, p.57.



up in the sky where there is no sign of race.” After all, the collective contributions from African American eggheads “could be your secret weapon.”<sup>80</sup>

\*\*\*\*\*

The impact on what educators did specifically to rearrange their curriculum when confronted with complaints throughout the nation that the U. S. was lagging behind the Soviets in rigorous math and science courses, and how subsequently this impacted decisions regarding the *Brown v. Board* decision is not within the scope of this study. However, fruitful research might be gained from following this up. Did some individuals who were against integration—both black and white—mute their advocacy of their positions somewhat by stressing that Cold War concerns should take precedence over racial animosities? Did international issues affect these domestic policies because of trepidation that they were losing the “egghead” race and thus not developing the necessary talent to achieve breakthroughs in theoretical sciences? Did they decide that welcoming black students into their predominantly-white neighborhoods was worth the risk, considering the environment that they lived in; one in which nuclear war was possible at any moment? Did some African Americans stress the need to now include international history and “cheerleading” for the United States in their segregated school curriculum? One might also wonder how the battles over school curriculum between the Progressive and traditional proponents that were circulating in the wake of *Sputnik* were viewed by readers of black newspapers. How did African Americans respond to integration when it was revealed in their news sources that America’s schools were

---

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

falling behind? Did the determination to achieve integration fluctuate? Was there a renewed emphasis to remain segregated—but improve on the older white-based curriculum?

Davison M. Douglas argues that for most of their history, African Americans “have viewed education as essential to their quest for equality. Although many blacks have expressed frustration at the inability of education to move them into the political and economic mainstream, *faith in the potential of education has remained strong*” (italics added).<sup>81</sup> If the American public school system appeared to wobble precariously on shaky ground before and immediately after *Sputnik*, did parents of black students modify their enthusiasm for entering previously excluded schools? Furthermore, Douglas characterizes that black education in the North has been historically “more complicated.”<sup>82</sup> While Southern segregation by *de jure* practice has been highlighted as a result of the legal efforts instituted by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to overturn them through the court system, in Douglas’s opinion, “the struggle to end school segregation in the North has received far less scholarly attention. . . .” Arguing that “African Americans have consistently embraced the importance of education,” the other related topic of racially mixed schools “has been far more complex.”<sup>83</sup> Douglas stresses that in “literally dozens of northern school districts,” African American communities were not monolithic in how they perceived sending their children to school with white students. “In many instances,” explains Douglas, “some blacks opposed efforts by other blacks to challenge school segregation. . . . Although the integrationist vision of the Supreme Court’s *Brown* decision has

---

<sup>81</sup> Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*, 1.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

dominated this country's intellectual discourse about race for the past half century, a substantial dissenting tradition...has persisted until the present."<sup>84</sup> How did educational curriculum battles during the space race impact the direction of the integrationist versus segregationist impulse in African American thought? Did a sought-after "white education" become transformed into a liability; a disincentive to struggle for equality?

It may be fitting to close with a quotation from an astute observer of race relations, W. E. B. Dubois, who asked the question in the 1930s, "Does the Negro need separate schools?" In answering his own query, Dubois claimed "the Negro needs neither segregated schools nor mixed schools. What he needs is Education."<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>85</sup> W. E. B. Dubois, "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?" *The Journal of Negro Education* 4, no. 3 (July 1935): 328-335, 335.

## CHAPTER 3 ONE SMALL STEP?

### APOLLO 11 AND BLACK THOUGHT

In reading a review by space popularizer Arthur C. Clarke for Andrew Chaikin's book about the American space program, I was struck by Clarke's pronouncement that "Apollo may be the only achievement by which our age is remembered a thousand years from now."<sup>86</sup> I asked myself: "Is it possible to locate an event in history that transcended all differences among people to elicit a unanimous response?" If there were any candidates for such an object, I was inclined to believe that something literally beyond planet earth might contain the answer. With this information in mind, I recalled one of the front-page headlines that I came across during my research. In July 1969, the following day after two of the three astronauts set down on the moon, the *Chicago Daily Defender* featured a front-page photo of Neil Armstrong stepping onto the surface. The headline read: "Moon Shot Unites U. S. For Instant." The accompanying story provocatively called the Apollo mission, "The first non-racist moment in American history. . . ."<sup>87</sup> While newspapers do not promulgate historical truth merely by flashing headlines before their readers, I set out to discover whether there was any substance to this bold claim. Did the black press view this mission as a milestone in universal thought?

Well-known cultural historians Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears edited a collection of essays covering the topic of "consumption." The editors were concerned with "the processes by which a nineteenth-century 'producer ethic'—a value

---

<sup>86</sup> Arthur C. Clarke, review for Andrew Chaikin, *A Man On the Moon: The Voyages of the Apollo Astronauts* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), jacket quote.

<sup>87</sup> *CHI*, July 21, 1969, p.3.

system based on work, sacrifice, and saving—evolved into a dominant twentieth-century ‘consumer ethic’?” In referencing Robert Westbrook’s essay entitled “Politics As Consumption,” Fox and Lears discussed in the introduction how political consultants in the contemporary age “try to contextualize candidates the way ad men contextualize products” and that if politics “has been increasingly reduced to spectacle in the consumer culture, the same can be said of much government-sponsored science.”<sup>88</sup>

This comment about the specific issues addressed by the scientific community in America related to Michael L. Smith’s contribution to the essay collection. Smith argued that the government resources mobilized toward the Apollo mission depended largely on “selling the moon” to the public; that the moon landing was “[c]onceived in the wake of the Sputnik scare” and was ultimately “the most elaborate advertising campaign ever devised.” Through the use of television, “Its audience was truly global. Eight hundred million people saw or heard the first men on the moon.”<sup>89</sup> Smith also devoted two pages to describe the nation-wide reaction. A brief paragraph addressed the black viewpoint by quoting from *Ebony* magazine. The writer speculated on what type of conversation would follow if extraterrestrial life-forms were encountered: “Are we going to say, ‘We have millions of people starving to death back home so we thought we’d drop by to see how you’re faring’?”<sup>90</sup>

The most recent work discussing the moon landing was released in 2006 by historian Gerard J. DeGroot, author of a previous work about the atomic bomb. Published as *Dark Side of the Moon* and unambiguously subtitled “The Magnificent

---

<sup>88</sup> Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears eds., *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

<sup>89</sup> Michael L. Smith, “Selling the Moon: The U. S. Manned Space Program and the Triumph of Commodity Scientism,” chapter in *The Culture of Consumption*, 175-209, 177.

