

“THE BEST NOTES MADE THE MOST VOTES”: RACE, POLITICS,
AND SPECTACLE IN THE SOUTH, 1877-1932

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ABSTRACT

From the end of Reconstruction in 1877 to the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, black southerners influenced local, state, and national politics and challenged white supremacy by performing at political spectacles. Reformers, Lost Cause advocates, and party leaders employed spectacle to generate enthusiasm, demonstrate the strength of the party, mobilize voters, legitimize electoral results, and spread their platforms.

Before disfranchisement, African Americans played prominent roles in these spectacles as performers, orators, musicians, marchers, and torchbearers. Despite attempts to eliminate spectacles and restrict voting, southerners continued to view spectacle as an important part of the political process. In the twentieth century, African Americans participated in spectacles despite disfranchisement, diminished economic opportunity, and the threat of lynching. With their presence and activism, they remained a visible and audible part of the public sphere, which resulted in financial improvement and political influence. At times, they exhibited dangerous behavior at political spectacles by harassing white politicians and confronting white women.

Based on findings in newspapers and archives, this dissertation examines three case studies from Georgia, Louisiana, and Tennessee. From 1885 to 1898, black Atlanta and black Maconites played prominent roles in the local-option prohibition campaigns of the region despite increasingly hostile attitudes toward African Americans. In 1903, black musicians in New Orleans allied with their white colleagues to protest the exclusion of black talent from a reunion

of Confederate veterans. In 1909, black bandleader W. C. Handy lent his talents to the mayoral campaign of Edward Hull Crump. During the campaign, Handy composed a song that launched both of their careers.

In addition to these case studies, this dissertation consists of three broader chapters, which reveal black southerners performed similar behavior across the South. From 1877 to 1932, African Americans spoke at public rallies, generated enthusiasm with music, linked party politics to the memory of the Civil War, honored favorable candidates, and openly humiliated their opposition.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Neil and Sandra, who unconditionally supported me in this endeavor, and taught me to work hard and appreciate the past.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1902, black bandleader William Christopher Handy, who had not yet achieved fame as the Father of the Blues, settled in Clarksdale, Mississippi. Instead, he took whatever work he could find to make ends meet, which resulted in seemingly unlikely alliances. “We were frequently hired...to furnish music for political rallies,” recalled Handy. Most of these rallies supported the white supremacist Democrats who dominated local and state politics during the era. At these rallies, Handy and his band of black musicians had to “absorb a ‘passel’ of oratory of the brand served by some Southern politicians.” At one campaign event, Mississippi politician and notorious white supremacist James K. Vardaman promised his audience that he would not spend “one dollar for negro education” because “education unfits the nigger.” In a condemnation of the current generation of African Americans, Vardaman praised the former Confederacy and explained that enslaved African Americans, who had little or no education, had protected “like so many faithful watch-dogs” the mothers, daughters, wives, and sweethearts of southern soldiers during the Civil War. After Vardaman finished his hateful speech, Handy and his black band played the southern anthem “Dixie” for the white audience. Vardaman’s comments recalled to Handy’s mind previous instances of racial abuse. When the event concluded and Handy and his band removed themselves from public gaze, they laughed off these comments no matter how

much it hurt. Handy explained, “We could laugh and we could make rhythm. What better armor could you ask?”¹

Although Vardaman put Handy in a tough spot with his rhetoric, Handy enjoyed playing in the campaigns of some of the South’s less-vitriolic politicians. Handy admitted that “the political campaigns was not always the bitter pill this particular candidate made it.” On one occasion, Handy and his band played for Senator John Sharp Williams of Mississippi, “a great favorite of the people.” He enjoyed playing for Williams because it provided them an opportunity to demonstrate their appreciation for him and showcase their “good music and gay uniforms.”² Handy took these jobs because they provided financial opportunity but also a measure of political influence. By 1909, Handy had not yet caught his big break and had moved to Memphis. Then and there, he composed a campaign song for mayoral candidate Edward Hull Crump. Handy’s composition would launch both of their famous careers.

When I encountered the alliance between Handy and Crump’s campaign, I became immediately curious. I wanted to know what made the alliance between openly white supremacist politicians, such as Crump and Vardaman, and black musicians, such as Handy, possible. I also wanted to know if other African Americans performed similar duties for white politicians in the American South during the nadir of race relations. This dissertation addresses this curiosity.

From the end of Reconstruction in 1877 to the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, black southerners influenced local, state, and national politics and challenged white supremacy by performing at the political spectacles essential to the southern politics. Reformers, third party

¹ William Christopher Handy, *Father of the Blues: An Autobiography* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1941), 79-82; Adam Gussow, “‘Make My Getaway’: The Blues Lives of Black Minstrels in W. C. Handy’s *Father of the Blues*,” *African-American Review* 35 (Spring 2001): 5-28; Adam Gussow, “Racial Violence, ‘Primitive’ Music, and the Blues Entrepreneur: W. C. Handy’s Mississippi Problem,” *Southern Cultures* vol. 8 (Fall 2002): 56-77.

² Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 79-82; Gussow, “‘Make My Getaway,’” 5-28; Gussow, “Racial Violence,” 56-77.

leaders, Lost Cause advocates, Democrats, and Republicans generated enthusiasm, demonstrated the strength of the party or movement, mobilized voters, legitimized electoral results, and spread their platforms with public spectacles, such as parades, rallies, orations, flag-raising, and more. African Americans often played a central role at these spectacles and created their own spectacles, where they expressed their politics and demanded recognition of their place in the political sphere and economic rights. At political spectacles, therefore, African Americans seized economic opportunity and exercised a measure of political influence. During a period of disfranchisement and lynching, African Americans accessed the political sphere by adorning the character of the humble, loyal servant and the feckless black performer, which helped them escape the harsh repercussions reserved for African Americans who stepped out of their prescribed role in southern society. Behind these characters, African Americans sometimes exhibited dangerous behavior before white audiences in the quest for political and economic power.

In the post-Reconstruction South, white southerners reinvigorated antebellum racial hierarchy by tailoring their methods of oppression to suit a modernizing, industrializing region.³ Historian C. Vann Woodward provides fundamental understanding of the creation of Jim Crow with his book *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. During Reconstruction, according to Woodward, biracialism pervaded southern politics, which meant that segregation and disfranchisement did not occur as an inevitable consequence of Reconstruction's shortcomings. By the 1890s, Woodward explains, white southerners had received the blessing of the Supreme Court, which condoned segregation and redefined the Fourteenth Amendment with its decisions in cases such

³ Robert Higgs, "Race and Economy in the South, 1890-1950," in *The Age of Segregation: Race Relations in the South, 1890-1945* ed. by Robert Haws (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1978), 89-90; Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 251.

as *United States v. Cruikshank* in 1872, The Slaughter-House Cases in 1873, and *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896. Energized by these decisions, white southerners instituted rigid, race-based segregation and disfranchisement across the region.⁴ In the urbanized and transient society of the New South, white southerners segregated transportation, public accommodations, schools, hospitals, neighborhoods, and more. They justified segregation by claiming that black men, including the well mannered and prosperous, posed a threat to white women in public spaces.⁵ They justified disfranchisement with similar reasoning. If African Americans participated in the political sphere, they threatened white men's ability to protect white women.⁶ In addition to the use of the legal and political system to enforce white supremacy, white southerners used the public spectacle of lynching to respond to rumors of sexual assault and punish upwardly mobile black entrepreneurs who competed with white businesses. When poll taxes and literacy tests failed, white southerners used intimidation and violence to keep black voters away from the polls.⁷ Faced with oppression, African Americans, many of whom had never experienced enslavement, became impatient and bitter toward white supremacy. As African Americans became more aggressive, however, white southerners struck back with intensified violence that

⁴ C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow: A Commemorative Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3-8, 11-18, 67-72; Dan Carter, "Southern Political Style," in *The Age of Segregation: Race Relations in the South, 1890-1945* ed. by Robert Haws (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1978), 50-66.

⁵ Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3-8, 11-18, 67-72; Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 136-146.

⁶ Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Jane Dailey, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, and Bryant Simon, *Jumpin' Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁷ Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (New York: The New York Age Print, 1892), <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14975/14975-h/14975-h.htm>; Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon, 1998); Lisa Lindquist Dorr, *White Women, Rape, and the Power of Race in Virginia, 1900- 1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Paul Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

terrorized black southerners.⁸ African Americans recognized that a successful attack on Jim Crow would require economic empowerment, political power, and legal expertise.⁹

African Americans hoped to gain status, and therefore political influence, by acquiring property and wealth. In segregated spaces, black entrepreneurs opened businesses for black clientele, resulting in financial success. They intended to leverage economic prosperity into political power, but black workers could not keep up with white counterparts because black wages lagged behind. In response to wage disparities, black workers used absenteeism and slowed down the pace of work to strike back at their white employers. To counter unequal facilities and opportunity, African Americans built up their communities by creating their own schools and mutual aid societies with the black church often at the center of these endeavors. With these methods, they hoped to gain small advantages from their employers and make tangible progress in their communities. They intended to create for themselves the services and institutions that the government would not provide them.¹⁰

As many African Americans worked to counter Jim Crow by strengthening their communities, other African Americans trained in law and politics, and they used their talents to claim political and civil rights. To influence politics, black civic leaders encouraged black men to register to vote and pay their poll taxes. When African Americans succeeded in their door-to-door canvasses of the black community, white Americans often responded with terrorism.¹¹ In addition to these grassroots efforts, African Americans unsuccessfully challenged disfranchisement in federal and district courts. In the 1890s and 1900s, they did not succeed, but

⁸ Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 404-422.

⁹ Donald E. Devore, *Defying Jim Crow: African American Community Development and the Struggle for Racial Equality in New Orleans, 1900-1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2015), viii-ix,

¹⁰ Leslie Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham: Gender, Class, and Black Community Development in the Jim Crow South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Devore, *Defying Jim Crow*, 122-145, 151-154.

¹¹ Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed*, xiv, 182-187, 214, 321.

they did lay the groundwork for success in the 1960s.¹² Similarly, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People challenged segregation in education with a series of court cases, which had their origins in the 1930s and 1940s but would not succeed until 1954.¹³

Like black factory workers and lawyers, black performers used their musical and theatrical talents to challenge white supremacy, attain economic opportunity, and transcend segregation. Scholars have explained the ways in which African Americans, especially performers, manipulated negative stereotypes to their advantage, but they have not recognized the full power of these methods to gain access to the seemingly whites-only realm of southern politics. Often, scholars have emphasized forms of covert resistance made possible by segregation. In general, black musicians played for black audiences, which created a safe space for black expression.¹⁴ In these safe spaces, they could vocalize their hopes and frustrations with white society and their own condition.¹⁵ African Americans, however, performed for white audiences, as well.

African Americans broke down racial barriers in the entertainment industry because they took advantage of the success of blackface minstrelsy and the desire of white audiences, who had been charmed by blackface performances, to see authentic products. Scholar Eric T. Lott analyzes the dialectic of racial hatred and racial envy present in antebellum blackface minstrelsy. In *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, Lott explains how white working-class Americans used blackface minstrel shows to mock African Americans and

¹² R. Volney Riser, *Defying Disfranchisement: Black Voting Rights Activism in the Jim Crow South, 1890-1908* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010).

¹³ Gary M. Laverne, *Before Brown: Heman Marion Sweatt, Thurgood Marshall, and the Long Road to Justice* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2011).

¹⁴ Historian R. A. Lawson, in his book *Jim Crow's Counterculture: The Blues and Black Southerners* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), likens this dynamic to the cabin culture of enslaved people, who removed from the master, had a measure of freedom to express themselves.

¹⁵ Adam Gussow, *Seems Like Murder Here: Southern Violence and the Blues Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 2-4, 22-58, 68-75.

justify their enslavement, yet these white performers tested the color line and felt the need to adorn themselves in blackface to attain musical abilities. In these performances, white Americans acknowledged that black culture existed and that it appealed to them. Blackface minstrelsy, therefore, helped integrate black music styles into the national mainstream.¹⁶ Given its popularity, African Americans expropriated minstrelsy as a means to economic wealth and social standing. As white audiences became less interested in blackface performances, African Americans took the stage to satisfy white desires for authentic products. Through these efforts, they changed American culture by integrating new music into the cultural mainstream and also popularizing social dancing.¹⁷

Although black performers played the role of the humble servant in these performances, African Americans critiqued white society and expressed their frustrations with segregation and racial violence. The musicians adapted typical musical themes, including unrequited love and vanished lovers, to address lynching. They also expressed a desire for personal freedom and enjoyment, such as sexual pleasure and financial wealth, during a period of circumscribed freedom. With these methods, black performers spoke to fellow blacks without offending whites.¹⁸

Off the stage, black performers separated themselves from the image of the humble plantation product and cultivated an image of professionalism and civility that their plantation characters lacked. They took on these demeaning roles, no matter how much they hurt, to attain

¹⁶ Eric T. Lott, *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3-8.

¹⁷ David Krasner, "The Real Thing," in *Beyond Blackface: African Americans and the Creation of American Popular Culture, 1890-1930*, ed. by W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 99-123; Karen Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race: Black Performers in Turn of the Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 42-162; Gussow, *Seems Like Murder Here*, 2-4, 22-58, 68-75; Lawson, *Jim Crow's Counterculture*.

¹⁸ Gussow, *Seems Like Murder Here*, 2-4, 22-58, 68-75.

economic success and gain recognition of their status as professionals.¹⁹ In search of economic opportunity, I explain, African Americans played for white supremacist organizations, political candidates, and reformers. In some cases, black performers leveraged these economic opportunities into political influence by publicly expressing their political loyalties and expressing frustrations with the post-Reconstruction political and social order. They took advantage of a political culture that reached the masses through spectacles.

Spectacles have political implications because they influence the way that people understand and interact with the people and world around them and sensationalize society's norms, mores, and values. Spectacle, according to philosopher Guy DeBord, refers to a social relationship between commodities, not people. At spectacles, people do not interact with one another but rather with one another's representations of themselves. DeBord explains that spectacle became possible because of mass media's and mass consumerism's reliance on sensational images to portray reality. To win audiences and sell newspapers, for example, politicians and newspaper editors use sensational images, which resemble an extraordinary version of reality.²⁰ For politicians, spectacles serve as a means to spread an ideology, which the audience can either buy or reject. When people view spectacles, they use past experiences and assumptions to give meaning to the images presented to them, which means that spectators have an active role in the spectacle.²¹ As spectators have an active and not passive role, it means that the audience can make inferences different from one another and from the intended message, which provides opportunities for resistance. When people encounter these images, in other

¹⁹ Lawson, *Jim Crow's Counterculture*; 31-32, 47-57; 170-195; Sotiropolous, *Staging Race*, 163-196.

²⁰ Guy DeBord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1967); Nathan Markovitz, *Racial Spectacles: Explorations in Media, Race, and Justice* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 4.

²¹ Douglas Kellner, "Media Culture and the Triumph of the Spectacle," in *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality TV and Beyond*, ed. by Geoff King (Bristol, U. K.: Intellect Press, 2005); Douglas Kellner, *Media Spectacle* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Markovitz, *Racial Spectacles*, 5.

words, the sensationalized words and images take on a life of their own.²² In this dissertation, I am interested in the ways in which black and white people, as both participants and spectators, used spectacles to reinforce and resist prevailing notions of race and racial hierarchy.

Americans, including disfranchised Americans, demonstrated their party and national loyalties with political spectacles. During the American Revolution and early national period, elite representatives made decisions in the national capital, but patriots and citizens endorsed these decisions with street demonstrations, such as parades and processions, which they infused with patriotism and partisanship and thereby claimed citizenship in the nation and membership in the party.²³ During the antebellum period, Americans continued to participate in political spectacles regardless of age, ethnicity, class, and sex. The people reflected the democratic, freedom-loving spirit of the age with their actions at these spectacles. They enjoyed gluttonous amounts of food and drink and invited the candidates to attend as the guests of the people. Women and African Americans, both free and enslaved, attended these events in segregated capacities.²⁴ After the Civil War, Americans continued these practices. Newspapers supported political spectacles in advertisements and detailed accounts of the events. Inspired by the war, Americans imbued the spectacles with militaristic elements. Led by lieutenants, political clubs marched through the streets with torches and banners in military-style uniforms. They raised

²² Markovitz, *Racial Spectacles*, 5.

²³ David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 3, 7-13, 18-24; Jason Schaffer, *Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 7-9; Susan G. Davis, *Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 2-7, 9, 12-13.

²⁴ Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 9-10, 82-84, 230-233; Michael E. McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North, 1865-1928* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 5-6, 3-41; Sean Wilentz, "Artisan Republican Festivals and the Rise of Class Conflict in New York City, 1788-1837," in *Working-Class America: Essays on Labor, Community, and American Society*, ed. by Michael H. Frisch and Daniel J. Walkowitz (Urbana, Ill., 1983), 37-77; Michael E. McGerr, "Political Style and Women's Power, 1830-1930," *Journal of American History* 77 (Dec. 1990): 865-868; Davis, *Parades and Power*, 2-4, 46-47, 119, 149, 161-165; Robert F. Moss, *Barbecue: The History of an American Institution* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 54-55, 64-65; Also, see Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

flags and poles in their towns and cities to demonstrate their party's strength. Like their colonial and antebellum forebears, they believed that political decisions and electoral results did not have legitimacy until the people endorsed them in the streets.²⁵ In the postwar period, women resumed their important role at these events and lent their support to political parties despite lacking the right to vote. Like men, they attended barbecues, spoke before large audiences, raised flags and poles, presented flowers, persuaded voters outside of polling booths, sang hymns, and marched in parades.²⁶

In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, according to historians, party leaders and reformers, especially in northern communities, lamented the persistence of political spectacles. By the 1880s, northerners had accepted a new masculine ideal emphasizing composure and domesticity instead of passion and aggressiveness. As the war grew distant, northerners also wanted to distance themselves from militancy. In their politics, they preferred to act like refined intellectuals rather than soldiers. Northerners, therefore, wanted fewer parades and more debate. They condemned political spectacles, which they perceived as a ploy to attract illiterate and gullible voters, especially African Americans.²⁷

In the North and South, white middle-class Americans emphasized the need for intellectual debate and condemned political spectacles because they wanted to restrict political power to the elite. In terms of voting numbers, they succeeded. In the twentieth century, voters did not go to the polls in impressive numbers. By 1924, northerners only voted at a rate of 58 percent. Historian Michael E. McGerr explained the demise of popular politics in the North. As

²⁵ Mark W. Summers, "The Press Gang: Corruption and the Independent Press in the Grant Era," *Congress & the Presidency* v. 17 (Spring 1990): 29-44; McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 6-7, 14-38.

²⁶ Rebecca Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery: Gender in the American Party Politics from the Civil War to the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 25-28, 35, 53-54, 65, 81-83, 100-106, 128.

²⁷ Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery*, 66-68; James Corbett David, "The Politics of Emasculation: The Caning of Charles Sumner and Elite Ideologies of Manhood in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century United States," *Gender & History* vol. 19 (August 2007): 324-345; Craig Thompson Friend, *Southern Masculinity: Perspectives on Manhood in the South since Reconstruction* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2009).

politics became less partisan and spectacular and more intellectual, most northerners lost interest, especially as entertaining cultural spectacles, such as baseball, boxing, and theme parks, took their attention away from consulting the newest literature on political issues. In the South, voters stayed away from the polls for entirely different reasons. With disfranchisement measures, southerners kept poor black and white citizens away from the polls. By 1924, southerners voted only at a rate of 20 percent.²⁸ Although voting numbers plummeted, black and white southerners found ways to exercise a degree of political power.