Madness of the American Lunar Quest,” DeGroot confessed that this book, “provisionally titled *One Giant Leap*, was originally intended as an antidote to my last book, *The Bomb: A Life*.” After immersing himself in the topics of the construction and subsequent devastation released by nuclear weapons, DeGroot felt “depressed, cynical, forlorn, and scared. After that experience, I craved something hopeful and uplifting and therefore...decided to write a book about the heroes of my youth—the astronauts who took America to the Moon.” Once the appropriate research began, there were indeed “heroes aplenty.” Yet another side—a “dark side”—soon emerged:

I discovered scheming politicians who amassed enormous power by playing on the public fascination for space and the fear of what the Russians might do there. . . . The Moon mission was sold as a race that America could not afford to lose—a struggle for survival. Landing on the Moon, it was argued, would bring enormous benefit to all mankind. It would be good for the economy, for politics, and for the soul. It would, some argued, even end war.<sup>91</sup>

Although DeGroot relates a depressing and scathing indictment of the Apollo mission as a whole, he conceded that “the popularity of space stories is perhaps understandable.” In explaining why he undertook such a project in the first place, DeGroot contends that “We all love heroes, we all enjoy a great adventure.” Furthermore, the urge to “travel nostalgically to that era when the Moon made us feel good” is still present by participants who experienced the event either through watching on television or reading in the newspapers in 1969. DeGroot believed that the famous televised event still represents a “safe harbor in a sea of cynicism, violence, and despair” for those individuals who “remember the sixties.”<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> Smith, “Selling of the Moon,” 207.

<sup>91</sup> Gerard J. DeGroot, *Dark Side of the Moon: The Magnificent Madness of the American Lunar Quest* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), xi.

<sup>92</sup> DeGroot, *Dark Side of the Moon*, xii.

DeGroot does devote a few pages to civil rights leaders. Included is a brief synopsis of the Poor People's Campaign—including Rev. Ralph Abernathy, Andrew Young, and Hosea Williams representing SCLC—at the *Apollo 11* launch site to protest the use of funds earmarked for sending men and metal to space while earthbound problems persist. “It is a grave inequality,” remarked Abernathy at the launch site, “to spend billions to put human beings on the moon when the nation refused to allocate sufficient funds to prevent starvation of human beings on earth.” Looking ahead to future space-related projects beyond this particular flight, Abernathy concluded that “We may go on to Mars and Jupiter and to the heavens beyond, but as racism and poverty prevail, we as a civilized nation have failed.”<sup>93</sup> Gerard notes that “Space was a dominating issue of the 1960s; civil rights was another. The two were distinctly separate: space showcased the country's achievement; civil rights underlined her shortcomings.” However, Gerard does agree that “the two issues did nevertheless intersect, most often when civil rights campaigners argued that the billions required to put a few men into orbit could be better utilized to help millions of blacks onto their feet.”<sup>94</sup>

Gerard DeGroot's work documents how the decision to allocate funding and resources for manned space flight was intertwined with the “selling” of outer space to achieve public approval. Another argument is that President John Kennedy came to eventually perceive “the space issue” as being “nonpartisan” and therefore, holding the potential to allow JFK an “appeal to parts of the country he could not ordinarily reach.” DeGroot suggests also that Kennedy was encouraged to promote interplanetary

---

<sup>93</sup> “Poor People at Launch,” *NYA*, July 19, 1969, p. 1.

<sup>94</sup> DeGroot, *Dark Side of the Moon*, 234.

manned space travel to help divert attention from “political storms in Berlin, Cuba, and Indochina” during the first few months following his 1961 inauguration.<sup>95</sup> Ultimately, though, DeGroot concludes emphatically that the time, energy, and money devoted to the Apollo program was a “brilliant deception, a glorious swindle.”<sup>96</sup> Even though the fortieth anniversary of the moon landing is two years away from my current study, there will undoubtedly be more memoirs and presentations available to the public to commemorate the event. Gerard’s work may cause that round rock to be viewed by all people on planet earth in a new light.

While DeGroot wrote about discovering cynicism for the first time in his life while delving into his historical research, his primary sources do not center on African America thought. My intent in viewing black-operated newspapers is to discover patterns concerning the moon landing. Cynicism about the practical benefits of space travel, combined with distress over unnecessarily squandered funds that could be implemented for domestic programs, was available for the readers of black newspapers during that time period. DeGroot did discuss in a few pages the contrasting positive and negative views pertaining to NASA and the eventual moon landing:

Enthusiasm for NASA was a manifestation of socioeconomic standing. Those in steady jobs were much more likely to support the space program than those on welfare. Blacks were less enthusiastic than whites, high school dropouts less than college graduates...The cost seemed affordable, since it had not led directly to tax rises. Fifty cents a week was a small price to pay for all that excitement. But for those in poverty, NASA seemed a cruel manifestation of national priorities. Going to the Moon was, it appeared, more important than education, welfare, health, or housing. On the margins of society, a constant refrain was heard: “If we can send a man to the Moon, why can’t our children read?”<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, xii, xiv.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 199-200.



The African American press did see the trek of Aldrin, Armstrong, and Collins as wonderful achievements that satisfied the curiosity of human beings. Yet, there was predominantly a desire expressed by black writers to link these two events with the unfinished civil rights movement that chronologically accompanied the space race. Money should have first been spent on earth crises, such as poverty, better housing, and equal justice under the law before being allocated for the fulfillment of such distant (literally) goals. In addition, compliments were numerous for the dedication and commitment that was required for the success of the Apollo mission, but there was disappointment at not witnessing this same willpower for tackling domestic issues head on.

#### Billions for What?

The cost of the Apollo program was estimated at around \$25 billion dollars. As Gerard DeGroot points out, this number fluctuated throughout the period, so that it remains difficult to give an accurate figure because “estimating the cost of the mission...is nearly impossible given the difficulty in deciding what to count.” Pointing out that “not all the money went toward the task of a moon landing,” DeGroot cited the “widely accepted” cost as being around \$35 billion dollars. This figure was also a similar approximation that black newspapers exhibited.<sup>98</sup> Contrasted with *Sputnik*—which witnessed criticism not at dollar amounts, but for not spending enough on education—African American newspapers objected to the diversion of funds to a space race that

---

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, *xiii*. Again, my concern is not to ascertain exact economic figures in this paper, but to discover what the perception was concerning issues such as this. It would interest me if I found a report from a newspaper that listed the dollar amount as extraordinarily off the mark to apprehend how significant the economic issue was for some African Americans. If, hypothetically-speaking, a letter to the editor or article written by a columnist was located, conceding that \$30 billion was an acceptable sum for space travel as opposed to the “actual” figure of \$70 billion, that disclosure of thought would certainly be intriguing.

should have, in their minds, been spent on domestic issues. When *Sputnik* was launched more than a decade ago, the addition of funds was not a concern; increased emphasis in math and science were viewed as important contributions to a society that realistically might endure a third world war involving nuclear weapons.