Disfranchised southerners, including African Americans, found a way to express their politics at political spectacles.²⁹ In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, southerners continued to use militaristic, aggressive displays for political purposes. Despite disfranchisement, African Americans participated in politics by taking to the streets to join their black and white neighbors in popular demonstrations to support candidates, legitimize results, celebrate victories and defeats, and endorse political decisions. Unable to participate in official political activity on a large scale, these seemingly powerless men and women used what they had available to them, such as their musical talents, to gain small concessions and achieve a measure of visibility from a system crafted to oppress them, disfranchise them, and lynch them.³⁰

In the post-Reconstruction South, white Americans used spectacle to disseminate their ideology of white supremacy. By lynching African Americans, white Americans dramatically demonstrated their continued mastery of black bodies. Lynching served not just as a punishment for real or perceived transgressions but also as a message for the rest of society. Beyond its

²⁸ McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 186-215.

²⁹ I have reason to believe that spectacle continued in the North, as well. In this dissertation, I only examined the South but have come across instances of spectacular demonstration in the North. I have even included a few of them in these pages. I believe that future work should examine spectacle across sectional lines.

³⁰ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), xv-xvi.

immediate effects on black victims and white assailants, lynching became representational of white supremacy because souvenirs, images, and accounts of the violence and death reinforced its message across the nation. When black and white people encountered the stories and images of lynching, they remained assured that white people continued to rule. African Americans suffered numerous forms of abuse and humiliation, but lynching's spectacular nature made it the primary symbol of white supremacy in the United States. Although white assailants intended for lynching to serve as testimony white supremacy's strength, the lynching impetus resulted, in part, from white anxieties over living and working in closer to proximity to African Americans in increasingly urbanized and industrialized spaces. Lynching, furthermore, did not always have its intended affect on audiences because images of hanged and burned bodies helped galvanize resistance to white supremacy.³¹ With this dissertation, I contribute to a picture of white supremacy as never quite as dominant and complete as white southerners hoped to believe and project. At other spectacles similarly designed to reinforce white supremacy, such as campaign rallies and monument dedication ceremonies, African Americans countered the ideology of white supremacy in subtle, overt, and sometimes threatening ways.

In this dissertation, I explore many questions, but I intentionally leave some questions unanswered because this dissertation has its limits. First, I do not intend this dissertation to serve as a study of music or theater. Except in rare circumstances, I am reluctant to discuss composition. I have chosen a different route because many scholars have already examined the content of black music and performances. They have analyzed the ways in which African Americans integrated western styles and maintained African styles.³² They have also explained

³¹ Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 1-15; also see Hale, *Making Whiteness*.

³² Dena J. Epstein and Rosita Sands, "Secular Folk Music," in *African American Music: An Introduction*, ed. by Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby (New York; Routledge, 2006); Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University

how they used musical and theatrical elements for resistance.³³ Instead, I am interested in where performances occurred, for what purpose, how people discussed these performances, and the implications of the performance for economic and political purposes. Second, I cannot make any assertion as to whether this type of activity or black presence at political spectacles increased or decreased from 1877 to 1932 because of its extralegal and often-undesirable nature. For many reasons, white southerners had an incentive to keep black political behavior quiet. By acknowledging black presence at political spectacles, they would have been admitting that African Americans had taken their place in the public sphere and, in some cases, that they have a political conscious. With an admission of black presence, a southern politician would have jeopardized the image of politics as a whites-only process. I am able to argue, however, that spectacular politics continued into the twentieth century, and these events included both black and white people, which had important implications for white supremacy and black resistance.

To complete this study, I have examined a variety of sources but have relied on newspapers because existing scholarship has portrayed newspapers as supportive of political spectacles. Newspaper editors and reporters supported the persistence of popular politics in two ways. First, the partisan press mobilized people for the spectacles and encouraged them to participate because large audiences testified to the strength of the political party. They also believed that large crowds might serve as a means of community pressure and influence votes and deter corruption.³⁴ Second, newspaper editors and reporters helped outsiders relive the events. They wanted people to wish they had participated. With intense detail and bold claims,

Press, 2007); Imamu Amiri Baraka, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980); Brian Ward, *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

³³ Lawrence W. Levine, "African American Music as Resistance," in *African American Music: An Introduction*, ed. by Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maulsby (New York; Routledge, 2006); Gussow, *Seems Like Murder Here*; Lawson, *Jim Crow's Counterculture*; Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race*.

³⁴ Summers, "The Press Gang": 29-44; McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 14-38.

newspaper editors portrayed spectacular political events as remarkable. With this type of reporting, they connected outsiders to the events and expanded the boundaries and effects of the spectacle.³⁵ They also used their reporting to provide context and understanding to the events that unfolded, which means they had one of the loudest voices in contemporary dialogue about race in the United States. They could portray black activity at a spectacle as either a moment of accommodation to existing stereotypes or as a challenge to these stereotypes.³⁶ With this in mind, I searched and browsed major newspapers and small, local weekly publications for evidence of black participation at political spectacles. In addition to newspapers, I consulted archival material, especially with regard to the three case studies that appear in this dissertation, which highlight different types of black political activity.

I have arranged the chapters of this dissertation to highlight three major sites of black participation in spectacular politics, specifically reform movements, the Lost Cause, and partisan politics. In these spaces, African Americans leveraged their presence at spectacular events to attain economic and political power and, therefore, challenge white supremacy.

First, I focus on the reform movements of the period because they provided African Americans with the best opportunity for access to the public sphere and represented the groups most likely to rely on spectacles for political mobilization and influence. To overturn the existing political order, in other words, these movements relied on political spectacles and black voters. In Chapter 1, I reveal the extent to which African Americans pervaded the spectacles performed on behalf of third parties and reform movements because they represented a considerable part of these movements. Throughout the region, black and white southerners participated together in the temperance movement, labor movement, and third parties, such as the Community Party. In

³⁵ Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-De-Siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 11, 13, 22-24, 202.

³⁶ Markovitz, *Racial Spectacles*, 1-5.

Chapter 2, I demonstrate the persistence of a spectacle-based political culture in the temperance campaigns dominating politics in Georgia from 1885 to 1898. In these campaigns, prohibitionists and anti-prohibitionists considered political spectacle as an important part of their work. The issue split white voters, which made African Americans particularly powerful at the voting booths and at the political spectacles staged by both sides. Overall, these chapters describe the post-Reconstruction South as a time and place in which Americans, including African Americans, continued to view spectacles as a vital part of the political process.

Second, I examine black participation at Lost Cause spectacles to explain why black and white southerners agreed to unlikely alliances with one another. In Chapter 3, I explain how white southerners crafted and disseminated the image of the faithful slave. Then, I focus on how African Americans turned the image of the faithful slave into economic opportunity and challenged the Lost Cause. Behind the mask of the faithful slave, African Americans participated in white supremacist spectacles to secure economic opportunity, fame, and recognition of their professional status. Although white southerners manipulated black presence at their events to reinforce white supremacy and the Lost Cause, African Americans improved their conditions with these opportunities. They gained small favors, sums of money, and sometimes even fame and fortune. In Chapter 4, I demonstrate that African Americans in New Orleans challenged white supremacy by demanding recognition of their union rights and professional status. When the United Confederate Veterans planned their 1903 reunion in New Orleans, black and white musicians threatened to boycott the event unless the veterans employed the black musicians. By analyzing this incident, I explain how white southerners publicly portrayed black talent as an apolitical vestige of the Old South but would not let them play at the reunion. To the veterans and supporters, the sight of black professional musicians with union rights would have

threatened the romanticized image of the Old South that justified white supremacy.³⁷ These dynamics also played out in the political spectacles of the Democratic and Republican parties.

Finally, I describe black participation at formal and informal spectacles staged on behalf of the Democratic and Republican Party to explain how African Americans attained economic success and influenced electoral politics in creative and dangerous ways. In Chapter 5, I reveal that black performers worked for Republicans and Democrats in the South in search of economic opportunity and political influence. In the post-Reconstruction South, spectacles remained an important part of the political process because disfranchisement limited formal expressions of political power. As in the Lost Cause spectacles, African Americans manipulated stereotypes to enter seemingly off-limit spaces. African Americans had a notable presence at campaign rallies, political parades, public orations, bonfires, inauguration ceremonies, and other such events. By participating at these events, African Americans claimed membership in the political party and the body politic. Although many black performers did their work without incident, some African Americans exhibited potentially threatening behavior at political spectacles. They honored and humiliated public officials and candidates. In mobs, they burned white politicians in effigy. They embarrassed white politicians without the punishment usually reserved for insubordinate behavior because acknowledging the significance of these displays would have legitimized black political consciousness. In Chapter 6, I analyze the relationship between Memphis mayoral candidate Edward Hull Crump and black bandleader William Christopher Handy because they took advantage of spectacle to achieve power and fame. Crump's supporters employed Handy and his band to generate enthusiasm for the campaign and mobilize black voters on Beale Street to register and cast ballots. Given this opportunity, Handy created a song that inspired black and

³⁷ Portions of Chapter 4 were previously published in *Louisiana History* 56 (Summer 2015): 315-343, copyright Louisiana Historical Association.

white voters to support Crump, but the song also made Handy famous and launched his successful career as a composer and publisher.³⁸

With these findings, I paint a different picture of the post-Reconstruction American South and black resistance to white supremacy. I hope to remind readers that white supremacy had its limits. African Americans remained surprisingly fearless and aggressive in the face of the law and the threat of lynching, which claimed thousands of victims and put fear into the hearts of black southerners. Rather than focusing on lawyers and politicians, who challenged white supremacy in the courts and legislatures without much success, I shed light on a different story, which emphasizes the seemingly smallest forms of resistance that nonetheless softened white supremacy's harshest elements. With their performance at political spectacles, African Americans could only expect to secure a couple extra dollars, some modest publicity, or a laugh at someone else's expense. At times, however, their performances generated national attention, toppled politicians, and went a long way to helping African Americans secure and exercise economic and political rights.

³⁸ Portions of Chapter 6 were previously published in *Southern Cultures* 20 (Summer 2014): 52-68, copyright Center for the Study of the American South.

CHAPTER 1

“OUT IN FULL FORCE”: BLACK PARTICIPATION IN THE SPECTACULAR POLITICS OF THE AGE OF REFORM

On Wednesday, November 16, 1892, Democrats in Clinton, North Carolina, buried an effigy of twenty-nine-year-old Populist politician Marion Butler. His once-promising political career, after all, seemed dead.¹ Born in 1863 near Clinton, Butler quickly built a career as a Democrat in Sampson County and North Carolina politics. In 1890, Butler became one of 110 members of the Farmers' Alliance to win a position in the North Carolina General Assembly. As the youngest state senator, he became a crucial voice for the Populists in the Democratic Party and the General Assembly. In 1891, the members of the North Carolina Farmers' Alliance chose him as their president. Rather than form a third party, he wanted to work within the Democratic Party to accomplish his reform goals, specifically the coinage of silver. By 1892, Butler had lost hope for an alliance with Democrats when they nominated fiscal-conservative Grover Cleveland as their presidential candidate. In 1892, he became a leader in the North Carolina People's Party and served as chairman of the party's nominating convention and platform committee. The delegates also chose him as their presidential elector-at-large. During the 1892 campaign season, he traveled from town to town to support Populists in their election bids, and his personal reputation suffered. North Carolina's Democrats knew him as MaryAnn Butler and characterized him as a gambler, drunkard, thief, and “bad egg.” On November 14, 1892, North Carolina

¹ “Buried in Effigy at Clinton,” *Watauga Democrat*, Nov. 17, 1892, 1.

Democrats crushed Butler's Populists by dominating elections for national, state, and local offices.² The defeat of the Populists inspired Sampson County Democrats to hold an elaborate funeral ceremony for their former champion.

At 4 p.m., the courthouse bells rang out, and Democrats gathered in large numbers in the courthouse square for the funeral rites. The crowd marched around the courthouse two or three times while a brass band played funeral dirges. At the head of the funeral procession, a few marchers held a white banner with black letters: "In Memory of Maryann Butler. He died young." After completing their procession, the crowd gathered around a short, deep grave to hear funeral orations from local politicians, who brought "an infinite amount of humor to bear on the subject" and "a rare bit of wit and satire." After the orations, "the grave was closed and a number of young men gravely laid upon the new made mound bunches of old dried leaves tied with dirty rags" while the crowd continued to sing hymns. To conclude the funeral rites, they erected a headstone and then dispersed "amid yelling and laughing over the ridiculous spectacle." According to rumors, Butler watched his own funeral from a nearby office window.³

Although the Populists suffered defeat in 1892, Butler did not disappear from North Carolina politics, and he would continue to experience humiliation. He reworked the Populists' political strategy around the silver issue. He reached out to North Carolina Republicans to form a coalition capable of beating the Democrats. He purchased the *Tarboro Farmers' Advocate* and re-branded the newspaper as the *Caucasian*, which he used as an organ to spread a Populist and white supremacist message. From the editorial pages, he devoted his newspaper to the "interests of the wealth producers of North Carolina," thus spreading a subtler form of white supremacy than the original newspaper, which committed itself to "pure democracy and white supremacy."

² James L. Hunt, *Marion Butler and American Populism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 33-37, 40-41, 47-49, 52-57.

³ "Buried in Effigy at Clinton," *Watauga Democrat* (Boone, NC), Nov. 17, 1892, 1.

He no longer served as president of the state Farmers' Alliance, but he did serve as chairman of the executive committee. After marrying the daughter of a wealthy plantation owner, he embarked on a tour of North Carolina and presented numerous speeches to revive the Farmers' Alliance and People's Party.⁴ On November 10, 1893, Butler spoke in Monroe, North Carolina, to rally local Populists. The event's organizers arranged a band of black musicians to furnish music as the audience filed into the Union County Courthouse on Main Street. At 11:30 a.m., Butler commenced his speech but did not finish without interruption. About twenty minutes into the speech, a prankster put red pepper in the ventilator at the top of the courthouse, which caused "a vast amount of sneezing and coughing" and forced the crowd "to vacate and wait for the building to cool off." After exiting the building, the wheezing Populists encountered the black musicians on the porch. They did not know that their local leaders had employed the musicians. Instead, they assumed that the musicians had shown up "out of ridicule or spite." They "kicked and drove the band out into the middle of the street" before realizing their mistake. After the fray, Butler continued his speech, and the Populists permitted the black musicians to play from the gallery within the courthouse. After concluding his speech, he walked the streets of the city, but residents threw eggs at him.⁵ North Carolinians did not hesitate to intimidate their opponents with public harassment or humiliation.

When North Carolinians buried effigies, threw eggs at candidates, and attacked black musicians, they participated in a thriving, centuries-old spectacular political culture through which citizens expressed national and party loyalties but also agitated for revolution and reform. During the American Revolution, patriots mobilized to celebrate new nationalistic occasions,

⁴ Hunt, *Marion Butler*, 64-67.

⁵ "A Populist Meeting at Monroe Broken Up by a Shower of Pepper," *The Landmark* (Statesville, NC), Nov. 11, 1893; "From Our Raleigh Correspondent," *Charlotte Democrat*, Nov. 17, 1893; "A Populist Meeting at Monroe Broken Up by a Shower of Pepper," *Watauga Democrat*, Nov. 23, 1893; "More Pepper at Monroe," *Daily Charlotte Observer*, Nov. 11, 1893, 1.

such as the Fourth of July, thus popularly endorsing the decisions, such as the move for independence, made by elite representatives in Philadelphia and Boston. Newspaper editors circulated the news of festivities, so people across the country could participate in common celebrations with their fellow citizens. Americans wrote and performed plays to express their patriotism and disseminate a vision of the past and project a future of the new nation. These popular spectacles became the means by which American patriots first affirmed their loyalty in the United States of America and to one another. By participating, Americans staked their claim to membership in the nation's political community.⁶

For rebellious Americans, public demonstrations served as the basis of their insurrection against royal authority. As colonial intellectuals published rational arguments against Parliament's policies and actions, working-class insurrectionists hanged effigies of monarchical advisors, royal officials, and colonial agents. In New York, laborers marched in unity from Broadway to Fort George by candlelight and hanged effigies of the devil and the colony's governor. With these popular demonstrations, working-class Americans vented years of frustrations over colonial policies that enhanced the wealth of a few at the expense of many. They caused more than damage and humiliation. They gained tangible results by forcing colonial agents to open ports and permit ships to sail without customs stamps. Through these experiences, Americans learned how to cooperate, organize, and agitate for political purpose, and they created a legacy of popular demonstrations that influenced future generations of Americans.⁷

⁶ Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 3, 7-13, 18-24; Schaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 7-9; Davis, *Parades and Power*, 2-7, 9, 12-13.

⁷ Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 184-194; Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 17-19; McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 214-215; Brendan McConville, *The King's Three Faces: The Rise & Fall of Royal America, 1688-1776* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 306-311.

During the early national period, Americans continued to participate in popular spectacles to affirm their nationalism, but they infused these local celebrations with partisanship. When conservative political leaders sought to reform the country with the Constitution. To accomplish this goal, they fashioned a form of popular politics that expanded to include the middle-class, upper-class, and women. They relied on the press to generate participation in their spectacles. To rejoice in the ratification of the Constitution in 1788, Americans paraded in a series of Grand Federal Processions in cities and towns across the country. By reporting popular demonstrations in newspapers across the nation, they generated a sense that the document had been popularly and enthusiastically ratified in the streets. Similarly, Federalists and Republicans organized spirited campaigns for their respective candidates. Party leaders organized militia regiments to march on their party's behalf in Fourth of July parades. In rural areas, residents gathered for barbecue picnics, at which local civic leaders fed the spectators a prodigious amount of meat, starches, and desserts alongside rhetoric of nationalism and partisanship. At popular political events, voters made themselves the focus and hosted the speakers and candidates as their guests, which marked a shift from deferential to democratic politics in the United States. By participating at these events, antebellum Americans simultaneously identified themselves as loyal Americans, expressed a commitment to democracy, and pledged their unwavering faith in a political party. Americans communicated with local and national politicians and shaped their relationship with their government with these traditions.⁸

After the Civil War, Americans participated in a vibrant spectacular political culture enhanced by newspaper journalism and a militaristic spirit. Responding to public demand for timely and accurate wartime news, journalists made immense strides in their craft, such as

⁸ Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 3, 7-13, 184-192; McGerr, "Political Style": 865-866; Moss, *Barbecue*, 13-17; Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

widespread use of the telegraph. Newspapers became vital to popular politics by connecting a postwar nation that stretched across the continent. Like most nineteenth-century Americans, editors and journalists were intense partisans and exacerbated political divisions with their reporting and editorials, especially on the subject of political corruption. Editors often fabricated or exaggerated these stories, which destroyed Americans' confidence in their government and enhanced partisan spirit.⁹ As they had done before the war, Americans expressed their partisan loyalties with popular demonstrations, such as flag-raising ceremonies, torchlight parades, rallies, and picnics. They formed marching companies and political clubs. They attracted audiences to rallies and parades with music played by brass bands. With unprecedented access to information and the lively atmosphere of the proceedings, political campaigns engrossed people for months before election day. Fueled by the press and partisanship, Americans voted in record-level numbers from 1870 to 1900. When voters arrived at the polls, they brandished colored ballots to announce their allegiance. They wore ribbons and buttons. After casting their votes, they continued to proclaim their politics by parading through the streets and gathering with likeminded voters to await the results.¹⁰

Throughout the nineteenth century, Americans participated in these political spectacles regardless of their age, ethnicity, class, and sex. In urban areas, people gathered across class lines to celebrate national holidays. These celebrations, however, could exacerbate class differences when working-class people and local elites tried to impart their own interpretation on the event. At these events, women made significant contributions, as well. During the 1830s and 1840s, they performed traditional domestic tasks, such as sewing banners and preparing food. In some cases, they adorned symbols of beauty, liberty, and virtue and marched in parades. They played

⁹ Summers, "The Press Gang": 29-44; McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 14-38.

¹⁰ Summers, "The Press Gang": 29-44; McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 14-38.

prominent roles in popular politics, especially among Whigs, who championed the antebellum temperance and abolition reform movements, both of which appealed to women. Free and enslaved African Americans engaged politics through popular spectacles, which earned them both praise and scorn. They cooked for white people at political barbecues throughout the South and even attended as guests, drinking and eating with white neighbors and slaveholders. Political leaders characterized the presence of black guests at their opponents' political spectacles as a sign of the degradation of politics and the problems of mass political culture. After the Civil War, women started organizing their own events by expanding the domestic realm to access more political power. African Americans, furthermore, participated alongside white Americans and crafted their own festivals and celebrations, which connected them with white Americans while expressing an alternative political agenda that celebrated emancipation and demanded civil rights.¹¹ In nineteenth-century America, the spectacle demarcated the boundaries of the political sphere, and women and African Americans put themselves within these boundaries by participating.

In the 1870s, middle-class liberal reformers commenced a campaign against spectacular politics because they favored an elitist, educated political style that condemned universal manhood suffrage, unwavering party loyalties, and impassioned spectacular politics. Reformers hoped to eradicate real and perceived corruption, so they attacked the principle that every man should have the right to vote. In the South, reformers successfully disfranchised thousands of black and white voters with poll taxes and other methods, which seemingly destroyed popular

¹¹ Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 9-10, 82-84, 230-233; Wilentz, "Artisan Republican", 37-77; McGerr, "Political Style": 865-868; Davis, *Parades and Power*, 2-4, 46-47, 119, 149, 161-165; Moss, *Barbecue*, 54-55, 64-65; Also, Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*.

politics.¹² In the North, reformers adopted subtler methods to restrict the right to vote, such as immigration restrictions, secret ballots, and tighter registration requirements. Northern reformers also argued that responsible citizens did not possess absolute party loyalties but sought information to reach independent conclusions. Americans no longer felt inspired to express their politics through popular demonstrations because of the emphasis on enlightened politics and disillusionment with partisanship. Without spectacles and guidance from the partisan press, less-educated voters did not invest their time or interest into issue-based political campaigns. Newspaper editors helped contribute to apathy toward rallies and parades by printing news and speeches from people and events from across the country. People lost the enthusiasm for local politics. Through the independent press, journalists separated less-educated people from politics with their fact-based, unbiased reporting. These journalists reported sensational news and features but relegated political news to smaller coverage. By 1892, Democrats and Republicans had forsaken political spectacle in favor of intellectual methods, such as the dissemination of pamphlets and other educational materials. Partisan spirit and high voter-turnouts lingered but eventually faded.¹³

By the turn of the century, Americans had become apathetic toward popular politics, which deviated from an overall trend toward spectacular displays in other aspects of life. During the 1890s, politicians could not compete with new forms of entertainment made possible by mass consumerism and new technology.¹⁴ In urban areas, Americans attended theatrical performances, viewed movies at the cinema, visited amusements parks such as Coney Island, and cheered on hometown teams at sporting venues. Americans incorporated these spectacles into their daily

¹² McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 6-7. In this section, McGerr identifies disfranchisement as the harbinger of popular politics in the South. He points out the massive decline in voter turnout but does not seem to pursue whether or not popular politics continued.

¹³ McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 43-70, 107-137.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

lives, but they turned their everyday realities into spectacles, too. Americans dramatized race relations for mass consumption through stage productions, musical performances, and even lynchings.¹⁵ Given the centrality of spectacle to American democracy, it seems unlikely that popular politics would disappear at the same time that spectacles and mass consumerism became so intertwined with modern, urban life in the United States and around the world.¹⁶

In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, reformers, such as prohibitionists and labor advocates, and third party leaders, like the Populists, relied on vibrant spectacular political culture of parades and rallies to spread their message and mobilize voters. They agitated the established political order with pamphlets and, like their revolutionary predecessors, generated popular approval for their reforms with spectacular demonstrations. Reformers and third-party leaders depended on pamphlets and newspapers to differentiate their vision from the traditional political order. They did not, however, make educational literature the centerpiece of their campaigns. They based their political style on spectacle. They wore badges and uniforms to the polls, organized parades, raised banners and flags in the city squares, and performed other ceremonies to create a sense of community. The Populists, for example, portrayed themselves as enlightened intellectuals with informed opinions who condemned spectacular displays. Nonetheless, they hosted parades, formed glee clubs, marched banners through the streets, and blasted fireworks into the sky.¹⁷

In addition to the need for spectacle, these reform movements and third parties required black votes to succeed and overthrow the entrenched parties. In 1870, Americans ratified the

¹⁵ Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race*, 1, 4-6; Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, The Great Migration, and Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 5-8; Barbara L. Webb, "Authentic Possibilities: Plantation Performance of the 1890s," *Theatre Journal* 56 (Mar. 2004): 63-65; Lawson, *Jim Crow's Counterculture*, 28-32; Hale, *Making Whiteness*; Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*; Crystal N. Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

¹⁶ Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities*, 2-6, 10-12.

¹⁷ McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 214-215.

Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which guaranteed black male voting rights, but African Americans never enjoyed free and easy access to the polling booth. To eliminate black voting power, white southerners formed paramilitary organizations to intimidate black voters and keep them away from polling stations. In the 1868 and 1872 elections, white Louisianans terrorized and massacred black voters and officeholders. In the wake of the 1872 gubernatorial election in Louisiana, white Democrats killed more than 100 African Americans in the Colfax Massacre. To the same ends, Georgians passed a poll tax in 1877, and other states took similar measures.¹⁸ Although reformers, like other white southerners, tended to have fears of black political power, they needed creative alliances to mobilize enough votes. African American proved receptive to new political alliances as they became more disillusioned with the Republican Party, so they provided considerable support to these movements, especially in local and statewide elections. African Americans held the balance of power when white southerners could not agree. At the spectacles staged on behalf of reform movements and third parties, therefore, African Americans often had a public, visible role in politics.

In the early twentieth century, many white southerners resented the alliances that black southerners made with members of their own race, so they successfully disfranchised black voters as a response, which did not stop black participation at spectacular events. In the twentieth century, African Americans continued to express their politics in the public spectacles held on behalf of the prohibition issue, third parties, and the labor movement. With power at the ballot box severely limited, African Americans marched in parades, attended campaign rallies, and mobilized voters to make an impact in the political sphere. They remained an element part of

¹⁸ LeeAnna Keith, *The Colfax Massacre: The Untold Story of Black Power, White Terror, and the Death of Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Michael Perman, *Struggle for Mastery: Disfranchisement in the South, 1888-1908* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 291.

these movements as they maneuvered the system to cast ballots, but they also remained extremely visible, especially in the prohibition movement.

After the Civil War, the prohibition movement gained energy with much of it powered by African Americans, who made significant contributions to the movement in the South because the issue split white voters along class, ethnic, and religious lines. When voters went to the polls to decide the issue, they did not vote as Democrats or Republicans but rather as dries or wets. In 1887, for example, Texas voters went to the polls to decide the fate of alcohol in a state-wide referendum. Democrats dominated Texas politics, but they could not agree to prohibit alcohol. Progressive Democrats supported moral reforms, including prohibition, to ameliorate social conditions and promote better government. Conservative Democrats, however, opposed prohibition because it threatened individual liberty. Across the region, the issue divided people along other lines, as well. Prohibitionists generated support among rural, native-born, evangelical Protestants by tapping into their frustration and cynicism toward immigrants and other urban dwellers. Catholics, Germans, and urbanites tended to oppose prohibition. Within the city, prohibitionists could claim support from the middle class but not the working class. With all of these cleavages, southern white voters did not speak with a unified voice in the countless local-option campaigns in the South. Black Republicans, therefore, could vote as a bloc and tip the balance in whatever direction offered them the most promise. They seized these opportunities to make tangible gains in their conditions, but they proceeded with caution because of their precarious condition.¹⁹

¹⁹ James W. Endersby, "Prohibition and Repeal: Voting on Statewide Liquor Referenda in Texas," *The Social Science Journal* 49 (2012), 505; George Cantrell, "'Dark Tactics': Black Politics in the 1887 Texas Prohibition Campaign," *Journal of American Studies* 25:1 (Apr. 1991): 85-86; Stephen A. West, "'A Hot Municipal Contest': Prohibition and Black Politics in Greenville, South Carolina, after Reconstruction," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 11 (Oct. 2012): 519-524.

During the 1880s, African Americans formally contributed to temperance campaigns at the voting booths and as leaders and managers for both sides of the issue. In 1881 and 1884, black and white delegates gathered for the State Temperance Convention of Alabama. At the 1884 event, the biracial delegation moved to support the National Prohibition Party. In 1882, North Carolina's anti-prohibitionists formed the Liberal Anti-Prohibition Party and held a convention. At this convention, the 150-person delegation included 30 African Americans. The new political party ran black candidates for the state legislature and secured a couple victories. In 1887, about 90,000 black voters cast ballots in Tennessee's vote on a statewide prohibition amendment, which failed.²⁰ These black voters and officeholders influenced the outcome of prohibition and anti-prohibition campaigns, which often coincided with participation in the era's vibrant culture of popular politics.

In 1883, the black and white residents of Greenville, South Carolina, engaged in a spectacular contest over the future of the city's eighteen saloons. African Americans made up almost half of the town's residents, so they would play a major role in the outcome of the election especially because the issue split white voters without regard to party lines. On election day, black men cast their ballots while black children paraded and sang in the streets and black women served lunch to prohibition supporters. At the conclusion of the voting, the wets had won by a slim margin. Black and white men affirmed the decision by partying in the town's streets, launching fireworks into the sky, and harassing leading prohibitionists by marching near their homes. In many prohibition elections, African Americans held the elections in their hands as

²⁰ Hanes Walton Jr. and James E. Taylor, "Blacks and the Southern Prohibition Movement," *Phylon* 32:3 (1971), 250-258.

they did in Greenville, so they leveraged their power into meaningful gains, such as improved schools and municipal appointments to the police and fire squads.²¹

In 1887, black Texans made their presence and politics known by voting and with their participation in the rituals that accompanied a statewide prohibition referendum. Across the state, dries and wets held rallies and barbecues for crowds of four to six thousand black and white voters. At these events, the prohibitionists featured religious leaders to speak with moral authority against alcohol. Black voters, however, wanted political leverage rather than salvation. They also wanted freedom and power. In a series of speeches, ex-bondsman Melvin Wade explained to black and white audiences that freed people would vote the wet ticket because they appreciated freedom.²² On July 26, 1887, anti-prohibitionists gathered near Fort Worth. The 500,000 participants from across the state created a festival-like event, which featured nine bands to furnish music. In the morning, they formed a procession and marched for forty-five minutes through the city's streets. The parade featured "colored voters from all over the State," who "marched with their delegations sandwiched between their white friends" with "no distinction made in regard to them." After the march, the massive crowd of black and white voters feasted on poultry, goat, veal, and pork while listening to a series of speeches by prominent anti-prohibitionists including state officials. The program continued deep into the night.²³ By participating in this event, these black voters became part of the anti-prohibition community, which welcomed both black and white supporters. They helped forge a temporary yet important political and racial alliance that the prohibitionists could not overcome at the voting booths.

On August 4, 1887, the "fight culminated in a day of intense excitement" as the anti-prohibitionists and prohibitionists pleaded for every vote. "The thermometer was high, but not

²¹ West, "A Hot Municipal Contestz": 519-551.

²² Cantrell, "Dark Tactics": 85-93.

²³ "A Big Demonstration: The Greatest Anti-Prohibition Rally Texas Ever Saw," *New York Times*, Jul. 27, 1887, 1.

higher than the feeling between the parties,” commented a reporter, who proceeded to chronicle the feverish events of the day. In Galveston, the prohibitionists “were out in full force” and set up booths by each polling place. At these booths, “women attired in a uniform similar to that worn by Salvationists” provided voters with lunch and marked ballots. “The women engaged in active canvass for votes” and employed their children in the work, as well. The prohibitionists created a series of wagons covered “with various devices calculated to inspire a terror of rum and the liquor traffic.” They rolled these wagons through the streets to persuade and energize voters. In carriages, women made their way through the streets and pled with voters to save their sons. In churches, women gathered for prayer services. Likewise, Galveston’s anti-prohibitionists mobilized voters with a series of stump-speakers, who urged voters to avoid fanaticism and condemned the work of the women at the booths. In Laredo, the anti-prohibitionists staged an impressive procession complete with bands and carriages, which they used to transport the city’s voters to the polls. In Denison, “women worked as hard at the polls as did their sisters in Galveston.” The W.C.T.U women met at the local church and descended upon each of the city’s polling places, where they remained all day. Led by a drum corps, the city’s children marched through the city and sang temperance hymns. On floats, young women sang temperance hymns. In Tyler, the anti-prohibitionists outmaneuvered their opponents by taking possession of every major public space in the city, which relegated prohibitionists to private, smaller spaces. In Fort Worth, the anti-prohibitionists staged a rally for black voters and read the letter penned by former confederate president Jefferson Davis for the campaign. He emphasized personal liberty as the foundation of the country. Despite its origins, the letter’s message of freedom resonated among black voters “with good effect.” Amid the election day spectacle, voters did cast ballots. The anti-prohibitionists benefitted from the support of about seventy-four percent of the state’s

black voters to win a significant victory. Based on the success of this campaign, black Texans would sporadically work with white voters to defeat Democrats at the polls in future elections.²⁴

During the 1887 campaign for a statewide prohibition amendment in Tennessee, African Americans had a constant presence at campaign events for both sides. On September 14, a wagon carried a black band through Nashville's major streets to announce a prohibition speaker at the Olympic Theater. A grocer and baker responded, "Vote for beer and pretzels" and promised: "If the state goes dry, goodbye my pretzels, good-bye."²⁵ On September 24, about 4,000 black and white prohibitionists assembled in Nashville's Public Square to listen to black minister J. C. Price of North Carolina speak in support of the proposed amendment. During the speech, he argued that prohibition would lead to harmony between the races, safer and more-intact black families, more educational opportunities for African Americans, and less criminal behavior. After the speech, a local black minister gave a "short and earnest address" and "urged his people to throw themselves with energy into the great fight now before them."²⁶ Like black South Carolinians and Texans, black Tennesseans made themselves visible members of politics by participating at these events.

In 1890, the black and white residents of Lynchburg, Virginia, participated in a spectacular campaign on the subject of prohibition. The local-option prohibition contest stirred the town from "centre to circumference as it has seldom, if ever, been stirred before." With the excitement at a "fever heat on both sides," men and women hit the streets to participate in the campaign. On January 9, prohibitionists and anti-prohibitionists each staged a parade through the

²⁴ "Women in Politics: The Prohibition Battle Fought In Texas Yesterday," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Aug. 5, 1887, 5; H. Paul Thompson, Jr., *A Most Stirring and Significant Episode: Religion and the Rise and Fall of Prohibition in Black Atlanta, 1865-1887* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013), 215-216; Endersby, "Prohibition and Repeal": 505; Cantrell, "Dark Tactics": 85-86.

²⁵ "At Loggerheads," *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), Sept. 15, 1887, 1.

²⁶ "Real Oratory: A Splendid Oration in Favor of Prohibition," *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), Sept. 25, 1887, 7; Walton, Jr. and Taylor, "Blacks and the Southern Prohibition Movement": 256.

city's major streets with black musicians at the head of the march. These two parades met near Main Street, where the "colored bands that headed the two processions came together, mingled momentarily in what seemed inextricable confusion, but finely separated without a serious collision." After the incident, the prohibitionists proceeded to a meeting at the city's opera house, and the anti-prohibitionists "marched on to the Madison Street armory, where an immense meeting in favor of 'moisture' was held."²⁷ In many of these events, the spectacle takes the form of combat with opposing sides seeking to outmaneuver and disrupt one another. In these battles, African Americans sometimes led the charge.

When African Americans opposed prohibition, they often conflicted with white women before a public audience, which tended to entail trouble. In 1888, a local-option prohibition campaign in Versailles, Kentucky, caused quite a stir because of the interactions between black and white street demonstrators. An Oregon-based newspaper reporter characterized the town as "in the very heart of the Blue Grass region" and "the hottest hotbed of Kentucky aristocracy." On election day, the city's female prohibitionists occupied booths near the polls and provided "free lemonade and winsome smiles" for fellow supporters. They sang temperance songs and spoke with voters in an attempt to influence the election. In reaction, "the chivalrous opposition sent away and secured a negro band to drown the voices of the ladies, and by that and other similar means carried the day."²⁸ The reporter commented that despite "all the talk about chivalry in the South," bourbonism forced chivalry into the back seat. When the black musicians agreed to play for the anti-prohibitionist leaders, they assumed a dangerous role. In the post-Reconstruction South, southerners had designed segregation to mark black people as inferior but also out of a desire to protect white women, so they crafted laws to maintain distance between middle-class

²⁷ "A Local-Option Contest: Lynchburg Greatly Stirred Up—Brass Bands and Oratory," *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Jan. 10, 1890, 3.

²⁸ Untitled News Brief, *The Morning Oregonian* (Portland, OR), Aug. 25, 1888, 4.

white women and black men in crowded public spaces.²⁹ To similar ends, white southerners passed antimiscegenation laws to maintain separation of the races in sex and marriage.³⁰ When black men threatened the separation of the races, they could face severe punishment in the form of arrest or lynching, especially if a middle-class white woman made an accusation of rape.³¹ In this episode, therefore, the black musicians put on a dangerous public show of defiance to white supremacy and challenged the pedestal upon which southern society put white middle-class women. Unlike many unfortunate black southerners, these musicians escaped harassment, perhaps, because the spectacle required white women and black men to act out their respective roles for consumption by spectators. Upon witnessing the scene, white observers may have felt satisfied, to an extent, by seeing black men act just as like the characters in minstrel shows, which justified their white supremacist worldview.

By participating in these spectacles, African Americans had the opportunity to mingle with national candidates. On October 24, 1896, Prohibition Party vice-presidential candidate Hale Johnson, from Illinois, arrived in Clarksville, Tennessee, for a speaking engagement. His supporters greeted him at the train station. Throughout the day, the city's black musicians escorted him through the city.³² In the final two decades of the nineteenth century, black southerners often played a role in the era's vibrant culture of spectacular politics, which brought them into contact with high-ranking politicians.

²⁹ Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 136-142; Williamson, *The Crucible of Race*, 251-256; Dorr, *White Women*, 15-28.

³⁰ Rachel F. Moran, *Interracial Intimacy: The Regulation of Race & Romance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

³¹ Dorr, *White Women*, 15-28; Diane Miller Somerville, *Rape and Race in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 200-202; Dorr and Somerville point out that working-class white women did not necessarily benefit from white men's protection of virtue, so their accusations did not always result in conviction or extralegal punishment.

³² "Hale Johnson's Theory: Saloons Are More Dangerous Than Any Money Standard," *The American* (Nashville, TN), Oct. 25, 1896, 5.