Two days after all three astronauts returned to earth, the *New York Amsterdam News* conducted an informal, walk-up interview with various black New Yorkers to record their thoughts on the moon walk. Donald Faison, a “resident,” explained that “It’s really not important. . . . That’s the man’s thing to avert the people’s attention from what’s happening here.” Another resident, Steven Ferrer, commented, “I have no reaction outside of disgust.” Finding humor in the fact that “people can involve themselves in such trifles in the name of mankind when in fact only a few individuals benefit,” Ferrer was convinced that the Apollo mission was “only an ego thing of international prestige.”<sup>99</sup> A Bronx resident, Mr. Alfredo Thomas, sarcastically responded to the inquiry by stating that the “great achievement” was not the moon landing, but the gall humans possessed to “leave the earth and sweep the earthly problems under the rug.” Another Bronx interviewee thought the federal government “should take the money and build homes and create jobs for the poor people here, before going up there to interfere with someone else’s world.” Readers were left with an unintentional thought-provoking comment when the respondent hoped that “they” (aliens? American astronauts? future moon colonists?) should “come down here and do a job on these people here.” One New York City dweller proclaimed the moon landing a “marvels thing [sic],” yet wondered what exactly was “up there” that was so significant to justify spending money allocated for space exploration: “Who cares what’s up there? I need

the money they used to send those men up there; why don't they give me some?"<sup>100</sup>

Before the launch, civil rights activist Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy led a protest complaining about the amount of money spent on the Apollo program while vast numbers of people remained at the poverty level. "America has reached out to the stars but has not reached out to her starving poor," explained Abernathy while leading a small group of 15 African Americans through the Cape Kennedy Visitors Center.<sup>101</sup> The *Michigan Chronicle* pointed out in an editorial that even Abernathy commented that upon witnessing the moon landing he "really forgot the fact that we had so many hungry people." In an ironic tone the editorial reminded readers that this admission of bedazzlement and temporary memory loss was "coming from the man who led a crowd of followers there to protest the costly space program."<sup>102</sup>

An article penned by Booker Griffin in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* proffered the argument that while the moon landing was definitely "one of the miracles of the ages" and that "[t]aken at face value, it would seem that all Americans would rejoice at such a monumental occurrence," Griffin announced: "I do not." In Griffin's article, entitled "Moon Dust and Black Disgust," a central theme was the contrast between what the Apollo program achieved and what remained unachieved on earth in the black communities: "Here is a country that cannot pass a rat control bill to protect black babies from rats, but can spend billions to explore rocks, craters and dust thousands of miles away." Griffin believed that this nationwide comprehension of what transpired with the various programs preparing astronauts since the space race began in 1957,

---

<sup>99</sup> "Mixed Emotions: Different Views," *NYA*, July 26, 1969, p. 1.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 45

<sup>101</sup> "SCLC In Space Parley," *CHI*, July 16, 1969, p. 4.

combined with the televised steps of Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, was a declaration that all can see and cannot hide: “America has proven that she will pay for what she honors and believes in. Look at space; look at Vietnam. . . .” While the Federal government was authorizing funds and committing its leaders in discussing the nuts and bolts of what NASA could accomplish; of how Vietnam would be addressed as a national dilemma, other neglected issues, according to Griffin, revealed for all to see that “America has proven that she will pay for what she honors and believes in.”<sup>103</sup>

An August editorial in the *Sentinel* commented on a recent statement apparently voiced by Vice President Spiro Agnew to the effect that “we need to use the spirit of our space program to alleviate hunger and suffering” in contrast to simply relying on “space program funds.” The writer acknowledged, “Perhaps we do need the spirit.” However, while this sense of collective optimism about accomplishing goals might solve half of the problem, “at the same time we need the *means* with which to right the existing problems” (*italics added*).<sup>104</sup> The *Sentinel* also commented on the protest by the SCLC. In an interesting quantitative analysis, an editorial entitled “Moon Conquests: The Progress of Man” contrasted the “three men who put their lives on the line” with the “50 or so people who walked a picket line.” These protestors had “asked that some of the money presently being channeled into the space program be diverted to feed some ten thousands of hungry people” who have neither adequate food nor “comfortable homes in which to watch the first man on the moon.”<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>102</sup> Editorial, “Billions For Trip to Moon; Now How About Care for Poor,” *MICH*, July 26, 1969, section A, p. 8.

<sup>103</sup> Booker Griffin, “Getting it Together,” *LAS*, July 24, 1969, section B, p. 7.

<sup>104</sup> Editorial, “Black Capitalism: An Empty Promise?” *LAS*, August 7, 1969, section B, p. 6.

<sup>105</sup> Editorial, “Moon Conquest: The Progress of Man,” *LAS*, July 24, 1969, section B, p. 6.

In the *Sentinel* editorial page that appeared three days before Aldrin and Armstrong touched down on Tranquility Base, readers were informed that “[b]y the time this editorial is read, there is a better than average chance that the United States government will have attempted to place a man on the moon. . . .” While the editors had confidence that the scientific research during the last decade “prepared the normal American for the moon shots,” they also desired to “interject a question. Does the fact that we are preparing for space travel circumvent the fact that hunger and strife still exist unabated in this wonderful country of plenty?” The exploration beyond the earth’s atmosphere might answer questions interesting for scientists and educators, yet this voyage to the moon should not have commenced without answering domestic questions such as: “Does the millions of dollars spent on space programs supplement the millions needed to feed the starving people in the black ghettos across the nation? Will the flight to the moon find adequate housing for those people displaced by Urban Renewal?” In assessing the priorities of the United States government, “it would appear that the fathers of our nation would allow a few thousand hungry people to die for the lack of a few thousand dollars while they would contaminate the moon and its sterility for the sake of ‘progress’ and spend billions of dollars in the process while people are hungry, ill-clothed, poorly educated (if at all).”<sup>106</sup>

A Michigan *Chronicle* editorial reiterated the common theme of lavishing praise on the epoch-making significance of traveling through space, but immediately inserted qualifications. Citing a poll taken by the *Chronicle*, it was summarized that African Americans “agree that the feat was awesome” but due to the “enormous financial expenditures” exhibited a consensus that the funds “should have been put to use in

curing earthly ills.”<sup>107</sup> In the same issue, the *Chronicle* regretted how “this country has expended approximately \$24 billion” while the “Apollo voyage alone estimated at a cost of \$35,000,000.” Reminding readers how the newly-inaugurated Nixon administration was “planning cutbacks on most of the programs designed to uplift the poor,” the editorial thought it ironic that “Americans grumble every day about the taxes they have to pay to support welfare,” while the federal government was going “to spend even more billions in its quest to conquer space.”<sup>108</sup>

A column by a “Dr. Dowell” printed in the July 24, Oklahoma City *Black Dispatch* demonstrated further this type of “reserved praise” that circulated throughout African American newspapers. “Never before,” exhorted Dowell, “can I recall so many people from different parts of the world joining in praise and commendation for a single accomplishment.” Describing the space-era landing as a “great human achievement,” Dowell was convinced that a “great step forward has been made.” However, the event should have forced Americans to “re-evaluate many things.” Among one, the realization that “more than 15% of our citizens are living at or below poverty level[.]” While the poverty of citizens remained a blight on the country’s record, the moon landing “venture cost 35 million dollars.” The writer would have liked to have seen the United States “re-evaluate its priorities and essential needs.”<sup>109</sup>

That same day, the Oklahoma Eagle published varying responses from the city’s readers. A Tulsa resident viewed the ability of NASA to achieve the necessary funding as a disturbing revelation. “What it means to me is—now anything is possible.”

---

<sup>106</sup> Editorial, “Moon Launching: Progress, Regress,” *LAS*, July 17, 1969, section B, p. 6.

<sup>107</sup> “A Waste of Time, Money. . .,” *MICH*, July 26, 1969, section A, p. 1.

<sup>108</sup> Editorial, “Billions for Trip to the Moon; Now How About Care for Poor,” *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>109</sup> “Dr. Dowell Speaks,” *BLK*, July 24, 1969, section A, p. 6.

Convinced that the federal government pulled a con job on its citizens, the residents' eyes were now opened and realized "[w]e were never lacking in money to solve our world's problems." Now that the *Apollo 11* mission successfully landed on the moon, it was clear for all the world to see that what "we lacked was the incentive and the faith to do it all." Preston A. Humphrey groaned when he thought of the "24 billion dollars spent to accomplish this feat when there are millions of people going hungry at night. . . ." If the money used for launching men into outer space was employed instead to "spend it here for the people on earth," this would have been the "great accomplishment." Hearing disheartening reports that the participants of the space program are even now "talking about going to Mars and Jupiter," Humphrey thought that humanity's priorities were presently misguided: "There should be somebody who wants to do something about hunger, housing, ghettos, etc." Otis Williams also thought it was a "great accomplishment," but suggested that "more should be spent in solving our domestic problems."<sup>110</sup>

Whitney Young voiced the opinion in the *Milwaukee Courier* that to "America's 30 million poor people, the moon landing had little meaning, except perhaps to taunt a child with dreams of accomplishment the system places beyond his reach" or to "flaunt affluence and power in the face of a man who can't afford to feed his family." Calculating that since it "cost \$35 billion to put two men on the moon," it would subsequently require "\$10 billion to lift every poor person in this country above the official poverty standard this year."<sup>111</sup> In the same *Courier* issue of that day, an editorial voiced concern that the "EEOC needs help." The Equal Employment Opportunity

---

<sup>110</sup> "Comments Vary on Outer Space Feat," *OKE*, July 24, 1969, p. 16.

<sup>111</sup> "To Be Equal," Whitney M. Young, Jr., *MIL*, August 2, 1969, section 1, p. 4.

Commission, created by Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to combat job discrimination against minorities, apparently was embroiled in a “hatchet job” regarding its essential funding. Explaining how the EEOC’s budget in 1968 was “9.2 million dollars to cover the total United States,” it has now requested a “more realistic budget of 15.9 million” to assist with discriminatory complaints. The editorial then goes on to reveal to its readers that this amount [15.9 million] is “.06 per cent of the expenditure on the Apollo 11 shot. . . .”<sup>112</sup>

#### A Lover’s Quarrel? The “Fear of Commitment”

A focus by African American newspapers on the perceived lack of commitment and willpower by the United States to resolve issues based around poverty and racial inequalities back home on *terra firma* was supplemented with praise for the Apollo mission itself. It is an admonishment for something that African Americans love—namely, the democratic creeds and professions of the United States—to achieve actualization in their lifetime. This spotlight on words such as “determination,” “willpower,” and “commitment” is also connected with a desire to implement a similarly efficient approach to solving crises at home. Since the *Apollo 11* mission demonstrated that America *could* solve particular objectives if these goals involved planning, committees, research, funding, and the use of “boosterism” to keep it in the eyes of the public and onto the national agenda, these characteristics of the moon landing were also emphasized. For example, Louis Martin reprinted excerpts from private correspondence exchanged between himself and a “learned Nigerian friend,” Dr. S. O.

---

<sup>112</sup> Editorial, “EEOC Needs Help,” *Ibid.*



Onabanjo. In one letter reprinted August 30, 1969, in the Michigan *Chronicle*, Onabanjo talked about a possible scientific remedy that would be consistent with the current technological era:

As I review man's sad condition on this bloody planet, I find myself thinking of your astronauts who have startled the world by walking on the face of the moon. Perhaps we have been entrusting our hopes for a better world with the wrong people. . . . Since these people and their institutions, the churches and the schools, have failed to lead mankind to tolerance and mutual goodwill, why not turn the job over to the scientists? Your rich country could embark upon an earth project as you did the moon project and mobilize the best scientific brains to work on tolerance vaccines or peace pills. . . . You have pills that control births which is the scientific answer to the reckless love life of mankind. Your young people are taking weird drug trips that put them in orbit and land them on illusionary moons. Why not pills for peace?<sup>113</sup>

“Pills for peace” connotes a magical, quick fix that works instantaneously. While not generally advocating simple solutions, African Americans used language that was reminiscent of turn-of-the-century progressive reformers and muckrakers who—although diverse in objectives and ambivalent about methods—favored the improvement of society by investigating facts and mobilizing “experts” for maximum efficiency.