During the 1880s and 1890s, African Americans caused quite a stir in the campaigns and elections concerning the prohibition issue, but they made an impact on other issues and supported many other third-party movements. As in the prohibition movement, African Americans worked for and against many third parties, which challenged the traditional political parties and, therefore, needed black support. After Reconstruction ended, white Democrats faced challenges to their dominance in the South because of factions within their diverse coalition. Many white southerners chose to leave the Democratic Party for any number of third parties. These third parties, including the Readjusters and People's Party, relied on popular spectacle. These third parties had to attract black voters to dislodge the Democrats, so they reached out to black Republicans. Often, these alliances did not amount to much because they required universal support from black Republicans. When they did succeed, these parties mostly benefited white southerners, but African Americans did gain political influence and tangible results. Like the prohibition movement, nonetheless, third parties provided another arena with high levels of black participation. During the 1870s and 1880s, African Americans lent their support, in similar ways as they did for the prohibition movement, to third parties with their ballots and with their participation in popular spectacle.³³

In 1879, disillusioned Virginians established the Readjuster Party to challenge the power of wealthy white planters, and they relied on African Americans for their brief success.³⁴ During the 1870s, Virginia Democrats decided to pay off the state's debt, so they cut public schools and other services. In response, lower-class black and white Virginians supported William Mahone, a former general in the Confederate Army, as state governor. Mahone established the Readjuster

³³ Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 373-377; Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 53.

³⁴ Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*.

Party. Faced with the threat of bankruptcy and social and economic turmoil, the Readjusters intended to readjust the state debt and increase funding for public schools and facilities. Like most third parties, they actively courted African Americans to their ranks. After initial hesitancy, African Americans responded. They maintained loyalty to the Republican Party but recognized that an alliance with white Readjusters gave them a shot at electoral success and patronage positions. After the 1879 election, the Readjusters controlled sections of state government, including both the state legislature and state senate because thirteen black Republicans had won seats. When these black Republicans supported Mahone in his bid for the U.S. Senate, they successfully forged an alliance that offered hope to black Virginians. Immediately, Readjusters offered patronage positions to African Americans. In state matters, the alliance seemed to work, but African Americans still owed their national allegiance to the Republican Party. Black Virginians did not yet know if the Readjusters would affirm their alliance with the black community or compromise with the Funders of the Conservative Party, or Democrats. From the black perspective, the Readjusters needed to guarantee that African Americans could access the polls on election day, which they both needed to protect their alliance and achieve electoral success.³⁵

During the 1881 campaign, Readjusters made frequent use of spectacle, which had a militaristic element to it, and African Americans played a vital role in the fight. From the beginning of the party system, party leaders often created highly organized teams of campaign workers that resembled military units. Dressed in military-style uniforms, these teams went out to canvass voters and encourage men to vote.³⁶ The Readjusters used similar means to mobilize voters in Virginia. In Petersburg, Mahone set up his campaign headquarters and directed “his

³⁵ Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, 15-47, 48-76; Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 373-379.

³⁶ McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 12, 22-27.

forces with his usual skill.” During the campaign, Mahone appointed black canvassers to travel around the state to rally voters, address audiences, and organize events. For each county, Mahone appointed black and white lieutenants to manage the election day work. They organized supporters into squads of ten voters and assigned black and white squad captains. On election day, these captains had the responsibility to distribute ballots and march voters to the polls.³⁷

Virginians debated the significance and utility of popular demonstrations on election day, and they mostly concluded that popular spectacle entailed political power. On the morning of the election, *Petersburg Index Appeal* editors argued, “Elections are the curse of this country—not the principle, but the methods.” They asked voters to cast their ballots quickly and quietly and then return to “daily business.” The editors condemned “promiscuous gatherings about the polls” because these displays “breed confusion and disorder, and lead often to collisions and bloodshed.” They argued, furthermore, that success did not result from having “the largest number of idlers about the polls” but instead insisted that “ballots only count.” They pleaded for “a peaceful election.”³⁸ Although some people condemned electoral spectacle, they could not stop it or undermine its significance.

The political leaders of the Funders and Readjusters did not heed this advice. On the same editorial page, Superintendent of the City Central Committee Richard B. Davis encouraged voters to “vote early” and “remain at the polls, as far as practicable, all day” for the “welfare of the country.” He instructed voters to “be not deterred by the weather from the discharge of your plain duty at the polls” because their “very presence will influence some vote and swell the

³⁷ Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 375-380; Dr. William H. Henning to William Mahone, 14 July 1881, William Mahone Papers, box 187; County Canvassers, Lunenburg County, 1881, WMP, box 187; County Canvassers, Buckingham County, 1881, WMP, box 187; Local Readjuster Organization and Expenses, Louisa County, n.d., WMP, box 188; Readjuster Organization, King and Queen County, n.d., WMP, box 189; Readjuster Organization, Southampton County, n.d., WMP, box 189.

³⁸ “Election Day,” *Petersburg Index Appeal*, Nov. 8, 1881, 2.

certain majority” for the Funders. He concluded, “Up! Virginians! Do your duty to-day and save your State from the coalition.”³⁹ Similarly, C. B. Raine, who served as the Superintendent of the Republican Party, instructed his fellow Republicans, “Go to the polls and vote early, and stay there all day, rain or shine.” He explained, “You will never know what vote you can influence until you try, and there is no better way to get votes than to be at the polls prepared to do your whole duty.” He concluded with a rather preposterous statement. He stated, “There was never a battle fought on the soil of Virginia, or an election held in the State upon which depends so much good for us, and the whole country as the election today.”⁴⁰ To party organizers, the spectacle had political significance because it could lead to electoral success.

On election day, Virginians braved terrible weather to collectively participate in the spectacle. In Richmond, crowds gathered outside of the *Daily Dispatch* office to see updates from election officials. In the windows of the building, they hanged pictures of the major candidates with the vote totals. “During a good part of the time the rain came down in heavy showers,” explained a reporter, who explained that the crowds found shelter in nearby doorways. Despite the rain, “the street was never wholly deserted, as there was about half an acre of umbrellas on hand, or rather in hand, and beneath these the enthusiastic Democracy stood cheering good news and growling at bad.” Throughout the day, the crowd experienced mood swings as the election results remained in doubt. As conflicting reports reached the audience, the crowd would swing from moments of “great exultation” and quickly relapse into discouragement. During the day, rain may have dampened enthusiasm for the election day

³⁹ “Your Duty, Virginians!” *Petersburg Index Appeal*, 2.

⁴⁰ “Republicans of Petersburg,” *Petersburg Index Appeal*, Nov. 8, 1881, 1.

spectacle, but the weather turned favorable. In Petersburg, residents came alive at night and celebrated that the election “passed off in a quiet and orderly manner.”⁴¹

Amid the spectacle, African Americans set the tone of the day by taking control of the polls. The white voters at the polls “had a realizing sense of the nature of the contest when on Tuesday morning they beheld long lines of ignorant negroes standing in solid array at the strong negro precincts ready to cast their votes.”⁴² By making themselves visible on election day, African Americans secured a spot for themselves in the political sphere. African Americans participated in other movements, as well. In addition to their work on behalf of prohibition, anti-prohibition, and the Readjusters, African Americans participated in the labor movement of the late-nineteenth century by lending their support to labor-oriented third parties. In these third parties, they had massive membership, which they publicly flaunted at spectacles.

Among many third parties, the Knights of Labor effectively aligned black and white working-class southerners to agitate for labor reform. In the 1880s, Americans effectively organized into labor parties, which appeared on ballots across the country.⁴³ During its reign, the Knights of Labor, the most prominent of these labor parties, had a massive enrollment of black members because of its emphasis on egalitarianism. During the 1880s, black and white men and women joined this order to fight on behalf of eight-hour workdays, the abolition of convict labor, child labor laws, and equal pay for equal work for women. When the organization reached the South, it had a presence in the South’s industrial centers in Richmond, Raleigh, Birmingham, Little Rock, and Galveston, but it soon spread to the rural counties of the South. By 1886, the

⁴¹ “The Returns: Giving the Results of Yesterday’s Elections in Virginia and Other States,” *The Daily Dispatch* (Richmond, Va), Nov. 9, 1881, 1.

⁴² “The Republican Victory,” *The Daily Dispatch* (Richmond, Va.), Nov. 11, 1881, 1.

⁴³ Leon Fink, *Workingmen’s Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), xii-xiv, 1-5; Matthew Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists, Farmer-Labor Insurgency in the Late-Nineteenth Century South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 80.

Knights of Labor had fifty thousand members organized into two thousand local chapters in ten southern states. They drew their support from the ranks of skilled and unskilled labor without regard for “party, race, and sex.” African Americans played a prominent, assertive role in the organization.⁴⁴

African Americans participated in third-party organizations that worked on behalf of the labor movement, especially the Knights of Labor. In October 1886, the Knights of Labor gathered in Richmond, Virginia, for a convention. On October 11, the delegates enjoyed a day of festivities. In honor of the day, Richmond’s mayor ordered all city offices closed, and many shops and factories followed suit. At 10 A.M, the Knights of Labor formed a procession of “four and five thousand men” and marched through the city. Amid the massive crowd, black men and women marched and rode in carriages and numbered as many as 1,600 of the few thousand gathered. The black members of Pioneer Assembly 3572, which consisted of black members of the Knights of Labor, marched alongside their white comrades led by a black band. Thousands of people lined the streets, especially in the eastern part of the city. Among the spectators, “the entire colored population” seemed to have “turned out to witness the parade.” After the procession, the Knights of Labor gathered at the fair grounds for games, including bicycle races, and various tournaments. At the conclusion of these festivities, the delegates enjoyed a banquet and “white and colored delegates sat together at the tables,” which included black women, as well.⁴⁵ On June 15, 1888, the supporters of the Union Labor Party gathered in Athens, Texas, for a rally to nominate their candidates for county offices. For the event, the organizers hired a black

⁴⁴ Hild, *Greenbackers*, 79-121; Fink, *Workingmen’s Democracy*, xii-xiv, 149-177; Melton Alonzo McLaurin, *The Knights of Labor in the South* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978); Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 216-217, 234-235; Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 41, 41-421. With regard to black participation in the Knights of Labor, Steven Hahn explains, “This is not, in short, a picture of stasis, insularity, or social retreat; it is one of movement, interaction, and assertion.”

⁴⁵ “The Knights of Labor: The Big Demonstration To-Day at Richmond,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 11, 1886, 2; “The General Assembly: Proceedings of the Knights of Labor Yesterday,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Oct. 12, 1886, 1;

band and arranged for numerous speakers.⁴⁶ African Americans expressed themselves politically through the Knights of Labor and other third-party labor parties. They sought more than labor rights and leveraged their power within the organization to exercise political power by supporting favorable candidates. Although weakened at the election booth, African Americans continued to fight with their support of labor-oriented third parties.⁴⁷

With these biracial activities, labor organizations, especially the Knights of Labor, made a significant statement on behalf of racial equality and cooperation. With regard to the march, one of the Knights of Labor delegates explained, “It was a demonstration which showed the large numbers of the Knights in this vicinity” and “the practical equality of the races in action plainly before all eyes.” The delegate added, “When assemblies of white men and a white band, and assemblies of colored men and a colored band, march in the same procession, each assembly coming into line just where it happened to be, the color line was to that extent rubbed out.”⁴⁸ According to *Hartford Daily Courant* editors, the Knights of Labor’s biracialism in Richmond demonstrated that wage-earners “have declared that color has nothing to do with the rights of laboring men.”⁴⁹ Many southerners disagreed.

In southern states, newspaper editors expressed disgust at the actions of the Knights of Labor, specifically with regard to their choice to have African Americans placed in honorary positions. During the convention, black delegate Frank J. Ferrell introduced Grand Master Workman Terrence V. Powderly, which displeased many newspaper editors in the South. According to the editors of *Mobile Register*, the Knights of Labor insulted Virginia’s Governor Fitzhugh Lee with this breach of protocol. They explained, “Mr. Powderly tries and condemns

⁴⁶ “Henderson County Union Labor Party,” *The Gazette* (Fort Worth, TX), Jun. 16, 1888, 5.

⁴⁷ Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 411.

⁴⁸ “The Knights of Labor at Richmond,” *The Independent: Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, History, Literature, and the Arts*, Oct. 28, 1886, 5.

⁴⁹ “The Knights and the Negro,” *Daily Courant* (Hartford, CT), Oct. 23, 1886, 2.

the southern people, and sets himself up as an exponent of the laws of God and man.” The editors of *Memphis Avalanche* stated that southern states did not appreciate “the meddling of Mr. Powderly or of anybody else” with their affairs. After criticizing these racist viewpoints, the editors of *Hartford Daily Courant* concluded their opinion piece with Robert Burns’s poetic refrain: “A man’s a man for a’ that / And twice as much as a’ that.”⁵⁰

Like the Knights of Labor, biracial and black labor unions agitated on behalf of workers across the South through the use of spectacular demonstrations, and African Americans participated often in these events. In the 1870s and 1880s, biracial labor unions had formed across the South, including cities like Richmond, Birmingham, and New Orleans. As they had done for third parties and the prohibition movement, African Americans participated in the spectacles of labor organizations, such as Labor Day. Labor leaders used Labor Day celebrations and spectacles to form a community of labor supporters, advocate for labor rights, and demonstrate the group’s political power. In 1882, New Yorkers celebrated the first Labor Day, but the event soon spread throughout the nation with an endorsement from the American Federation of Labor, which hoped to turn the day into a three-day event. During Labor Day parades, working-class Americans expressed class consciousness while reveling in festivity, food, and drink with people of different ethnicities, sexes, races, and religions. For these events, labor leaders called upon playwrights, composers, directors, and campaign managers to create interesting demonstrations that would capture the attention of Americans yet spread a militant and aggressive class-based message. They organized speeches, performances, parades, and picnics, which became almost sacred elements of the Labor Day ritual. They created floats and banners and rehearsed skits and songs. By staging these events, working-class Americans forced local and national politicians to express their esteem for their wage-earning constituents. At the

⁵⁰ Ibid.

very least, they forced employers and the state to recognize a day off from work and gained the attention of millions of Americans. Labor Day became a major event, and newspaper editors covered the parades and festivities by reporting the intricate details with special attention to the crowds and the marchers, and their dress and slogans. Before a national audience, laborers could reflect on the past year in the labor movement and state their goals and intentions. With these rituals, labor advocates forced labor issues into the national mainstream political debate. For labor leaders, these celebrations became the primary means by which American laborers articulated an aggressive class-based message yet appeal to a wider audience of middle and upper-class Americans.⁵¹ African Americans had a constant presence at these events.

African Americans marched and played alongside white southerners in Labor Day celebrations throughout the South. On September 7, 1891, people “of all ages, sizes and conditions, men, women and children, white and black” arrived in Nashville, Tennessee, for a Labor Day celebration. Under a perfect, bright sky and brilliant sunshine, an immense crowd of 12,000 laborers celebrated and formed a procession for a long march through the city. Throughout the parade, musicians filled the air and “gay coloring brightened every portion of the long procession.” The members of the various trade unions wore remarkable uniforms. At one point, a black band from the Independent Order of Immaculates, which became locally famous for its “sho’ ‘nuff” music, marched by the grandstands and struck up “Dixie,” which the Nashville crowd appreciated. In 1894, these musicians would make another appearance at the city’s Labor Day festivities.⁵² African Americans had a highly visible presence in the labor movement of the South, but they had even more substantial influence in other reform

⁵¹ Michael Kazin and Steven J. Ross, “America’s Labor Day: The Dilemma of Workers’ Celebration,” *The Journal of American History* 78 (Mar. 1992): 1294-1307.

⁵² “Labor’s Day: Wage-Worker’s Holiday Celebrated by Thousands,” *Daily American* (Nashville, Tenn.), Sept. 8, 1891, 1; “Great Turnout: Local Industrialists Excel Previous Efforts,” *Daily American* (Nashville, Tenn.), Sept. 4, 1894, 1.

movements, notably the Populists, who would use similar spectacular methods to energize supporters.

The Populists had a short-lived but highly successful insurgency during the 1890s that blended educational tactics with popular politics. The Populists offered poor and rural black and white Americans an alternative to the Republicans and Democrats by advocating for an energetic government to extend loans, build warehouses, regulate railroad rates, print paper money, and coin silver. As a third party, the Populists needed to display intellectual rigor to differentiate themselves from the more-established parties, yet they had to mobilize voters with popular politics to achieve success at the voting booths. The Populists distributed an immense amount of campaign literature. They filled newspapers with sophisticated arguments on politics and economics, in which they frequently referenced reports and statistics. They studied the plans of other nations and noted these ideas in their speeches and pamphlets. They made these arguments, however, without alienating common voters. In speeches, political cartoons, and other media, Populists had a knack for reaching out to poor and rural black and white voters.⁵³ Like other third party and reform movements, Populists also made frequent use of spectacle to mobilize supporters to their cause.

The Populists frequently used spectacular tactics with a revival-like atmosphere to attract voters and rally people to their cause. In July 1896, Populists gathered in Sutherland Spring, Texas, for a meeting, where the speakers pumped “political salvation into the ears of their admiring followers.” At the climax of the week-long affair, which consisted of Populists from nearby counties, Jerome Kearby, who the newspapers referred to as the Populists “idol and their political Moses,” arrived to speak and “lead them out of their night of darkness into the right

⁵³ Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4-5; Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 264-296.

sunlight of a subtreasury.”⁵⁴ The Populists made frequent use of these types of spectacles, and Africans Americans commonly participated.

In the South, white Populists shared their opponents’ disgust for Reconstruction and fear of black civic leaders, but they needed black votes if they had any hope of defeating the Republicans and the Democrats at the polls.⁵⁵ During the 1880s and 1890s, African Americans started to look beyond the Republican Party for a better political alliance. They formed their own Populist movement, which shared many of the same principles as its white counterpart but also advocated for measures to attain racial equality. For the most part, they specifically focused on the plight of the black farmer by pushing for better wages and fairer credit conditions for black farmers. They also wanted general measures with regard to racial equality. They hoped to end the convict lease system and segregation, and they demanded the inclusion of African Americans on jury pools.⁵⁶ In addition to their separate movement, in which they designed their own platforms and put forward their own candidates, African Americans also allied with white Populists, which resulted in fusion tickets between the People’s Party and black Republicans.⁵⁷ As a new party, the People’s Party had the opportunity to practice their rhetoric and find a language that would win these black votes without alienating white voters. In Alabama, Louisiana, Virginia, North Carolina, and Texas, the Populists adopted a subtle approach. They ambushed the Democrats and Republicans by reaching out to white audiences and attracting

⁵⁴ “Populist Camp Meeting,” *Galveston Daily News* (Galveston, TX), July 13, 1896, 3.

⁵⁵ Omar H. Ali, *In the Lion’s Mouth: Black Populism in the New South, 1886-1900* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2010), 3-6; Postel, *The Populist Vision*, 4-5, 12-19, 173-178; Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 264-296; Deborah Beckel, *Radical Reform: Interracial Politics in Post-Emancipation North Carolina* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 160-170; Helen G. Edmonds, *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina, 1894-1901* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1951), 1-5, 10, 14-29; 34-66.

⁵⁶ Ali, *In the Lion’s Mouth*, 8-10, 78-112.