Another exchange reprinted between Martin and Dr. Onabanjo appeared in the *New Pittsburgh Courier* August 2. Onabanjo believed that the impact of *Apollo 11* “will lead to a new breed of men.” Stating that the landing demonstrated “a classic example of the triumph of mind over matter,” Onabanjo explicitly acknowledged how “the moon walk has made it official. In simple terms the message from the moon is that an ignoramus, black or white, no longer has a place in your culture.” In order for the NASA space program to achieve such a lofty goal, it is necessary to possess “trained minds”

---

<sup>113</sup> Dr. S. O. Onabanjo, letter reprinted by Louis Martin, “African Says Moon-Like Project Needed on Earth,” *MICH*, August 30, 1969, section A, p. 8.

and “teamwork.”<sup>114</sup> A Minneapolis *Spokesman* editorial complimented “the great amalgam known as American” because of their evidenced capability of “doing things which many other nations have considered impossible.” The moon landing sustained “our long-held and oft expressed opinion that this nation once it decides to accomplish a purpose . . . has the brains, the resources, the initiative to bring about change in a comparatively short period as time goes.” While the outer space challenge was vigorously met, another challenge “of the ghettos and the poor” awaits that same commitment. Only by “enlisting the best minds and the great resources” can victory be achieved on planet earth.<sup>115</sup>

Comedian Dick Gregory offered “Lunar reflections” in the *Milwaukee Courier*. Admitting that the event “has been an epic for the television” and that Armstrong’s words were indeed true about the landing constituting “mankind’s greatest leap,” Gregory warned that “if America’s future commitment and united effort are limited to probing deep...into space,” then the entire *Apollo 11* achievement will “have been in vain.” After all, through the technological devices that allowed NASA to escape the earth’s gravity, communicate long distances with its astronauts, and fulfill Kennedy’s prophecy that the United States would physically touch moon dust by the end of the decade, a powerful demonstration was displayed to the world that was “sorely needed by those who are trying to put together some kind of consensus for living together on earth.” The mission created a benchmark capable of increasing the expectations for what can be accomplished:

---

<sup>114</sup> Dr. S. O. Onabanjo, letter reprinted by Louis Martin, “Dr. Onabanjo Says Moon is Sending Message to Blacks,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, August 2, 1969, p. 7.

<sup>115</sup> “Publisher’s Corner,” *MNS*, July 24, 1969, p. 2.

America must now work as hard and honestly with her resources and technology as she does with the Apollo enterprise to wipe out hunger and disease the world over and to create a humane and livable environment on earth. Dr. Thomas O. Paine, head of [NASA], has recognized the demonstrative value of Apollo 11. And he has warned that domestic problems cannot be solved without the kind of total commitment exemplified by the Apollo project. . . . In a recent interview he observed that the United States has in the past required a Pearl Harbor to galvanize it into action... The real message of Apollo 11, said Paine, is that it demonstrates that we have become a 'spacefaring' nation. And the real question raised by Apollo is will American [sic] continue to be a wayfaring nation with regard to domestic and world responsibilities?<sup>116</sup>

The previously cited "walk-up" poll conducted by the *New York Amsterdam News* after the moon landing also revealed this necessity of desire to achieve concrete goals. In addition to the concern about monetary issues, the interviewees saw impressive results from the landing, and envisioned the collective achievement of engineers, astronauts, and scientists as a model blueprint for combining determination and willpower to achieve concrete objectives. Mrs. Bernice Hall, a director of Empire State Girls Clubs, praised the landing as a "spectacular event" and believed that the "feeling of unity" shared by the crew and technicians should "open the eyes of people all over the world to the potential of man." One of Hall's main points was that objectives in space *and earth* could be actualized if the commitment by people was present. "If you really try hard enough," intoned Hall, "something can be accomplished." Unlike most of the other responses printed, Hall felt that the accomplishment of the *Apollo 11* program "[was] worth the money spent." William H. Roberson echoed Bell's applause when he stated that the "preparation and flight was a scientific masterpiece," but noted that he would have experienced deeper jubilation had "the same effort" been implemented "in the poor people's program here. I am sure the government could do it." These

---

<sup>116</sup> Dick Gregory, "Lunar Reflection," *MIL*, August 2, 1969, section 1, p. 4.

fragments from the public reinforce the idea that if only the government had the desire and will and had conducted itself with similar efficiency in planning and mobilization of resources, perhaps domestic issues could have been solved just as thoroughly for some of New York City's inhabitants.<sup>117</sup>

In the Virginia-based *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, a guest column was reserved for the President of the National Baptist Convention, Dr. J. H. Jackson. Jackson proclaimed to readers that “[t]his nation and the peoples of the world are awe-stricken and gladdened” by the successful landing. While humans “do not know yet what further mysteries or experiences will come from this great achievement,” the collective effort to execute such a mission has “already taught lessons that may be profitable to men on this planet.” Such lessons included the impressive “contributions to the welfare of all mankind” from science as a general discipline. In addition, a substantial portion of Jackson’s article stressed accomplishment “through united effort and fellowship. . . .” While NASA and the pioneering astronauts were able to obtain efficient results in the scientific field, U. S. citizens should be able—if willing and dedicated—to replicate similar victories in the “moral, social, and political field.” Jackson continued:

When we overcome jealousies and rise above hatred, strife and class conflict, and decide ourselves with courage to the lofty goals of human fellowship, we can solve many of our remaining problems...The giant leap forward in human relations can best come *as individuals and communities become willing to make one small step toward the highest and the best...* Better race relations and first class citizenship cannot be achieved by pressure and by edicts from Washington. They will be achieved when men, individually and collectively, *resolve to make the little steps* of trust, friendship, and understanding in the interest of justice, freedom and goodwill (italics added).<sup>118</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> “Mixed Emotions: Different Views,” *NYA*, July 26, 1969, p. 1.

<sup>118</sup> Dr. J. H. Jackson, “Giant Step Forward,” *NOR*, August 2, 1969, p. 6.

These exhortations for the addition of “willingness,” “determination,” and conscious decision-making on the part of American citizens to eradicate poverty and racial inequalities were seldom accompanied by instructions designating the proper course to achieve those goals. It was assumed that the powerful impact of hearing about the moon landing or watching it televised could possibly serve as a catalyst for domestic change.

The Michigan *Chronicle* had to first congratulate NASA for defying those skeptics who “said it couldn’t be done. . . .” As a result of the “ingenuity, determination and open purses of the American people,” the U. S. could claim a successful mission. First reminding readers that the moon landing was achieved against unfavorable odds during a time when “just a few years back [the U. S.] found itself lagging far behind the Soviet Union,” the *Chronicle* was aware of the “irony that such mobilization could occur . . . that we could surpass the Russians and win the moon race, while we find ourselves unable to wipe out poverty, disease and hunger right here on this hemisphere.”<sup>119</sup> In the Iowa *Bystander*, a reader expressed hope that humanity was living at the “beginning of a most exciting beautiful era” and should now “face up the task of providing in spirit, mind and body for those less fortunate earthlings.”<sup>120</sup> While the results of efforts may take years, surely—some thought—if NASA can perform in one decade the accomplishment of putting a man on the moon, other tasks such as eliminating inequalities for blacks in housing, schools, and public areas should be possible to fix. What was missing was the “will” and the lack of “commitment,” terms that frequently appeared next to praises for the ability of Americans to mobilize for achieving practical results.

---

<sup>119</sup> Editorial, “Billions for Trip to the Moon; Now How About Care for Poor,” *MICH*, July 26, 1969, section A, p. 8.

An editorial in the *Oklahoma Eagle* astutely observed this possibility. From the successful landing on a rock-strewn satellite comes “the challenge to our nation to be leaders in the business of peacemaking and the conviction that *men can, if they really try, provide for every human being in the world to be brought out of poverty in the next quarter century* (italics added).” Humorously linking the famed words spoken by Neil Armstrong upon setting foot on the moon, the editorial thoughtfully asked that “Perhaps the ‘giant step’ referred to . . . is the recognition that all things are possible.” The attempt to break free of earth’s gravitational pull and navigate a machine onto earth’s natural satellite was achieved because America “set it up as a goal and for 10 years didn’t let up in money and labor and experiment. . . .” The article finished by stating that the “matter of dealing with this nation’s problems and its challenges is not a question of priorities, but a matter of will, determination, recognition of need and obligation plus allocation.”<sup>121</sup>

In a letter to the editor of the Michigan *Chronicle*, pastor James E. Wadsworth Jr. offered praise for a “tremendous technological achievement” but wondered why a nation able to “plan and have the know-how to get men on the moon” was unable to “plan with the same zeal and national commitment to solve our problems of poverty, poor public education, crime, slum, slum dwellings, etc.?” He responded as to why this riddle remained unanswered: “The truth is this country could but we do not have the commitment from the national political and business leadership...” Wadsworth counseled other black readers to refrain from “getting caught up in this moon landing

---

<sup>120</sup> Frederic Harold Harris, “Letters from Our Readers,” *IOWA*, July 24, 1969, p. 6.

<sup>121</sup> Editorial, “Moon Beams!” *OKE*, August 21, 1969, p. 16.

hysteria because we have to live on this globe and there is much that needs to be done to make our existence here worthwhile.”<sup>122</sup>

Notable African American leader Louis Martin contributed regularly to the black newspapers. One article reprinted a keynote address by Whitney Young to the National Urban League Conference audience in Washington, 1969. Young understood what “civilized human beings” were able to accomplish by adopting “rational measures” such as those exhibited by the *Apollo 11* astronauts. “What is missing,” affirmed Young, “is the will to act.” While America may be aware of the inequalities endured by African Americans in the 1960s, “to know the truth and to follow it are two different things.”<sup>123</sup> In fact, Young would offer a frequent column, “To Be Equal.” Writing one week later, Young offered a political assessment of federalism vs. states rights. Championing the centralized federalist position that had seen gains for blacks with the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act, Young wrote in an article entitled “Sharing Federal Powers With the States” that “What we need above all at this time in our history is a new set of national priorities; new goals to build the schools, housing and jobs the nation needs and a final end to poverty and discrimination.” Believing that those priorities can only “come from the national government,” Young announced to readers that the “moon landing didn’t come about because that nation’s priority was split among the states and cities. The interplanetary trip to the moon was achieved “because it was a federal priority and got the federal backing needed to make it succeed.” The

---

<sup>122</sup> Dear Editor, “‘Brothers’ Rightly Assess Moon Shot,” *MICH*, August 9, 1969, section A, p. 9.

<sup>123</sup> Louis Martin, “Whitney Young Has His Finger on Black America’s Pulse,” *MICH*, August 23, 1969, section A, p. 8.

state governments that were presently operating in the late 1960s “have yet to demonstrate their capability in tackling the great domestic problems of our time.”<sup>124</sup>

In a brief roundtable featuring candidates running for local positions in Michigan, the *Chronicle* reserved space for Detroit mayoral candidate Richard H. Austin. Austin, a Wayne County Auditor “considered a front-runner among the five major contenders for the mayor’s seat,” stressed that “Many of our problems fall in the area of finances and can be solved through proper planning and concentrated effort.” Criticizing the federal government for “not doing its part to aid the cities,” and pointing out how there existed the “needs of economically and socially deprived children and adults that are far greater in Detroit than in many other areas,” Austin cited the recent moon landing to document how the United States “succeeded in putting a man on the moon because we have a national commitment to do so.” If the federal government can allocate resources and “put a man on the moon,” it should logically follow that the same type of energy and fervor inserted into a different project would achieve parallel results:

Our nation needs to make the same type of commitment to improve the quality of life for its deprived citizens living in the cities... If our national government makes a commitment to do this, just as the commitment was made to put a man on the moon, it will be done. It must be done, and if I am elected major, I will join the majors [sic] of other big cities in insisting that it be done.<sup>125</sup>

In Houston, Texas, while the descent of the lunar module nicknamed “Eagle” onto the moon was commencing July 20, 1969, a small group of protestors representing the Houston Welfare Rights Organization gathered outside a small-scale model of the Eagle located near the NASA News Center. Director of Field Operations, Hulbert James, handed out a press statement to the reporters nearby covering the event. The

---

<sup>124</sup> Whitney M. Young, “To Be Equal,” *DAL*, September 6, 1969, p. 9.

<sup>125</sup> Nadine Brown, “What Candidates Are Saying,” *MICH*, July 30, 1969, section A, p. 15.



statement, according to the article, “called on the President to change the priorities of the nation after the moon flight.” While during Lyndon Johnson’s administration a “war on poverty” was declared, a renewed “unconditional war to eliminate poverty” was now necessary, and the Houston organization was adamant to see it accomplished “by the year 1976, [the] 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this nation.”<sup>126</sup> One week after the landing on the moon, the *New York Amsterdam News* devoted an entire front page to reporting on the event. One headline read, “Mixed Emotions: Different Views.” “Black New Yorkers,” read the article, “while looking on in amazement at the walk on the moon, expressed mixed emotions and different views. . . .” An insurance company executive gushed praise for the event itself. Apparently present at the Kennedy Space Center when the Apollo rocket was launched on July 16, Asa T. Spaulding “stood for an hour . . . on that historic hallowed spot anxiously listening to the countdown with admiration and awe.” Overcome with the visual and auditory tour-de-force of the rocket’s impressive liftoff from the launch pad, Spaulding recollected, “As I watched Apollo 11 disappear into the heavens, I could say with a great depth of feeling: ‘What hath God and man wrought?’” After leaving the space center, Spaulding imagined “what it will take to bring about a comparable national commitment to the overcoming of our human problems on earth.” Spaulding admitted candidly that this “‘thought-question’ has been haunting me ever since.”<sup>127</sup>

In August, the *New Pittsburgh Courier* was still grappling with what transpired two weeks ago. “The conquest of the moon is an affirmation of man’s infinite capacity to overcome all obstacles in his path to knowledge and technological accomplishments.”