⁵⁷ Beckel, *Radical Reform*, 160-170; Ali, *In the Lion’s Mouth*, 3-6, 113-149.

black votes out of sight. In Georgia, the Populists did not hesitate to openly appeal to black voters, and African Americans appeared as frequent guests and speakers at Populist rallies.⁵⁸

In 1892, the People's Party put candidates on local, state, and national ballots; in support of these candidates, African Americans had a noted and persistent presence at Populist meetings and rallies. On July 26, 1892, the Populists of Greenville, Alabama, hosted a rally on the grounds of the Greenville Collegiate Institute. The program featured speaker Petyon G. Bowman, who campaigned on behalf of gubernatorial candidate Rueben F. Kolb. For the event, the Populists hired a brass band to "drum up a crowd of colored voters as the speech was made principally to capture their votes." Newspaper reporters estimated that the crowd of 500 people consisted of 200 African Americans. During the speech, Bowman focused on disfranchisement and told his audience that the Democrats intended to disfranchise both black and poor white voters. He explained that Democrats intend "to win this vote by fair means if they can" but by "foul means" if necessary. He condemned the effort to disfranchise voters and characterized the man "that will undertake to swindle his neighbor out of his vote" as a "thief of the lowest cast." He appealed to every resident to "stand up as one man" and guarantee that each vote counts. Black voters responded by turning out for the Populists on election day.⁵⁹ On September 29, 1892, Populists rallied in Raleigh, North Carolina. They paraded to Brookside Park. The procession included presidential candidate James B. Weaver and 350 men, including 50 African Americans, astride horses.⁶⁰ By 1892, African Americans had become public, visible supporters of the People's Party, and they remained visible in the party's spectacles for the rest of the decade.

⁵⁸ Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 269-275.

⁵⁹ "Hot Politics: Bloody Bowman and His Speech," *Greenville Advocate*, July 27, 1892, 1; "Hurrah for Jones and Straight Democracy," *Greenville Advocate*, Aug. 3, 1892, 1; Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 270.

⁶⁰ Ali, *In the Lion's Mouth*, 3.

From 1892 to 1898, African Americans demonstrated visible, public support for the Populists. On July 31, 1894, a biracial crowd of 500 men and women gathered in Waycross, Georgia, to hear Populist leaders Tom Watson, James K. Hines, Tom Morton, and S. I. Bishop speak. Watson had a successful speech, in which he “abused the democrats” with his “witty sayings and humorous anecdotes,” which “elicited much cheering.”⁶¹ On September 5, 1894, Georgia’s Populists gathered in Louisville, Georgia, for a rally, which featured numerous speakers, who commented on a variety of subjects to an audience of 300 black and white spectators.⁶² On October 2, 1896, Tennessee gubernatorial candidate A. L. Mims spoke at the courthouse in Clarksville before a small crowd of 200 black and white Populists.⁶³ On November 4, 1898, Fusion congressional candidate James Wilkinson “invaded Congressman Brantley’s home county” and held a rally at the city hall in Brunswick, Georgia. The audience consisted almost entirely of African Americans. He directed his speech almost exclusively to the black members of the audience and shook hands with the black voters that had come to hear him.⁶⁴

During the 1896 campaign season, African Americans had a prominent role in the spectacles held on behalf of the Populists in Georgia. On August 17, 1896, Georgia Populists gathered on Stone Mountain for a “big populist rally.” The crowd had gathered to hear prominent Populist speakers, including gubernatorial candidate Seaborn Wright, but these speakers did not attend. Instead, less-celebrated Populists emerged to speak and generated “little enthusiasm.” During one speech, speaker orator Azmon Murphey directed his attention “to a crowd of twenty or more negroes in the audience” by speaking at length on the subject of convict labor and

⁶¹ “A Disappointing Rally: Populist Leaders Speak in South Georgia to a Small Crowd,” *Atlanta Constitution*, July 31, 1894, 3.

⁶² “Populists in Jefferson,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 6, 1894, 9.

⁶³ “Mims at Clarksville,” *The American* (Nashville, TN), Oct. 3, 1896, 2.

⁶⁴ “Col. Wilkinson at Brunswick,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 5, 1898, 7.

lynching.⁶⁵ Two days later, Wright opened his campaign with a meeting of black, white, female, and male supporters at the Moody Tabernacle in Atlanta. During his speech, he reached out to the black spectators with comments on violence at the ballot boxes, education, and prohibition. He recalled a story in which “helpless negro men were whipped and beaten until they were unconscious” and “bound and thrown upon their backs and that water was thrown into their faces until they were strangled and that blood gushed out of their lips.” He argued, “I say it to these black men in this audience, if they were guilty, no paltry fine was punishment enough” and promised that “they would have been punished” if he had been governor. Later in the speech, he spoke on the subject of education. He explained, “They laugh at us and our promises to furnish the children of this state, white and black, with primary school books.” He added, “the masses of the poor people must be educated and there are hundreds of poor people, white and black, who are not able to buy their school books and send their children to a common school.” He reached out to the black members of his audience by speaking on the issue of prohibition. With regard to an anti-barroom bill, he explained, “I say to you black men that your young men are being debauched and ruined in these abominable holes of vice” and encouraged them to vote for him in an attempt to eliminate taverns and saloons.⁶⁶

Black Georgians had a consistent presence at Populist rallies and speaking engagements throughout the campaign.⁶⁷ In August, the Populists staged a massive event in Alpharetta, Georgia, that featured numerous speakers and lasted for three days. People traveled as far as fifty miles on “horseback, mule back and in vehicles of all sorts and descriptions” to attend the event, plus many more “trudged many miles on foot.” Entire families made the journey. While “men and boys listened to the political talk,” the “women sat in the shade and devoted their attention to

⁶⁵ “Populists at Stone Mountain,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 17, 1896, 2.

⁶⁶ “Wright Is Heard: Populists Open Their Campaign with a Rally,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 19, 1896, 5.

⁶⁷ “Seab Wright at Madison,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 4, 1896, 7.

keeping the babies quiet—a futile task.” On each day of this “genuine camp meeting,” a major speaker engaged the audience, including vice-presidential candidate Tom Watson. On August 14, 1896, Watson spoke to the crowd and made a direct appeal to the hundreds of African Americans in his audience, who responded to his comments with cheers and applause. Watson emphasized the need for penal reform, specifically the need for a reformatory to teach skills to young black criminals to enable their return to useful lives rather than being “turned loose after long associations with the most hardened of criminals.” He concluded, “You colored men owe us your votes. It was the populist party which first demanded and secured for you the right to vote.”⁶⁸ Unlike many Populists, Watson reached out to black voters and made them a central part of his plan. For the most part, he argued poor black and white Americans shared common enemies in government and business. Watson and his allies, furthermore, condemned the Democrats for their constant whining about “negro domination” and “negro supremacy.” On September 29, Wright spoke in Newnan before an audience of about 700 black and white spectators. In the speech, he emphasized his independent position and committed himself to “pure methods in politics and pure men in office.” On October 7, 1896, Wright spoke before an audience of black and white populists as he closed his campaign for governor at the Moody Tabernacle in Atlanta.⁶⁹

At Populist rallies, black speakers spoke to black and white audiences in support of the movement. On July 9, 1896, Georgia Populists met in Montezuma to hear a series of speakers, including an African American.⁷⁰ On July 24, 1896, a crowd in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, gathered at the courthouse to hear prominent Populists speak, including Populist gubernatorial

⁶⁸ “Pops’ Campeeting: Three Thousand Gathered at Alpharetta Yesterday,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 15, 1896, 5.

⁶⁹ “Their Last Rally: Populists Hold a Meeting at the Moody Tabernacle,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Oct. 7, 1896, 5; Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 270.

⁷⁰ “Populists Meet: A Rally at Montezuma- Judge Hines to Speak,” *Atlanta Constitution*, July 9, 1896, 9.

candidate Robert L. Taylor. Before the rally, a massive procession occurred with 1,500 horsemen, two bands of music, and countless banners and signs expressing their support. After the hour-long parade, the crowd assembled at the courthouse and in Public Square, where Taylor “stirred the crowd to the greatest enthusiasm.” Upon completion of the program, African Americans took the stage. Elder P. W. Christian emphasized the need for the free coinage of silver. He encouraged his black audience to “affiliate with the best element in the community in which they dwelt.” He “captured his hearers completely” and “made a good impression.”⁷¹ When African Americans took the stage, they assumed prominent and extremely visible roles in third party movements.

Although most African Americans participated in these rallies and parades without retribution, they did encounter some resistance from black and white opponents. On July 31, 1898, Alabama’s black Populists gathered near Cusseta, Alabama, for a rally amid a political situation at “a very high pitch of excitement.” During the meeting, a black gunman and his comrades shot four black and two white male participants with double-barreled shotguns and killed three of the black participants.⁷² By the end of the 1890s, white southerners had become fed up with Populists and their allies and intended to eliminate them from politics. By the turn of the century, white southerners had concluded that African Americans had too much influence in politics. To stop black political activity, prohibitionists, who blamed black voters for their failures at the polls, and Democrats, who resented alliances between Republicans and Populists, marshaled popular opinion against African Americans to eliminate them from politics.

In the late-nineteenth century, white prohibitionists aggressively campaigns to eliminate black voters, so they revived stereotypes of African Americans as intemperate. For two decades

⁷¹ “Truths of Democracy,” *The American* (Nashville, TN), Jul. 25, 1896, 1.

⁷² “Six Men Are Shot Down by Alabama Negroes,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug. 1, 1898, 5; “Negro Populists Start Riot,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 1, 1898, 1.

after emancipation, prohibition's supporters and opponents suspended centuries-old stereotypes linking African Americans, intemperance, and insurrection because they each courted black votes for their cause. When they did portray African Americans as intemperate, they emphasized the need for reform and hoped to bring black supporters to the cause of temperance. By the dawn of the twentieth century, however, they had brought back these stereotypes and pinpointed black voters as the main reason for the failure of local-option campaigns. Prohibitionists and anti-prohibitionists agreed, therefore, that African Americans should not hold the outcome of these contests in their hands. Prohibitionists argued that African Americans had a biological inclination to drunkenness. They argued that prohibition among black communities would save African Americans from animalistic behavior and help both races avoid racial conflict. The saloonkeepers, furthermore, had enormous power in electoral affairs because saloonkeepers could mobilize voters, especially black voters, through urban political machines. Anti-prohibitionists did not stop these attempts at disfranchisement. By excluding black voters, white southerners could safely split on issues without fearing black political power.⁷³

Prohibitionists targeted African Americans as their greatest obstacle to success. "One of the chief causes of this great temperance movement is, as you might have guessed—the negro," stated a *New York Times* reporter in a feature article on reform in the South. Ferdinand Cowle Iglehart, who traveled the country speaking on behalf of temperance, argued, "There are reasons why the south should take the lead in this prohibition movement. It was necessary to remove the saloon from the negro to save southern industry and civilization."⁷⁴ According to a *New York Times* reporter, "It is when these [African Americans] drink of the vile, cheap whiskies that they

⁷³ Thompson, Jr., *A Most Stirring and Significant Episode*, 57-65; Michael Lewis, "Access to Saloons, Wet Voter Turnout, and Statewide Prohibition Referenda," *Social Science History* 32:3 (Fall 2008), 379-380; Walton, Jr. and Taylor, "Blacks and the Southern Prohibition Movement": 247, 249, 251-256.

⁷⁴ Ferdinand Cowle Iglehart, "The Nation's Anti-Drink Crusade," *Nashville Tennessean*, Jun. 16, 1908, 4.

are most liable to commit the crimes which the Southern white man avenges so swiftly and so terribly.” Gilbert D. Raine, who edited *The Memphis News Scimitar*, characterized African Americans “as children in intellectual and moral development” and concluded that “easy access to intoxicants is dangerous to them and to their white neighbors.” Alabama author Alfred B. Williams added, “The blacks are great consumers of liquors of the cheaper grade, and, therefore, of the kind which does the greatest harm” and stated that “the negroes drink beyond their limit of the cheap, vile whiskies, and are then in the mood to commit the crimes for which they afterward suffer.” Prohibitionists provided other reasons. According to one author, “The negro vote, outside of the preachers and teachers and a few others, could always be controlled by the saloon forces.” Another author argued that “liquor tends to demoralize negro labor.”⁷⁵

In southern states, prohibitionists became leading advocates for disfranchisement. In the late 1890s, Alabama prohibitionists supported disfranchisement for African Americans in their state because they could not pass any local-option prohibition laws. They blamed the state’s black voters for the failure of these laws. In 1901, white Alabamians disfranchised African Americans at their state constitutional convention. Afterward, Alabama’s prohibitionists supported legislation to keep African Americans from consuming alcohol. During the 1905 gubernatorial election in Georgia, candidate Hoke Smith supported disfranchisement. According to Smith, Georgia’s white residents suffered from black voting and the power of the state’s liquor interests. He explained that the liquor interests purchased black votes with liquor. By eliminating both, Georgia’s white population would prosper. By 1907, Tennessee’s white prohibitionists led the charge for disfranchisement, which they accomplished at the 1909 state constitutional

⁷⁵ “Mighty Wave of Reform Sweeps the Entire South: Prohibition and Local Option Laws Rapidly Closing the Saloons of the Entire Region south of Mason and Dixon’s Line—Negro Problem an Impelling Motive,” *New York Times*, Jun. 2, 1907, SM6; Walton, Jr. and Taylor, “Blacks and the Southern Prohibition Movement”: 247, 249, 251-256.

convention.⁷⁶ Prohibitionists supported the movement to disfranchise black voters. This movement gained momentum in the South because of the black and white alliance in the Populist Party.

Like prohibitionists, Democrats blamed African Americans for their failures and condemned their alliance the third parties, specifically the Readjusters and the People's Party. African Americans had played a prominent role in these movements, but they would suffer for their alliances with white voters. After the meteoric rise of the Readjusters in Virginia, conservative white southerners broke the alliance. Through intimidation and violence, they kept black voters away from the polls. They argued that race had a behavioral as well as biological element. By allying with African Americans, they reasoned, white southerners had forsaken their whiteness and taken a step toward becoming black.⁷⁷ Similarly, white southerners embarked on a mission to disfranchise and intimidate black and poor white voters in response to the Populist insurgency. In 1898, North Carolina's Populists formed an alliance with black Republicans, which caused a firestorm of outrage among white Democrats. They commenced a campaign to eliminate all African Americans from political office and keep them away from the voting booths. They filled newspapers with real and fabricated instances of black insubordination in public, such as refusing to yield to white men and women, abusing liquor, and causing disturbances on trains. The white Democrats blamed black insubordination on black office holding, which they argued emboldened African Americans to act disrespectfully toward white southerners, especially women. During the campaign, white Democrats threatened Republicans and Populists with death if they kept their candidates in the race. On election day, they took up arms to prevent African Americans from voting. With these methods, the Democrats dominated

⁷⁶ Walton, Jr. and Taylor, "Blacks and the Southern Prohibition Movement": 252-253, 256-257; Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*, 173-194.

⁷⁷ Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, 103-131, 135-142.

at the polls. Upon victory, they forced Republicans and Populists to resign at once rather than complete their terms. After taking power, the Democrats felt an ultimatum to eliminate black voting. In 1898, the United States Supreme Court permitted poll taxes and literacy tests. By 1900, North Carolinians passed a constitutional amendment that demanded literacy from all voters but provided a grandfather clause to keep white voters in power. After these developments, white southerners called for constitutional conventions to disfranchise voters in their own states and followed North Carolina to constitutional disfranchisement. For the most part, the delegates to these constitutional conventions did not have any power during Reconstruction and barely remembered the Civil War, if they even remembered it at all. They had experienced politics in the post-Reconstruction period, and they had seen Populism polarize and fragment white southerners, so they hoped to reform politics.⁷⁸ In addition to these political developments, economic circumstances affected the rights and privileges of African Americans, as well.

During the 1870s and 1880s, African Americans actively participated in labor organizations, specifically labor unions, but white southerners alienated the black working class after the onset of an economic depression. In 1893, a depression hit the country and made biracialism within the labor movement less likely, but African Americans still formed their own unions and participated at biracial labor spectacles. In 1928, the National Urban League lamented the majority of black workers in unionized industries that could not join their respective unions, but they did calculate that 81,658 black workers belonged to American trade unions with another 4,453 black workers in local trade and federal labor unions. From 1922 to 1928, African Americans formed city-wide labor organizations affiliated with the American

⁷⁸ Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 298-305.

Federation of Labor in major cities in Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia.⁷⁹

In the twentieth-century South, African Americans faced many obstacles to their continued access to political power. Disfranchisement affected the electoral power of black and white southerners. Economic depression jeopardized black labor rights. Yet, politics entailed more than voters and their ballots, and the labor movement did not simply rely on dues-paying members to thrive. Instead, politics and the labor movement entailed many accouterments, such as parades, rallies, barbecues, flag-raising ceremonies, and similar spectacular events. As it became more difficult for African Americans to cast ballots and join labor unions, they continued to make themselves visible and active members of the political sphere by participating in the region's vibrant spectacular political culture.

In the early twentieth century, white southerners hindered black participation in some of the most important prohibition contests. White women, however, continued to make an impact on these elections. In 1906, Georgians debated anti-dispensary legislation. On May 10, female prohibitionists divided into two groups and set out on the polls and churches of Hawkinsville, Georgia. They prayed and fasted and rang the church bells every half hour.⁸⁰ Due to the particular connections between African Americans, disfranchisement, and prohibition, it became difficult for African Americans to participate in these spectacles.

In 1901, Alabamians disfranchised black voters at a state constitutional convention and held a spectacular statewide campaign to decide the prohibition question, which energized white male and female Alabamians but left out African Americans.⁸¹ During the campaign, "the entire

⁷⁹ National Urban League, *Negro Membership in American Labor Unions*. Department of Research and Investigations of the National Urban League (New York: The Alexander Press, 1930), 101-103, 106-109.

⁸⁰ "Work and Pray for Prohibition," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 8, 1906, 2.

⁸¹ Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*, 173-194.

machinery of the Protestant churches, the women and children, and the strict moral argument were thrown into the fight on the pro-amendment side.” In preparation, women and children rehearsed their prayers and hymns for the election day spectacle.⁸² On November 27, Calhoun County residents concluded “the most memorable campaign in the history of Alabama” with an all-day speaking program and free barbecue meal provided by the anti-prohibitionists. At the event, about twenty thousand county residents gathered “to voice their protest against placing in the power of an unwise legislature the right to invade their homes.” The event included “ladies from the best families in the state,” who tended to support prohibition but here participated on behalf of anti-prohibition. They had a reserved spot in the audience, where they listened to the speeches for three hours “without evidence of weariness.”⁸³ On November 29, Montgomery residents flocked to a rally on behalf of prohibition. Before the program commenced, women and children marched through the city carrying banners and singing songs, and many men testified that they “could not vote against the amendment in the face of such a display.”⁸⁴ By participating in these spectacles, women and children gained notoriety for their political strength and work and seemed to have a bit of influence. Unlike previous prohibition campaigns, African Americans seemed absent in this particular election.

On election day, white Alabamians celebrated their unilateral control over politics and debated the utility of these popular demonstrations. “There was a time when elections in the south were farcical,” explained *Birmingham Age-Herald* editors, because “hordes of negroes were entitled to vote without any legal restriction.” They editors celebrated, “Today we have practically only a white electorate.” In fact, one reporter lamented that more fascinating campaigns had occurred during Reconstruction because “the newly enfranchised negro held the

⁸² “How Prohibition Was Turned Down in Alabama,” *New York Times*, Dec. 5, 1909, SM6.

⁸³ Stanley, J.E., “Campaign Ends in Calhoun County,” *Birmingham Age-Herald*, Nov. 28, 1909, 2.