---

<sup>126</sup> Gertrude Wilson, “Home-Made Signs Impotent In the Roar of a Rocket,” *NYA*, August 2, 1969, pp. 1, 42.

This trip to outer space and the return trek home, with the astronauts living to tell about it, “establishes beyond the peradventure of doubt man’s superiority over the blind forces of nature.” Employing words such as “determination,” “courage,” and “stamina,” the editorial asked: “If these extremely difficult and complex tasks can be performed, why can’t cities be cleaned up and made to work...Why can’t the races live together and make brotherhood a joyful reality?”<sup>128</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup> Asa T. Spaulding, “Delivery of a Day Pregnant With History,” *NYA*, July 26, 1969, p. 45.

<sup>128</sup> Editorial, “Dreams Can Come True,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, August 9, 1969, p. 6.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION AND EPILOGUE

African American newspapers shared concerns with other ethnic Americans that *Sputnik's* launch was a blow to the prestige of the United States. Like other citizens, a loss of mastery in the “education race” to the Soviet Union was perceived as a serious issue to confront. However, the perception by black newspapers was that the Soviet Union gained an advantage by fully using all of its country’s brains. Soviet students were able to fully employ their intellects for service in the Cold War without concern for exclusionary practices based on racial distinctions. The Little Rock Nine were one prominent reminder of how segregation prior to Brown—and after—impeded the potential number of “eggheads” that could have been recruited to offer their services in building rockets before the Soviet Union achieved their success. The *Apollo 11* voyage of American astronauts to the moon was greeted with admiration by the black newspapers for the ingenuity and determination the NASA-led program accomplished. Believing that the Apollo program achieved success because it was sufficiently planned, financed, and executed, black writers longed for the same type of commitment and determination from other American agencies and individuals. The consensus among African American newspapers was that the price tag for such a success for an interplanetary mission was not worth the scientific curiosity that would accompany the trek.

The term “final frontier” has been used in reference to outer space. One thinks of the opening theme of the original 1966 television show *Star Trek*, which, in its opening monologue, declared how humans will now attempt to “boldly go where no man has

gone before.” The theme of the westward-moving frontier in American history has also been used extensively by Fredrick Jackson Turner and subsequent historians. For black newspapers, the view of outer space did represent a new frontier. New, in the sense that two unique events that happened during the Cold War allowed black newspapers to comment and discuss their significance for readers throughout the nation. The *Sputnik* launch and *Apollo 11* moon landing were greeted by writers with enthusiasm that implicitly revealed a fascination with what had occurred. There was sincere interest in what science and technology was able to display for earth-dwellers gazing up at the stars. With the technological capability to report on events as they happened—thanks to the addition of radio and television assisting the associated news services—African Americans were able to participate and share thoughts that additional ethnic groups concurrently debated at the same time. However, while Americans reacted to *Sputnik* and *Apollo 11* with general wonderment at what science had wrought, black newspapers viewed each of these events as representing one step forward of a much longer march ahead. By themselves, these events were significant only when applied to the larger picture of achieving full citizenship rights within the United States.

This raises the question of what happens when two events that appear to potentially transcend all other public issues are examined within a long-term historical paradigm? If 1957 and 1969 featured two episodes in the history of science that were viewed by human beings as important for exploring the “final frontier,” can an examination of African American newspapers reveal evidence of a parallel, yet different perspective on how science has “progressed”? For example, how was science viewed by whites, as contrasted with blacks on the eve of the *Sputnik* launch in 1957? If

differences did occur, to what extent did those divergences create a separate vision that became vastly different to other ethnic groups? If some white Americans saw the moon landing as a culmination of positive scientific advances since 1957, did cheering and celebratory responses toward the moon landing appear, in retrospect, inevitable? In addition, what would African American writers comment about the moon landing if the actual year was not 1969—a distressing time for some blacks living in poverty among urban ghettos, combined with the political and military troubles instigated by America's involvement in Vietnam—but if set in a different time and environment? Counter-factual arguments, of course, do not offer historical evidence. However, through the posing of such questions, new avenues of exploration may be sought by historians.

The use of “paradigms” has been popularized by Thomas Kuhn’s *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Kuhn asserted that scientists operate for a period of time conducting “normal science,” which precludes them having to fret about certain unstated assumptions toward their investigative work habits. One early attempt to utilize Kuhn in the historical discipline was attempted by Gene Wise in his 1973 *American Historical Explanations*.<sup>129</sup> Wise sought to encourage his fellow historians to become more “selfconscious of the conventions through which [their] scholarship functions.” Wise argued that “paradigm shifts” occurred at key historiographical moments identified in his study. Wise began with the Progressive tradition of Turner and Parrington, followed by the Realism of Reinhold Niebuhr and Lionel Trilling, and concluded with the Counter-Progressive ideas of Perry Miler and R. W. B. Lewis. Wise believed that the questions historians ask, along with the primary sources they include, reveal biases that impact

---

<sup>129</sup> Gene Wise, *American Historical Explanations*, 2nd Revised ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980).

their historical output. These elements, according to Wise, should be carefully monitored to ensure that scholars are constructing the highest possible accuracy for its readership. In a review concerning Wise's monograph, James G. Blight critiqued Wise's analogy of history with science: "Scientific and historical explanations are not...identical, neither can their histories be understood within an identical framework." Reminding readers how "Kuhn himself recognized this in the postscript to the revised edition of his monograph," Blight concluded that despite some interesting approaches to the utilization of Kuhn's paradigms, the "important philosophical distinctions between scientific and historical explanation is the central flaw in [Wise's] book. . . ." <sup>130</sup> 130

While disagreements continue to exist, it is argued here that further exploration of how science was seen by different ethnic groups, and during various time periods in the United States, can yield fruitful research. If a consensus does not exist amongst ethnic groups about what constitutes "normal science," what happens to those other groups who do not share similar models? What kind of competition ensues on a daily basis? Are there "competing normal paradigms" that clash throughout societies? I believe that untangling these issues will assist society and individuals when emotionally-charged issues such as Affirmative Action are brought up for debate in the United States. Being able to see through the perspective of other human beings who may have been fellow "native" Americans, yet who view events in alternate ways from what is considered "normal," can help to reach a framework for understanding how seemingly unambiguous events can indeed become quite ambiguous.