⁸⁴ “Great Rally Closes Fight in Montgomery,” *Birmingham News*, Nov. 29, 1909, 9.

balance of power in politics.” In addition to these electoral reforms, officials passed a series of measures to reduce spectacle. They restricted access to the polling stations by keeping people thirty feet away, permitting only ten people in the booth at a time, and forced people to leave after five minutes. They mandated that voters may only speak to election officials while near the booths.⁸⁵

Despite these laws, white Alabamians continued to make politics into a spectacle, and these spectacles entailed frequent participation on behalf of disfranchised groups. Women and children, who got the day off from school, went to many of the polling places in the state and remained there all day. They performed many of the typical rituals, such as serving coffee and sandwiches, singing hymns, praying, and pinning ribbons onto voters’ lapels. Like previous campaigns, brass bands arrived on the scene to support the anti-prohibitionists. The reporter did not identify these musicians as black, which had been a notable feature of previous spectacles, in which black men and white women fought each other over the future of alcohol. These musicians engaged the female singers in a competition, which became “heated and interesting” as the musicians played ragtime songs. According to one reporter, the musicians had an impact. The reporter explained that anti-prohibitionists rallied around the song “Home, Sweet Home” because the amendment threatened to eliminate home-storage and personal consumption of liquor.⁸⁶ When the amendment failed, white Alabamians celebrated the outcome and their complete control of politics. After the polls closed, immense crowds gathered at the offices of the *Birmingham Age-Herald* and *Mobile Register* to await the results. When it became clear that voters had defeated the amendment, Mobile residents “cheered and cheered and cheered” and

⁸⁵ “Must Have Absolute Fairness,” *Birmingham Age-Herald*, Nov. 27, 1909, 2.

⁸⁶ “How Prohibition Was Turned Down in Alabama,” *New York Times*, Dec. 5, 1909, SM6.

“threw off the safety valve of their feelings and gave vent to their joy and delight.”⁸⁷ After disfranchisement, the spectacle did not change much in form and substance, except that African Americans tended to lose their place.

Although African Americans did not participate in some of the major prohibition campaigns of the era, they did not completely disappear. In 1908, the residents of Sedalia, Missouri, went to the polls to answer the prohibition question. During the campaign, the “temperance workers seemed to have all the best of it in the way of displays, streets parades and crowds at the public meetings.” On election day, female prohibitionists followed key leaders of the saloon interests to catch any hint of electoral fraud but did not find anything because the saloon interests did not buy votes and “made it a point to see that there was no liquor to be obtained.” Instead of providing alcohol, liquor advocates provided ice cream to their supporters and workers, which included African Americans. For the most part, the election “was without serious incident, free from all the squabbles at the polling places.” The prohibitionists had won in the streets with their spectacles, but they failed to cast enough ballots to pass the local option and, according to early reports, graciously conceded.⁸⁸ When it became known that African Americans worked on behalf of the anti-prohibitionists on election day, the prohibitionists became furious. According to Missouri Anti-Saloon League Superintendent Rev. U. G. Robinson, the liquor interests employed one hundred black workers for the election. He explained that the liquor interests intended to pay the black workers one rate if successful and another if they did not prevail. He admitted, “These men were not paid for their votes, but for their work in winning votes against local option.”⁸⁹

⁸⁷ “Great Crowds Read Returns,” *Mobile Register*, Nov. 30, 1909, 5;

⁸⁸ “Wets Win At Sedalia: Drys, After Spectacular Campaign, Are Surprised At Sweeping Defeat,” *Mexico Weekly Ledger* (Mexico, MO), Jun. 18, 1908, 1.

⁸⁹ “Wets’ Paid Cash,” *Mexico Missouri Message* (Mexico, MO), Jun. 18, 1908, 1.

In 1914, prohibitionists in Norfolk, Virginia, gathered to hear many a program of speakers, including African Americans, on behalf of their cause. White Virginians disfranchised black voters at their 1902 state constitutional convention in Richmond but that did not stop black participation in this prohibition campaign dominated by white Virginians.⁹⁰ Throughout the campaign, Virginia temperance reformers held open-air revival-like meetings. The members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union staged elaborate displays and organized massive parades. At these events, the female prohibitionists sang songs, such as "We're Out for Prohibition" set to the tune of "Dixie." The anti-prohibitionists adopted a cynical attitude toward these spectacles and characterized them as an attempt to win votes they could not win by reason.⁹¹ At one prohibition meeting, black minister Charles E. Morris, who served as the pastor of the "largest colored church in Norfolk," spoke before the white audience. He explained that prohibition had prevailed in the white districts of the city, but he lamented that saloons had found refuge in the black sections, where they affected the community. He argued, "You have taken the ballot away from us, yet we are outraged by having this scourge forced upon us, and we appeal to your chivalry to relieve us from being debauched and pauperized any longer." He encouraged the white voters to help defeat the saloon interest. He said, "I ask this league to use its power and influence to aid us in keeping fifty saloons from breathing the breath of hell into our nostrils when we stop from our homes or walk to our work."⁹² By presenting at this speaking engagement, Morris continued to have a voice.

Although Texans had disfranchised African Americans with a poll tax amendment in 1902, African Americans participated in the 1915 statewide campaign to decide the prohibition

⁹⁰ Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*, 195-223.

⁹¹ Robert A. Hohner, "Prohibition Comes to Virginia: The Referendum of 1914," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 75 (Oct. 1967): 476-477.

⁹² "All Who Oppose Enabling Act Are Hotly Assailed," *The Times-Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), Jan. 23, 1914, 1.

issue in the state.⁹³ On Sunday, July 25, 1915, prohibitionists gathered for numerous local rallies as part of the statewide movement. At these meetings, they sang songs, listened to speakers, and signed pledges to support the cause by any means necessary. In Lamar, Texas, residents gathered at the Lamar Air Dome, which was “packed to capacity.” In a speech, Rev. A. L. Andrews made African Americans one of his key talking points. He laughed at the anti-prohibitionists attempt to persuade voters through reasoning. He referred to their arguments as ‘jokes’ and explained, “Nobody believes it, not even the antis themselves.” He argued, “They know they can’t bring you out on the issue, so they are using the vaudeville the pictures and the negro band” to persuade voters to oppose the prohibition amendment. By 1915, the employment of African Americans on behalf of a campaign had become a condemnable offense and taken as a sign of desperation.⁹⁴

When African Americans did participate, they sometimes encountered resistance from white women. On March 11, 1907, Knoxville, Tennessee residents experienced an election that they “never saw and never dreamed of and doubtless will never see again” as residents went to the polling places to cast their ballots on the prohibition issue. Throughout the day, prohibitionists and anti-prohibitionists engaged in the typical spectacles, such as parades and marches. In the black sections of the city, “whites and blacks of all ages and both sexes fought the livelong day.” At one saloon, women and children arrived and “blocked the stairway and commenced a prayer service that continued for hours and kept the negroes, thought to have been bought for the saloons, blocked for hours.”⁹⁵

⁹³ Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*, 271-281.

⁹⁴ “Big Prohibition Meetings Over the County Sunday,” *Wichita Daily Times* (Wichita Falls, TX), Jul. 26, 1915, 5.

⁹⁵ “No More Saloons, Says Knoxville: By a Majority of Nearly 2,000 Town Climbs on the Water Wagon,” *The American* (Nashville, TN), Mar. 12, 1907, 1.

Outside of the South, African Americans participated in the various spectacles associated with prohibition campaigns. On October 25, 1916, Baltimore's black anti-prohibitionists gathered for a meeting at Merryman's Hall. When prohibitionists learned that the city's black residents had gathered for this meeting, they hired the Towson Colored Band to disrupt and break up the meeting. They believed that the black musicians "would coax the negroes from the hall." The music had "the desired effect," and the audience filed out of the building.⁹⁶ On July 4, 1921, anti-prohibitionists gathered in New York City for a rally to oppose national prohibition. On the day of the parade, 200,000 sweaty marchers "braved a broiling sun" to protest the Volstead Act and eighteenth amendment. The protesters emphasized the desire for personal liberty and even marshalled religious arguments on their behalf. For the most part, the parade consisted of Italians and Germans plus working-class labor activists. They carried banners and signs along the route. The parade "furnished a novel spectacle" because most marchers carried American flags and flags of their home nations. On one float, "a pretty girl in thin and scantily garments" stood near a mammoth bunch of grapes while other women surrounded her "dressed in the costumes of the nations." At the end of the parade, a "contingent of negroes" made their way down the route led by a "cakewalking negro drum major."⁹⁷ Regardless of whether or not African Americans could vote, they had a constant visible presence in prohibition campaigns, which they used to influence the political sphere. They continued to have similar influence in the various third parties of the twentieth-century South.

Despite disfranchisement, African Americans continued to play a visible but segregated role in the popular politics of third parties across the South. During Roosevelt's 1912 tour of the South on behalf of the Bull Moose Party, crowds of black and white supporters greeted him at

⁹⁶ "In Suburbs and County," *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Oct. 25, 1916, 5.

⁹⁷ "Fewer than 20,000 in Anti-Dry Parade; Slogans from Bible," *New York Times*, Jul. 5, 1921, 1.

every stop. When he arrived in Cheraw, Alabama, for example, a “straggling crowd of white men and a few negroes” met Roosevelt, including Dr. Booker T. Washington of the nearby Tuskegee Institute. In fact, the “white residents hung back in a rather embarrassed fashion” at this particular stop on the tour until Roosevelt personally requested that they come forward.⁹⁸ In support of Roosevelt, a local Bull Moose Party office opened in Macon. On September 22, these Macon Progressives held a rather disappointing rally consisting of only seventeen people, which included “a rabid socialist,” two African Americans, and another supporter “who did not take enough interest in the proceedings to keep out of slumberland.”⁹⁹ On September 28, 1912, Theodore Roosevelt spoke on behalf of the Progressive Party in Atlanta. Before the speaking began, an “imposing procession” led Roosevelt from the train station to the auditorium, which included automobiles headed by a band. The speaking engagement, which one reporter characterized as “one of the most remarkable political meetings ever held in the southland” and had the character of a “crusade rather than a campaign meeting.” African Americans and women attended the event. Many spectators wore red bandanna handkerchiefs emblazoned with the picture of Roosevelt or of a moose. In the auditorium, the event organizers reserved a section of 200 seats for female spectators and a small section in the top gallery for black spectators.¹⁰⁰ In 1932, socialists gathered in Richmond, Virginia, to hear six-time presidential candidate Norman Thomas speak. According to a reporter, socialists in northern states “throw their arms around Negroes and call them ‘comrades.’” In southern states, however, “the party members resort to the some old customs of the white folks down here of segregating.” At the speaking engagement, African Americans had to sit in the gallery “from which vantage point the speakers could be very

⁹⁸ John Corrigan, “With Roosevelt on Georgia Tour: Bull Moose Candidate Greeted by Great Crowds,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 29, 1912, A4.

⁹⁹ “Herd of Moose Formed in Macon,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 23, 1912, 3.

¹⁰⁰ “Unique Meeting At Auditorium: Roosevelt Gathering Tonight Will Have nature of Crusade,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Sep. 28, 1912, 1.

well seen but not heard” because the building manager restricted access to the first floor to white spectators. Party organizers “were powerless to do anything about it.”¹⁰¹

In the rest of the country, African Americans similarly practiced their politics by participating at rallies and parades on behalf of third-party candidates. On August 9, 1912, Baltimore’s black and white supporters of the Bull Moose Party met and staged a parade and meeting in the city. Throughout the day, “the members of this new political movement bubbled over with enthusiasm, lustily cheered each mention of Theodore Roosevelt’s name and applauded the Marylanders who participated in the convention.” At Camden railroad station, 500 men gathered to welcome home Maryland’s delegates to the Bull Moose Party convention, including black delegate Louis H. Davenport.¹⁰² Led by the Fifth Regiment Band, they started to move through the city with “the suffragists bringing up the rear in automobiles.” The marchers made their way and “lighted red torches and wore around their necks bandanna kerchiefs and the Roosevelt emblems.” Baltimore residents gathered along the sidewalks to cheer on the procession. Although the Bull Moose Party refused to seat some of the black delegates to the convention, “color lines were not drawn in the parade,” and African Americans “marched beside whites.” Upon reaching Rennert Hotel on Saratoga Street, a series of speakers commenced a program of speeches, which included Joseph P. Evans, a black man.¹⁰³

African Americans had their power at the polls restrained, but they remained a political force in the streets of southern cities with active participation in the burgeoning labor movement through their continued presence at Labor Day festivities and their support of the Communist

¹⁰¹“Dixie Socialists Called Similar to Purists,” *Atlanta Daily World*, Nov. 17, 1932, 4A.

¹⁰² Roosevelt refused to recognize the black delegates from the southern states, which according to *New York Times*, “will not get him any Southern electoral votes, and may lose him some Northern ones, but one thing it has done, it has made it possible for Southerners to leave the Democratic Party.” “Wilson At Last Put in the Ananias Club,” *New York Times*, Sept. 29, 1912, 3.

¹⁰³ “Bull Moose On Parade: Stay-At-Homes Welcome Back Contingent from Chicago,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Aug. 10, 1912, 12.

Party. Within the black community, African Americans looked to gain professional recognition of their work in the entertainment industries, among others, by reforming their practices and changing the perception of black talent by emphasizing skill, industry, and professionalism rather than natural ability.

In the twentieth century, African Americans continued to have a noteworthy presence at Labor Day events across the South. In 1901, Atlanta's labor leaders organized a Labor Day celebration and parade, which featured numerous bands including the Dixie Colored Band of Atlanta. The leaders of the city's many unions and companies provided floats for the parade. In addition to the black band, the female members of the Atlanta Typographical Union planned to arrive for Labor Day with "gay but not gaudy" uniforms that they promised would "be a sight well worth seeing."¹⁰⁴ In 1905, Norfolk's black laborers made "the best and the largest parade ever held here by the negroes." They formed a procession of a thousand men that extended for one-half mile and employed three black bands.¹⁰⁵ In Atlanta's 1907 Labor Day parade, a "negro band marked the advent of the negro adjunct to unionism and fully 400 expert bricklayers and kalsominers followed this musical organization and negro marshal."¹⁰⁶ In the 1918 Labor Day parade in Brunswick, Georgia, black musicians and black laborers marched among four to five thousand other laborers in the "biggest Labor day celebration... ever known to this city." After the parade, the laborers celebrated with dancing, barbecue, baseball, and speeches.¹⁰⁷

Although many labor leaders tended to emphasize and celebrate biracialism in Labor Day spectacles, some African Americans encountered resistance especially if they held positions of honor, notably in border states. In 1896, the workingmen and workingwomen of St. Louis staged

¹⁰⁴ "Programme For Labor Day," *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 9, 1901.

¹⁰⁵ "Big Negro Parade: Norfolk Celebrates Labor Day," *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), August 5, 1905, 2.

¹⁰⁶ "Labor's Army Given Ovation by Thousands," *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 3, 1907, 1.

¹⁰⁷ "Brunswick Has Planned Big Labor Day Fete," *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 1, 1918, A1.

a massive Labor Day parade, which featured a black band at the head. In response to the black band in this position of honor, many unions refused to supply bands for the parade, which created a “noticeable scarcity of union bands in line” because the white union men “say that they would not march in the same parade with the colored men.”¹⁰⁸ In 1911, Cincinnati’s white laborers withdrew from the city’s Labor Day parade because they refused to follow a black band and black union laborers. Each year, the various union leaders in Cincinnati draw from a hat to determine their place in line. For this parade, the black union of hod carriers won the honor of leading the parade, and they intended to assume this position with black musicians at their lead.¹⁰⁹

In addition to Labor Day celebrations, African Americans employed musicians to harass southern leaders on behalf of labor rights. In February 1900, black servants journeyed to northern cities for better work facilitated by employment agencies that helped clients find the best jobs. Due to the work of the agencies, many servants left, which gave local housekeepers “quite a serious problem in the matter of securing servants.” Lynchburg’s civic leaders took steps to curtail the work of the employment agencies and keep black labor closer to home, such as imposing a tax on these agencies. In support of the servants and their own enterprise, an employment agency hired a black band to parade the city’s streets with “a number of colored boys bearing banners on which good jobs and high wages in Northern cities were advertised.”¹¹⁰

In the 1930s, many black southerners turned to the Communist Party of America and visibly participated in the party’s rallies and meetings despite hostility to the party and black political action. Based out of Birmingham, the Communists looked to gain support in the Deep South and Tennessee, and they found quite a bit of success with African Americans in

¹⁰⁸ “How Labor Day Was Celebrated,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Sept. 7, 1896, 8.

¹⁰⁹ “Negroes Win First Place,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 21, 1911, 13.

¹¹⁰ “The Servant Problem,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Feb. 27, 1900, 10.

Alabama's Black Belt. In the South, African Americans made up about 80 to 90 percent of the Communist Party's membership and visibly agitated on behalf of the working class. On May 22, 1930, a black crowd gathered for a mass meeting of the Communist Party, in which speakers Tom Johnson, Frank Burns, and Walter Lewis advocated for self-determination for Alabama's black population and desegregation in restaurants and public transportation. The Communists held rallies in outdoor parks, especially at Birmingham's Capitol Park. African Americans tended to have a massive presence at these events. In May 1930, the communists staged a rally of seven hundred black people and one hundred white people in Capitol Park, where they rallied to demand aid for unemployed workers and protested the arrest of communists. When Birmingham's city officials responded with laws denouncing the Communist Party, 250 black workers returned to Capitol Park to support the party against hostility. At a September rally, the black communists remained in Capitol Park until police forced them to leave. During the winter of 1930, black communists participated in a series of rallies on behalf of the unemployed.¹¹¹ African Americans lent their support to the Communist Party despite lacking the right to vote by participating at the party's numerous rallies.

From 1877 to 1932, southerners professed their politics through a vibrant spectacular culture of parades, marches, revival-like meetings, barbecues, picnics, and other rituals, which they held on behalf of third parties and reform movements. To dethrone the Democratic Party, these movements employed every available method, including spectacular demonstrations. Across the South, African Americans participated in these spectacles. The prohibition movement, third parties, and the labor movement became the most likely sites of black political participation because these groups required black support to shake up the traditional political

¹¹¹ Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 15-16.

order. African Americans, therefore, made up a considerable party of these movements and demonstrated their loyalty to these causes and their political power at publicly staged political spectacles. From 1877 to the 1900s, African Americans practiced their politics with their votes and with demonstrations in cities and towns across the South. When they lost the vote in the 1900s, they continued to play a major role in each of these movements with their participation in political spectacles, which gave them continued access to the political sphere.

CHAPTER 2

“A CONTEST IN MUSIC”: ELECTION DAY SPECTACLES IN THE MIDDLE GEORGIA TEMPERANCE CAMPAIGNS, 1885-1898

“Early in the morning, before the usual ward workers and election bystanders had gotten to their accustomed posts,” began a report from Baltimore’s *The Sun* with regard to the December 1, 1898 local-option prohibition election in Macon, “an army of five hundred of the wives and mothers and daughters of leading citizens...marched through the principal thoroughfares of the city.” At each polling station, a choir of thirty to fifty women sang temperance hymns with the accompaniment of a church organ. As some women sang, other white female prohibitionists passed out sandwiches and coffee. To contest these methods, the anti-prohibitionists arranged for black bands to set up across the street and play ragtime. According to *The Sun*, the white women “were not daunted by the discord of the negro bands and the jeers and shouts of their opponents.”¹ With racial tensions at a fever pitch because of the mobilization of black and white soldiers for the Spanish-American War and the previous month’s deadly insurrection in Wilmington, North Carolina, these black musicians participated in Macon’s election day spectacle and openly confronted white women on the streets to make a political statement.

From 1885 to 1898, the residents of middle Georgia eagerly monitored a series of temperance campaigns, which dominated the region’s political affairs and demonstrated the persistence of a popular, spectacle-based political culture. During these campaigns, political

¹ “A Hot Time in Macon,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Dec. 2, 1898, 2.

spectacles thrived in the region's cities, especially in Atlanta and Macon.² In 1885 and 1887, Atlanta residents carried out their own local-option campaigns. Throughout the campaigns, African Americans participated alongside white men and women in political spectacles organized by both sides. On election day, black men voted with white men. The movement continued in Georgia for more than a decade.

During the 1890s, however, the dynamics of racial politics changed in the region to benefit white men and women at the disadvantage of African Americans because of the Populist insurgency, mobilization for the Spanish-American War, and the Wilmington Race Riots. These events intensified hostile attitudes toward black political activity, especially voters. During the 1890s, the People's Party threatened Democratic power in the South because it sought out alliances with African Americans in the Republican Party. In the South, white Democrats worked to eliminate black voters and poor white voters as a response to the Populists. In November 1898, black and white residents in Wilmington, North Carolina, engaged in a bloody conflict to determine control of local government. After the riots, negrophobia intensified and white southerners, who had already begun the effort to disfranchise African Americans in some states, strengthened their call to eliminate black voting.³ Simultaneously, many African Americans enlisted in the armed forces to wage the war in Cuba against Spain. Or, they wanted to enlist but could not because of bans on black soldiers in state militias. Aghast with the

² Michael E. McGerr, in his book *The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North, 1865-1928*, remarks that popular politics declined in the South because of disfranchisement. During the 1890s, interracial cooperation in the People's Party threatened conservative white power. In response, conservative white southerners successfully intimidated and disfranchised black and poor white voters causing voter turnout to fall from 64 percent in the elections from 1876 to 1892 to 32 percent from 1900 to 1916. By 1920, only 20 percent of voters turned out for presidential elections. He does not examine, however, whether or not these declines in voter turnout made any noticeable impact on the spectacular displays familiar to nineteenth-century Americans.

³ Michael Honey, "Class, Race, and Power in the New South: Racial Violence and the Delusions of White Supremacy," in *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy*, ed. by David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 174-178; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 108-122; Edmonds, *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina*, 158-180.

possibility of black men in uniform, white southerners treated black soldiers with suspicion and aggression.⁴ Stationed in southern cities near Macon, black and white soldiers came to blows with one another, which heightened fears of race war.

By the 1898 Macon temperance campaign, therefore, the city's residents had become openly hostile to black voters and wary of alleged black intemperance and unruliness. As disfranchisement and segregation overtook the region, African Americans refused to remain neither silent nor invisible in the political sphere. In the Macon campaign, black voters encountered intimidation, but they continued to participate in the city's political spectacles and cast their ballots. Amid a dangerous and volatile situation, black men even confronted white women on the streets to make a political statement. After the fray, white southerners launched efforts to disfranchise black voters but did nothing about the spectacular demonstration on the streets.

In the early nineteenth century, temperance reformers gained their strength from religious and secular impulses, including the spectacles of the Great Awakening. Preachers hosted religious revivals with the intention of gaining converts. At the revivals, they encouraged their massive audiences to completely repent for their sins, which included intemperance. In scientific literature, many reformers advocated for temperance out of concern for people's health and vitality because the young republic required a healthy and virtuous citizenry.⁵ American temperance reformers organized state-based and national-level temperance societies to carry out their work. By 1835, Americans had started more than eight thousand local temperance organizations in all regions of the country. At this point, they did not seek government regulation

⁴ David C. Turpie, "A Voluntary War: The Spanish-American War, White Southern Manhood, and the Struggle to Recruit Volunteers in the South," *Journal of Southern History* 80 (Nov. 2014): 862-865, 876-880.

⁵ Thompson, Jr., *A Most Stirring and Significant Episode*, 15-18.

or prohibition of the production, sale, or consumption of alcohol although some towns, cities, and the state of Maine did pass such laws.⁶

During the Civil War, temperance reformers felt a sense of urgency to accomplish their goals, so they appealed to the local and national governments to help them. Parents worried about their sons leaving the safe-haven of the home and becoming drunk in army camps, so they encouraged them to join temperance regiments and sign pledges before enlisting. Throughout the war, parents sent letters to their children to remind them about the poor effects of alcohol on the body and mind. Worried about temptation, reformers encouraged their governments to protect their fighting sons from alcohol through regulatory and even prohibitory measures. Americans and Confederates felt that the survival of their respective nations depended on the ability of fighting men to carry out their duties with sober minds and healthy bodies. At home, they practiced temperance as a means by which to demonstrate their loyalty and patriotism. Due to the Civil War, temperance reformers insisted on using the government to enforce their version of morality.⁷

Inspired by the Civil War, post-war temperance reformers reasoned that the national government should take an active role in the regulation of alcohol because it would improve political relationships, ensure harmonious human relationships by reducing crime and abuse, and reform workers according to respectable, middle-class principles. In the South, teetotalers could not persuade Democrats to support prohibition because of the party's insistence on staying out of personal matters. The candidates of the short-lived Prohibition Party did not have much success, either. The Republicans had no qualms about legislating on morality after President Abraham

⁶ Thompson, Jr., *A Most Stirring and Significant Episode*, 15-21; Megan Leigh Bever, *War Is a Terrible Enemy to Temperance: Drinking, Self-Control, and Meaning of Loyalty in the Civil War Era* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, 1-3.

⁷ Bever, *War Is a Terrible Enemy to Temperance*, 1-7, 14-19.

Lincoln issued the emancipation proclamation and Congress passed the thirteenth amendment, but they had little power in the South. Party and sectional loyalty, therefore, provided a roadblock to national prohibition legislation, so many reformers turned to local-option and statewide elections to pass prohibition laws.⁸ Georgia became a center of prohibition activity.

After the Civil War, formerly enslaved people and northern philanthropists and missionaries both moved to Atlanta for new opportunities, which made it a hotspot for temperance work among African Americans. Although Atlanta did not have a large black community before the Civil War, African Americans moved to the city in droves after emancipation. By 1870, they made up forty-five percent of the city's population. Upon arrival, they founded their own Baptist and Methodist churches, which would play a leading role in the future temperance movement in the city. African Methodist Episcopal ministers made temperance a constant subject in sermons, and church leaders organized conferences on the issue. After emancipation, northern reformers felt the need to educate formerly enslaved people in work ethic and manners, so they moved to the South to work among emancipated black men and women. They preached the value of temperance in black neighborhoods with temperance literature, such as *The Temperance Tract for the Freedmen* published by the American Temperance Union, and columns in *The Freedman* and *The Freedman's Journal*, which had a large circulation in the city. In the schools founded to educate formerly enslaved people, teachers instructed their students in temperance and asked students to take the Lincoln Temperance Pledge. To reach people that did not attend school or church, temperance reformers went home-to-home to educate formerly enslaved people in the virtues of temperance. The message certainly reached most of Atlanta's black community, and many but not most black Atlantians accepted

⁸ Thompson, Jr., *A Most Stirring and Significant Episode*, 1-9, 154-156; Gaines M. Foster, *Moral Reconstruction: Christian Lobbyists and the Federal Legislation of Morality, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 1-8; 163-192.

the message. The movement, furthermore, included a long list of black leaders, such as ministers Joseph Wood, Henry McNeal Turner, Wesley J. Gaines, and E. R. Carter. In their message to the black community, they emphasized the need for temperance to achieve true freedom. They linked individual behavior to the common good and argued that an individual's intemperance hurt the entire black community.⁹ With this biracial alliance, Georgia and Atlanta, especially, became a focus of the prohibition movement in the South.

During the 1880s, black and white Georgians proved receptive to temperance pleas. Many New South businessmen viewed it as the means to facilitate obedience and diligence among their workers and as vital to the South's economic growth and development. In the black community, middle-class African Americans advocated the merits of temperance in an attempt to demonstrate their conformity to the dictates of middle-class respectability. In 1880, Women's Christian Temperance Union leader Eliza D. Stewart spoke before a crowd at Trinity Methodist Church in Atlanta. In 1881, WCTU President Frances Willard toured the South and delivered speeches in more than fifty southern cities, including Atlanta. These female reformers inspired a surge in prohibition work in the South with their visits. Willard encouraged local organizations to put the issue on ballots in their communities. Distrustful of foreign authorities, southern reformers embraced this decentralized approach. In North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas, voters considered statewide prohibition. In hundreds of other towns, cities, and counties, they confronted the issue in local-option elections. In these elections, they had to decide whether or not to permit the retailing of alcohol in their communities, thus separating the issue from partisanship and making it more likely that community support for the law would guarantee its

⁹ Thompson, Jr., *A Most Stirring and Significant Episode*, 44-137.

enforcement. In 1885 and 1887, Atlanta held its own local-option elections. In 1898, Macon put the question to its voters.¹⁰

Atlanta's temperance reformers included many of the city's leading men and women, such as Henry Grady, and made the city the epicenter of the movement in the South. From his position as editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, Grady became a leading advocate of a particular vision of the New South, which included prohibition. The movement enrolled other New South businessmen, politicians, and religious leaders in pursuit of their cause, such as minister Atticus G. Haygood, preacher Sam Jones, and politician Alfred Colquitt. Colquitt, the state's governor, viewed prohibition as a means to reconcile the war-torn nation, thus he encouraged the passage of local-option laws. Other writers repeated a similar argument with regard to prohibition's potential to reconcile the nation. With regard to prohibition, one writer explained, "We shall always have a Solid South and a Solid North until a new party comes into power on a new issue." Another author added that the Prohibition Party exhibited a "fervor and earnestness which have not been seen in politics since the war closed."¹¹ Haygood, who served as president of Emory College and held various political offices, published a book on the subject of prohibition. In *Lose the Saloons: A Plea for Prohibition*, Haygood provided statistics with regard to alcohol manufacture and consumption in the state, observations from Georgia judges concerning alcohol and criminal behavior, and explored numerous arguments for prohibition. Given the energy of the prohibition movement in the area, Atlanta became a focal point for prohibition reformers to meet and work. From 1881 to 1885, Atlanta hosted a series of state conventions, such as the

¹⁰ Michael A. Wagner, "As Gold Is Tried In The Fire, So Hearts Must Be Tried By Pain: The Temperance Movement in Georgia and the Local Option Law of 1885," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 93 (Spring 2009): 30-34; Thompson, Jr., *A Most Stirring and Significant Episode*, 6-10, 21, 88-90, 154-157; Ann-Marie Szymanski, "Beyond Parochialism: Southern Progressivism, Prohibition, and State-Building," *Journal of Southern History* 69 (Feb., 2003), 109; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham*, 12, 20-21, 34-35, 46-47, 82-86.

¹¹ Prohibition Scrapbook, Walter B. Hill Papers, MS 3274, Hargrett Research Library, University of Georgia, Box 2.

annual meeting of the Georgia Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Georgia Prohibition Association. These organizations, among numerous others, published temperance newspapers.¹² In this energetic atmosphere, black and white Georgians became involved in the movement.

Georgia's reformers achieved a few important victories in their attempt to eradicate alcohol from the city. They prohibited gambling in taverns and saloons, outlawed the sale of liquor on election day, and banned its sale to minors. The city's legislators taxed it, as well. In the early 1880s, many of Georgia's rural residents had banned the sale of liquor within their counties. Residents of eighty Georgia counties passed local-option prohibition laws, but the state's five largest urban areas remained safe havens for the liquor trade. On September 9, 1885, the Georgia legislature passed a law permitting any county to hold a local-option prohibition vote if one-tenth of its residents signed a petition supporting it. According to Grady's *Atlanta Constitution*, "this is the local option bill which represents the climax of a long prohibition campaign." The reporter predicted "that under its provisions nearly 100 elections will be held in this state between now and the end of the year." Under the law, the ballots required voters simply to choose "for sale" or "against sale." Atlanta and Fulton County residents would go to the polls to decide this question but not until both prohibitionists and anti-prohibitionists staged massive campaigns.¹³

By the end of September 1885, Atlanta's prohibitionists and anti-prohibitionists organized their forces and commenced the battle. Based out of Good Templars Hall in Atlanta,

¹² Wagner, "As Gold Is Tried In The Fire, So Hearts Must Be Tried By Pain": 30-54, 48, 51-52; Thompson, Jr., *A Most Stirring and Significant Episode*, 9-10.

¹³ "The Local Option Bill Passed," *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 10, 1885, 4; "Whisky or No Whisky: The Atlanta Prohibitionists Preparing for the Fight," *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 20, 1885, 6G; "A Prohibition Wave: Liquor Selling in Atlanta Likely to Be Discontinued," *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), Sept. 21, 1885, 1; Wagner, "As Gold Is Tried In The Fire": 32-34, 48, 51-52; Thompson, Jr., *A Most Stirring and Significant Episode*, 9-10.

organized prohibitionists established a chain of command and bureaucracy to facilitate their work. They assembled a biracial coalition of men and women to enlist the city's temperance reformers on behalf of the cause, especially the members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. They immediately set out upon the city with twenty petitions to collect the requisite number of signatures, which they accomplished in a few short weeks. The anti-prohibitionists had a more crude organizational structure composed of a motley coalition of businessmen, liquor dealers, and high-license advocates. Unlike the prohibitionists, the anti-prohibitionists did not have a nationwide network or years of established organization to act on their behalf. Despite their rudimentary structure, the anti-prohibitionists had plenty of financial support from the business interests of the city. "There is no doubt that there will be funds sufficient on both sides of the fight to make it lively," observed a reporter from the *Atlanta Constitution*, who expected the campaign to become "red hot" by the first week of October.¹⁴

From the beginning, newspaper editors from across the country closely followed the election, publishing sensational updates from the campaign to satisfy an audience, which expected excitement. In their coverage, they hinted at potential violence and conflict but ultimately predicted victory for the prohibitionists. The editors of *Chicago Tribune*, *New York Times*, and other significant newspapers reprinted articles from the *Atlanta Constitution* for their local audiences. "The prohibition wave has struck Atlanta," explained a correspondent to Nashville's *Daily American*, who observed that "the excitement in Atlanta is intense over the election to occur here."¹⁵ A reporter from Atlanta to *New York Times* added that the local option law "revived the temperance crusade here in a wonderful degree" and that Atlanta had become

¹⁴ "Whisky or No Whisky: The Atlanta Prohibitionists Preparing for the Fight," *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 20, 1885, 6G; "Wet or Dry: The Impending Prohibition Issue in this County," *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 27, 1885, 12.

¹⁵ "A Prohibition Wave: Liquor Selling in Atlanta Likely to Be Discontinued," *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), Sept. 21, 1885, 1.

“the scene of violent agitation” on prohibition’s behalf. The reporter explained that “the agitation has extended to other cities, and prohibition in Atlanta will be followed by prohibition in Savannah and Augusta” despite the presence of German and Irish immigrants in these cities. The reporter concluded, “Before Winter is over there will not be a drop of liquor sold in Georgia under legal sanction.”¹⁶ Americans could participate in the campaign spectacle whether they resided in Atlanta or not because of prominent coverage in national newspapers.

The residents of Macon paid particularly close attention to the campaign in Atlanta because of the effects it might have on their own city. “The town talk in Macon at present is the prohibition movement in Atlanta,” explained a correspondent to *Atlanta Constitution*, who added that residents “eagerly sought” the newspaper “every morning for the latest developments in the campaign.” Macon residents gambled on the outcome of the election with “five dollars and boxes of cigars” as the typical stakes. Although most people bet on prohibition, a reporter observed that “occasionally parties who are known to have bets to that effect are caught hedging.” Macon’s residents tended to support prohibition in Atlanta because it “would give Macon a nice little boom.”¹⁷ With over seventy liquor dealers, Macon had a reputation among Georgians for its alcohol trade. Observers noted that, in particular, the “consumption of whiskey, in the past few years has been remarkable.” In addition to its financial power, the liquor interest held “full sway in nearly all political measures.”¹⁸ Atlanta and Macon residents predicted that Atlanta’s liquor retailers would move their businesses to Macon if prohibition prevailed. Based

¹⁶ “Prohibition in Georgia,” *New York Times*, Oct. 1, 1885, 1.

¹⁷ “The News in Macon,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 10, 1885, 2. Michael McGerr points out that this type of behavior pervaded popular politics before the 1880s but suggests that it declined along with the rest of the spectacular nature of popular politics. Often, “bettors waged money, dinners, hats, boots, or ties” but “one losing better had to push the winner or a pig around the town square in a wheelbarrow, shave off one side of his beard, or sit all day in a tree”; McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 28-29. According to *New York Times*, one Atlanta resident had over \$6,000 wagered on prohibition. “A Prohibition Victory: An Exciting Election in Fulton County, Georgia,” *New York Times*, Nov. 26, 1885, 5.

¹⁸ “From Macon: The Temperance Question Agitating the Central City,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Jan. 24, 1885, 4.

on these rumors, Atlanta's prohibitionists charged Macon's temperance workers for failing to force the issue in their own city. "If prohibition is carried in this city it will add many people and much more money to Macon," explained writer to *Atlanta Constitution*, who condemned leading temperance activist Walter B. Hill of Macon, who eventually became president of the University of Georgia, for his weakness.¹⁹ The campaign in Atlanta captured the attention of everyone in Georgia and people across the country.

In newspapers, prohibitionists and anti-prohibitionists waged an informative campaign to appeal to undecided voters with reason and argument, thereby practicing the type of educational politics that became prevalent at the end of the nineteenth century. Given the significance of the question at hand, one writer to *Atlanta Constitution* asked, "Would it not be well to consider the subject fully, in all its phases moral as well as financial, in order to arrive at a proper conclusion before acting in the matter?" After "hearing and reading a great number of arguments," he informed the readership that prohibition does not tend to work. Instead, he encouraged them to support high licenses and moral persuasion. To his followers, he instructed, "Make drunkenness whether existing among the high or low, so offensive that no man will indulge in the repulsive vice; make the habitual drunkard feel that he is an outcast, by shunning it as you would a leper."²⁰ For the most part, anti-prohibitionists adopted a high-license position. Julius L. Brown, an anti-prohibitionist, argued that it "is lawful to use firearms, but if crime results it is punished. It is lawful to desire and acquire property, but if crime results it is punished." Based on this reasoning, Brown advocated high license and better enforcement of laws against drunkenness.²¹

¹⁹ "Why This Music from Macon," *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 12, 1885, 3;

²⁰ "Local Option," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 11, 1885, 10. The same author sent another letter to the *Atlanta Constitution*'s editors on October 25, 1885, which the editors printed on page 10. The author identifies as "S." and as a "strong temperance man" thus justifying the use of the masculine pronouns in this section.

²¹ "Mr. Julius L. Brown Continues: The Moderate Use and Sale of Wines and Liquors Not Morally Wrong," *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 4, 1885, 3.

On the other side, prohibitionists countered with their own arguments, which often focused on the problems alcohol posed for women and children. They explained that business gained in liquor resulted in losses in other sectors. According to one prohibitionist, the “truth is the liquor traffic as carried on is debauching many of the young men in the city—making drunkards of many husbands and fathers, depriving many women and children of the comforts and often of the necessities of life.”²² Specifically, the prohibitionists focused their attack on a local brewery. They wondered if it had been taxed appropriately. They asked, if “the brewery company has made \$200,000 so quickly, who has lost it?” To answer, they suggested, “Did all that money just grow, or have wives and children suffered from the need of the millions spent for beer, of which it is the net profit?” The prohibitionists argued the “liquor traffic does not make Americans of the Georgia variety more industrious—thrifty—economical—intelligent—peaceable—respectable or happy.”²³ Even as journalists and campaign workers used facts and figures to influence voters, it did not deter more dramatic appeals.

Prohibitionists and anti-prohibitionists relied on spectacular popular politics to generate enthusiasm and mobilize voters on behalf of their respective causes, often including celebrities in the programs to draw massive audiences. The speeches and rallies often had an educational purpose despite their intent to attract popular audiences. The anti-prohibitionists, for example, advertised that people should “come out and hear facts and figures.”²⁴ They held their meetings throughout the city but tended to focus their rallies around the courthouse. The prohibitionists used the De Give’s Opera House for their massive meetings and met in churches. During the campaign, a group of male workers erected evangelist Sam Jones’s tent behind St. Philip’s

²² “Prohibition Points,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 5, 1885, 2.