---

<sup>130</sup> James G. Blight, review of Gene Wise, *American Historical Explanations*, 2nd ed., revised (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980; 1973), *Reviews in American History* 9, no. 3 (Sept., 1981): 313-18, 318. See also David A. Hollinger's examination of Kuhn's potential uses for historians: "T.S. Kuhn's Theory of Science and Its Implications for History," *The American Historical Review* 78, no. 2 (April 1973): 370-93.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources: 1957 (Oct. – Dec.); 1969 (Jul.-Oct.)

### *Newspapers on Microfilm*

<i>Baltimore Afro-American</i>	BAA
<i>Black Dispatch</i>	BKD
<i>Chicago Daily Defender</i>	CHI
<i>Cleveland Call and Post</i>	CCP
<i>Dallas Express</i>	DAL
<i>Iowa Bystander</i>	IOWA
<i>Los Angeles Sentinel</i>	LAS
<i>Michigan Chronicle</i>	MICH
<i>Milwaukee Courier</i>	MIL
<i>Minneapolis Spokesman</i>	MIN
<i>New York Amsterdam News</i>	NYA
<i>Norfolk Journal and Guide</i>	NOR
<i>Oklahoma Eagle</i>	OKE
<i>Pittsburgh Courier</i>	PIT

### Secondary Sources

#### *Books*

- Aldiss, Brian W., with David Wingrove. *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction*. New York: Atheneum, 1986; Originally published as *Billion Year Spree*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1973.
- Benjamin, Marina. *Rocket Dreams: How the Space Age Shaped Our Vision of a World Beyond*. New York: Free Press, 2003.
- Booker, M. Keith. *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*. Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy, no. 95. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001.
- Buni, Andrew. *Robert L. Vann of the Pittsburgh Courier: Politics and Black Journalism*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974.
- Borstelmann, Thomas. *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Boyer, Paul. *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*. With a New Preface by the Author. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994; New York: Pantheon, 1985.
- Carter, Dale. *The Final Frontier: The Rise and Fall of the American Rocket State*. The Haymarket Series, eds. Mike Davis and Michael Sprinker. New York: Version, 1988.

- Chafe, William H. *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- DeGroot, Gerard J. *Dark Side of the Moon: The Magnificent Madness of the American Lunar Quest*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.
- Divine, Robert A. *The Sputnik Challenge*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Dudziak, Mary L. *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*. Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America, eds. William Chafe, Gary Gerstle, and Linda Gordon. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Fredrickson, George M. *Racism: A Short History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Gerstle, Gary. *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Grayson, Sandra M. *Visions of the Third Millennium: Black Science Fiction Novelists Write The Future*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2003.
- Henriksen, Margot A. *Dr. Strangelove's America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Holt, Thomas C. *The Problem of Race in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The Nathan I. Huggin Lectures. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Kelley, Robin D. G. *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.
- LaFeber, Walter. *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1996*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. America in Crisis, ed. Robert A. Divine. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997.
- Marable, Manning. *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990*. Revised ed. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1991.
- Matusow, Allen J. *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s*. The New American Nation Series, eds. Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1984.
- Mazlish, Bruce. *The Railroad and the Space Program: An Exploration in Historical Analogy*. Technology, Space, and Society series, eds. Raymond A. Bauer and Edward E. Furash. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1965.
- McDougall, Walter A. . . . *the Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age*. New York: Basic Books, 1985.



- McCurdy, Howard E. *Space and the American Imagination*. Smithsonian History of Aviation Series, ed. Von Hardesty. Washington: the Smithsonian Institution, 1997.
- Norrell, Robert J. *The House I Live In: Race in the American Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Patterson, James T. *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy*. Pivotal Moments in American History, eds. David Hackett Fischer and James M. McPherson. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974*. The Oxford History of the United States, ed. C. Vann Woodward. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Pells, Richard H. *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. with a New Introduction by the Author. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1989; 1985.
- Roberts, Gene and Hank Klibanoff. *The Race Beat: The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakenings of A Nation*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.
- Simmons, Charles A. *The African American Press: With Special Reference to Four Newspapers, 1827-1965*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1998.
- Sitkoff, Harvard. *The Struggle for Black Equality: 1954-1992*. Revised ed. New York: Hill and Wang, 1993; 1981.
- Suggs, Henry Lewis, ed. *The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865-1985*. Contributions In Afro-American and African Studies, no. 177. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996.
- Weisbrot, Robert. *Freedom Bound: A History of America's Civil Rights Movement*. New York: Plume, 1991.
- Whitfield, Stephen J. *The Culture of the Cold War*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. The American Moment series, ed. Stanley I. Kutler. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- Winkler, Allan M. *Life Under A Cloud: American Anxiety About the Atom*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

### *Articles and Chapters*

- Bonner, Thomas N. "Sputniks and the Educational Crisis in America." *Journal of Higher Education* 29, no. 4 (April 1958): 177-184, 232.
- Counts, George S. "A Word About the Soviet Teacher." *Comparative Education Review* 5, no. 1 (June 1961): 13-16.
- Doel, Ronald E. "Evaluating Soviet Lunar Science in Cold War America." *Osiris* 7. *Science After '40* (1992): 238-264.
- Isaacs, Harold R. "World Affairs and U. S. Race Relations: A Note on Little Rock." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 22, no. 3. Special Issue on Attitude Research in Modernizing Areas (Autumn, 1958): 364-370.
- King, Richard. "The Role of Intellectual History in the Histories of the Civil Rights Movement." Chapter in *Race and Class In the American South Since 1890*. Melvin Stokes and Rick Halpern, eds. Oxford, UK: Berg Publishers, 1994.
- Kohler, Foy D. and Dodd L. Harvey. "The International Significance of the Lunar Landing." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 12, no. 1 (Jan., 1970): 3-30.
- Leonard, Elisabeth Anne. "Race and Ethnicity in Science Fiction." Chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, Edward James and Farah Mendelsohn, eds. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Michael, Donald N. "The Beginning of the Space Age and American Public Opinion." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (Winter, 1960): 573-582.
- Ravitch, Diane. "A Different Kind of Education for Blacks." *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 30 (Winter, 2000): 98-106.
- Rolan, Robert G. "Must We Choose between Men in Space and Mankind on Earth?" *Bioscience* 20, no. 14 (July 1970): 797-806.
- Smith, Michael L. "The U. S. Manned Space Program and the Triumph of Commodity Scientism." Chapter in *The Culture of Consumption*. Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears, eds. New York: Pantheon Books, 1983: 175-209.