²³ “Prohibition Points,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 6, 1885, 2.

²⁴ “Anti-Prohibition Meeting,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 4, 1885, 7.

Church on Hunter Street, which became the key site for revival-like prohibition meetings.²⁵

Spectators gathered at the prohibition tent and De Give's Opera House to hear nationally and locally famous speakers advocate prohibition in Atlanta.

On November 2, the "greatest crowd that ever filled the opera house" met to hear evangelist Samuel P. Jones and Senator Alfred Colquitt speak on behalf of prohibition. Jones had earned a reputation speaking on this issue throughout the South. His supporters characterized him as "fearless before mankind." He preached on the principle that "people need to be startled to get them to act" and used language to arouse people "from lethargy and indifference."²⁶ Before the program began, crowds cheered as the Young Men's Prohibition Club paraded from their headquarters on Broad Street to De Give's Opera House. During the speech to three thousand male and female spectators, Jones praised the city's temperance workers for putting prohibition on the ballot. He encouraged them to maintain the fight. He explained, "Whisky men get into much trouble and they are always fighting, but I never yet heard of a whisky man whipping a prohibitionist."

During the speech, Jones emphasized the role of women and the black community in the prohibition movement. He drew attention to the issue for African Americans by laughing off suggestions that prohibition would hurt the black community. With regard to women, he asserted, "I can never go wrong so long as I stand on the side of God, and the angels in heaven, and the mothers and sisters and wives on this earth." He characterized *Atlanta Constitution* as "the greatest power in Atlanta" and hoped it would support prohibition. He estimated that half of "the men and women of Georgia are on their knees every night praying that the great capital city

²⁵ "A Big Tent," *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 11, 1885, 5.

²⁶ Walter P. Emerson, "Sam Jones- A Study," Undated, Samuel P. Jones Papers, MSS 126, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.

of the state may redeem herself from this curse.” Newspaper reporters connected these interested people to recent campaign developments.

Upon conclusion of Jones’s speech, Senator Colquitt took the stage to highlight some of the campaign’s issues, such as prohibition’s effects on the local economy. The speakers often engaged the audience and encouraged their participation with laughter and cheers throughout the program. At the conclusion, one speaker asked all the prohibitionists in the audience to stand. Upon request, the “hundreds upon the stage rose as one man, and the great crowd in front and in the galleries rose with almost equal unanimity.”²⁷ At this event and in the streets, Atlanta’s prohibitionists gave their popular approval to prohibition with their spectatorship and applause and formed a community with one another by sharing in the experience.

On the same night, the anti-prohibitionists held a competing rally at the courthouse to stake out their position to black and white voters. Despite short notice, the anti-prohibitionists attracted “an enthusiastic” audience of eight hundred black and white spectators. For the most part, the speakers argued that prohibition would have disastrous effects on the city’s economy. W. A. Pledger, a successful black lawyer, civic activist, and editor of *Atlanta Defiance*, feared for the hotel and saloon employees that would lose their jobs if prohibition succeeded. He also argued that the lack of money from a tax on liquor would entail higher tax burdens for the poor and lower-functioning schools. To support his positions, he quoted at length from residents of Athens, who had initiated prohibition in their city. Athens resident Madison Davis testified that prohibition hurt smaller cities more than larger cities because of heavier tax burdens and lost business. Pledger’s speech put African Americans and women at the center of the campaign. He believed that prohibition in Athens resulted from a fear that students would drink and harass women and children. In Atlanta, he argued that the college’s rules would prevent the city’s black

²⁷ “Prohibition Men: Sold A Big meeting At the Opera House,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 3, 1885, 11.

students from drinking and rabble-rousing. He added, they “are too well acquainted with what their fates would be to go around raising thunder with white women and children.” At the conclusion of the meeting, the anti-prohibitionists passed a resolution to “invite the special cooperation of our colored friends who are employed in the various bars and restaurants of this city, and who would, in the event of the closing of such places, be at once deprived of their daily earnings and thrown upon an already overcrowded labor market.”²⁸ Notably, African Americans participated at the events of both prohibitionists and anti-prohibitionists, and they would continue to influence the campaign.

In Georgia, black voters faced numerous restrictions on their ability to vote. After emancipation, African Americans energetically participated in politics. As early as 1867, seventy percent of adult black male Georgians showed up and voted. In 1867, Tunis Campbell won a seat in the Georgia state senate, which he assumed in 1868 before white senators forced him out of office because they refused to guarantee black men the right to hold office. In 1870, Georgians elected a Democratic majority to the state legislature and effectively returned white citizens to power. At the states’ 1877 constitutional convention, Georgia’s delegates passed a cumulative poll tax, residency restrictions, and registration requirements, which drastically reduced black voting power on the state level. They apportioned the state legislature to temper the control of districts with a large black community, as well. Within Atlanta, municipal elections changed from ward-based contests to city-wide campaigns, thus making it difficult for the minority of African Americans in the city to overcome white majorities. When these measures did not suffice, the Republican Party had no power in the state, thus making the vote an uninspiring and ineffective tool for black Georgians. By the end of the nineteenth century, less than ten percent

²⁸ “Taking it Straight: The Anti-Prohibition Rally at the Court House,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 3, 1885, 11; Herman “Skip” Mason, Jr., *Politics, Civil Rights, and Law in Black Atlanta, 1870-1970* (Charleston, Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 55-56.

of the otherwise eligible black population voted.²⁹ Despite these circumstances, African Americans had a visible presence in the political sphere as voters and spectators throughout the 1885 local-option campaign.

On November 17, Atlanta's black and white prohibitionists gathered at the prohibition tent for a series of speakers. Evangelist Sam Small spoke "with good humored bits and stirred up a great deal of enthusiasm and applause" from the biracial audience. Once again, the speech focused on the racial elements of the prohibition campaign. According to an observer, he "spoke of the colored race as one that had capacity to make itself distinguished" and believed that white southern men wanted African Americans to "use his vote for the elevation of his race and to make the race a race of useful, contributing citizens." In reaching out to the black audience, he focused on the troubles alcohol posed to the black community. He explained, "The tax books showed that the colored people have accumulated nearly eight million dollars. It would have been eighty million if the other seventy millions had not been squandered in barrooms." In conclusion, he spoke directly to the black spectators in his audience and encouraged them "to be temperate, save their money and educate their children and to secure more of the comforts of life for themselves and their families."³⁰ After Small's speech, a quartet of black musicians rendered the hymn "Awake, Awake." In addition to Small, two black religious leaders from Philadelphia spoke before the audience. Bishop J. P. Campbell expressed satisfaction at the sight of "the two races united on such an issue as temperance" and encouraged them to continue the fight. Joining him, Dr. B. T. Tanner, an editor of the *Quarterly Review* of the African Methodist Episcopal

²⁹ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Perennial Classics, 2002), 314-315, 323, 423-424, 590-591; Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*, 281; For a comprehensive account of black officeholding, see Eric Foner's *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996).

³⁰ "Prohibition Meetings: Last Night at the Tent," *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 18, 1885, 5.

Church, also spoke for a bit. The rest of the meeting consisted of hymns and other speakers.³¹

The Philadelphia contingent had come to Atlanta for a conference, but they remained in town for a week to “help make the last battle for prohibition.” On the night of November 23, the Philadelphia clergy gave “a wonderfully powerful speech.”³²

On November 24, prohibitionists made their final plea to the voters of Atlanta and prepared for the battle. The prohibitionists opened their headquarters at 6 a. m. for an entire day of campaigning and programming. By using their highly structured organization, which one reporter described as “military in character,” they hoped to carry the election. The prohibitionists organized their supporters into companies and assigned a series of officers, including a captain and sergeant, to each club to command them into line, march them to the polls, and to guarantee that each voter correctly and legally cast his ballot. According to one prohibitionist, “We will have one thousand earnest workers at the polls tomorrow that will neither be bulldozed nor misled. They know the law, and they know their duty, and there are going to live the one and do the other. We will march over two thousand voters to the polls in line.”³³ With a militaristic spirit, partisan voters and poll workers set out onto the streets to persuade voters and awe spectators.

To reward voters for supporting prohibition, female workers arranged to provide lunch at two locations: North Atlanta on Broad Street and another in South Atlanta at the corner of Pryor Street and Mitchell Street. There “was a busy scene at each of the lunch rooms” on the day before election. Twenty female prohibitionists worked all day to collect donations and prepare the meals. They relied on contributions, which varied from “the modest half dozen rolls to great baskets filled with viands worthy to be set before the daintiest epicure in the city,” to feed all of

³¹ “Prohibition Meetings: Last Night at the Tent,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 18, 1885, 5.

³² Editorial Correspondence, *The Christian Recorder* (Philadelphia, PA), Dec. 3, 1885.

³³ “Wet or Dry? The Question to be Settled By the Voters Today,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 25, 1885, 1.

the voters, including African Americans albeit in a segregated lunch room. The women devised this plan in an attempt to keep people at work and in line as long as possible. They did not want voters vacating the lines to find dinner.³⁴ Although these women could not vote in the contest, they lent their efforts to help the cause by adapting their domestic duties for political purpose.

At 6 P.M on the eve of the election, the prohibitionists started to organize outside the Young Men's Prohibition Club meeting house on Broad Street, and they marched in spectacular fashion from this site to the tent at St. Philip's Church to listen to speeches and hear music. In a long line, the voters paraded through the major streets of the city with "great crowds" on both sides of the street "heartily cheering their marching allies." Leading them, four musical bands inspired the voters with their "martial strains." The marchers met a crowd of black and white spectators, which had already gathered at the tent, took their seats, and enjoyed the program deep into the night. The procession seemed the "most remarkable demonstration ever seen in Atlanta on the eve of an election."³⁵ After the parades, the black prohibition voters went to their churches, which the temperance women had stocked with food and stayed open all night. They waited for the morning to march to the polls together.³⁶

In the final moments, the prohibitionists made black voters their primary concern. "We have an unquestioned majority of the white vote," declared one worker at campaign headquarters. He added, "I think nobody denies that the calculation of the antis has been that they would get one thousand majority of the negroes, and that we would perhaps get this down to four or five hundred with the white vote." He argued, however, that the prohibitionists had expected a massive majority in the white vote and had plenty of African Americans registered to

³⁴ "Free Lunch," *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 19, 1885, 5; "Food for the Voters," *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 25, 1885, 1; "Dry It Is," *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 26, 1885, 1.

³⁵ "The Procession," *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 25, 1885, 1.

³⁶ "Corralling the Voters," *New York Times*, Nov. 25, 1885, 1.

vote on their behalf. The Young Men's Prohibition Club, furthermore, offered a reward of \$200 for the largest black organization to show up and vote for prohibition.³⁷

Although not quite as organized as the prohibitionists, the anti-prohibitionists efficiently prepared for the next day's election. At headquarters, "there were no loungers, and every man who dropped in had business, and when had transacted it he took his departure." The workers had done their jobs, and the "opening of the battle was being patiently awaited."³⁸ Like the prohibitionists, the anti-prohibitionists marched through the streets of the city on the eve of the election setting the streets "ablaze with the torches" and filling the air with cheering and music. By 7 P.M., parades from numerous parts of the city gathered at the post office on Forsyth Street. The anti-prohibitionists wore red badges in the procession. By 8 P.M., the crowd started to move as one through the city. The banners received quite a bit of attention. On one banner, the artist represented a dying child with its mother crying at the foot of the bed. The doctor advised, "A drop of brandy will save your child." The mother lamented, "Alas, doctor, I have no jug." The other banners emphasized the economic impact of prohibition by depicting people leaving the city and the closing of schools.³⁹ With these banners, the popular demonstrations had a notable argumentative bent. After the parades, the anti-prohibitionists enjoyed barbecues, which lasted until morning.⁴⁰

Across the country, people followed the campaign in Atlanta and even came to the city to witness it. The news of the spectacle reached the Northeast and Midwest, and local newspapers relayed information about the "unusual state of affairs" in Atlanta.⁴¹ They reported that musicians arrived from elsewhere in Georgia and as far away as Cincinnati, Chattanooga, and

³⁷ "Wet or Dry? The Question to be Settled By the Voters Today," *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 25, 1885, 1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ "The Procession," *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 25, 1885, 1.

⁴⁰ "Corralling the Voters," *New York Times*, Nov. 25, 1885, 1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Nashville to partake in the last night of the campaign. In addition to the musicians, “hundreds of visitors” and northern newspaper correspondents arrived from outside the city to participate in the drama.⁴²

On the cold and blustery morning of November 25, election day in Atlanta arrived. Before dawn, a few prohibitionists, including the police chief and one of his subordinates, had taken their place in line at the polling station at the Pryor Street courthouse. For more than an hour, they kept warm by blowing on their hands between bouts of idle chatter. Soon, thousands of voters prominently displaying red and blue badges would hit the streets and commence the battle surrounded by their supporters. The editors of *Atlanta Constitution* anticipated an “orderly and quiet” election but admitted that “some fear” remained that “there may be a collision between rival clubs as they march en masse to the polls” and “perhaps a squabble for the precincts.”⁴³

An hour before the polling stations opened, a band marched through the streets and trumpeted its political allegiance with a rendition of Stephen Foster’s famous drinking tune “We Won’t Go Home ‘til Morning.” With their arrival, they had definitely ended the morning silence and announced the arrival of election day. Captain Moses Bentley adorned himself “in truly gorgeous array” to lead the procession through the streets to the Pryor Street courthouse. Behind the band, George Yarborough, a black barber, adorned himself in a red sash and red feather in his hat to lead the procession of African Americans. At this point, more than 300 African Americans made their way to the polling booths “with military precision.” The officers wore red sashes around their waists and led the voters. At the voting booths, they divided the crowd into three detachments, which each took a position in line behind each of the three voting boxes. In the

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ “Wet or Dry? The Question to be Settled By the Voters Today,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 25, 1885, 1.

earliest moments of the election, the anti-prohibitionists had taken control of the Pryor Street courthouse.⁴⁴

At 7 A.M., the crowd rushed to cast their ballots but had to wait until police officers could manage the crowd. At first, the clerks had trouble with the crowds and following the procedures, which resulted in as few as “two votes to the minute” polled at the Pryor Street courthouse, but the pace soon quickened. As voters started to cast their ballots, a band hired by Macon temperance workers led the Third Ward Colored Club, which consisted of fifty-two members, and revealed their politics with the temperance song “We Won’t Get Drunk Any More.” As they approached the polls, they divided into three companies and pushed their way toward the front of the lines. Nearby, prohibition’s supporters cheered the black voters because their “hopes were evidently revived.” At this point, red and blue voters mixed together and quickly cast their ballots.⁴⁵

On the outskirts of town, the engine house became another key battleground of the election day spectacle. At this location, the female prohibitionists dominated the scene before dawn. They had made their preparations to provide the poll workers and voters with lunch and drinking water, which needed constant attention because it tended to freeze within minutes. By 7:15, more than one hundred voters had already arrived at this polling station. Within the hour, the three lines extended across the street for a distance upwards of fifty yards. The voters waited and chatted with one another in the freezing weather. Unlike at the courthouse, blue-ribboned voters and supporters dominated the scene. At 8 A.M. the windows of the polling station opened “and the rain of ballots began” with the prohibitionists in firm control of the polling station. By 10 A.M., the tide turned against them as the red-clad voters fired their ballots “hot and heavy”

⁴⁴ “Dry It Is,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 26, 1885, 1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

into the box. At this point, the prohibitionists appeared overwhelmed by voters in red badges. At 11 A.M., a group of anti-prohibitionists arrived, but their presence seemed to bolster the work of the prohibitionists at this particular site. Marching down Marietta Street, the employees of the Atlanta hotel Kimble House carried banners and flags. They cheered for the cause of liberty. Fearing defeat, the prohibitionists rallied and “for an hour they did good and effective work.”⁴⁶ During election day, momentum seemed to swing back and forth between the two groups, which contributed the excitement and anxiety over the outcome.

The crowds and spectacle never ceased. It seemed that everyone in Atlanta had taken to the streets to participate in the election. The lines continued to grow even though voters moved quickly toward the ballot box. “As fast as one man deposited his vote and dropped out of the way another slipped up,” explained a reporter, who added, “all along the line there was a forward march movement.” For the most part, “every man held his ticket in his hand, and no effort was made to influence or change him.”⁴⁷ Nevertheless, both parties tried to persuade black voters at the last minute.

Throughout the day, prohibitionists and anti-prohibitionists pleaded for every last vote from undecided voters, especially black voters. At the engine house, any person that approached the polls “in an indifferent manner” and “without a badge pinned on his manly breast” became a target for workers from both sides, who would grab him and attempt to persuade him. In many cases, these workers could change the minds of African Americans. Black preachers appeared on the scene, and they would identify undecided black voters and “cabbage on to the darkey and pour words of convincing argument into his unwilling ears” until he made up his mind.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Although both sides courted black votes, many white Atlantians sneered at the black voters. The reporter praised each voter for taking his place in line and remaining there despite the presence of black voters. The black voters who cast their ballots at the engine house polling station, according to reporters, “never did fail to take a chance at the free lunch table.” These voters would cast their ballots and enjoy a meal of chicken, sandwiches, biscuits, and pies. In fact, reports circulated that “several red badge negroes got a good square lunch by hiding the crimson and pinning on the blue badge.” At the courthouse, an elderly black man arrived and announced that he intended to sell his vote. Immediately, a mob descended upon him and presented him with both red and blue tickets. “The old man was pulled and hauled about quite roughly” by the crowd, which lifted and carried him across the street. Eventually, a police officer arrived on the scene and secured the elderly man’s release from its grasp. At the Collins Precinct, an African American approached the polls with the intention to vote, but the crowd challenged the legitimacy of his vote because someone in the crowd claimed that he owed taxes from 1883. He explained the circumstances to the satisfaction of the crowd and “was allowed to prove his liberty by casting his wet ticket.”⁴⁹

For the most part, the antagonism toward African Americans centered on the ‘possum festival held at a black church. A black civic leader, identified as Howard Horton, arranged to prepare 200 opossums to feed the black community at one of the churches, specifically to reward black prohibitionists. According to a newspaper reporter, an “unregenerated anti, without the fear of the Lord” spread the rumor that Horton had instead provided cats, not opossums, for the meal because he had seen him “skin the cats.” The black voters “refused to touch the ‘possums and threatened to withdraw their allegiance from the cause” until “Horton proved to their satisfaction that his ‘possums were not cats.” Then, the black voters resumed the feast “amid genuine

⁴⁹ Ibid.

applause” and filled their bellies with “possum and peace.”⁵⁰ By disseminating these images and stories, newspaper reporters helped paint a picture of feckless and uneducated black voters, which stood in stark contrast to the white women at the polls.

The female poll workers and prohibition activists received quite a bit of positive attention from the press and the crowds, most notably for their own lunch service. “The ladies, too, have taken up the contest with vigor,” explained a reporter to Louisville’s *Courier-Journal*.⁵¹ The newspaper reporters praised the female workers for their excellent service throughout the day and their ability to feed “hundreds of souls.” At local churches, female prohibitionists gathered and prayed all day. They sang songs and made some remarks on behalf of prohibition. After the closing of the polls, prohibitionist activist J. W. Anderson thanked numerous people for their work in the campaign, especially the female workers, who “were the inspiration of the movement, prayed constantly for our success, encouraged us to be hopeful and earnest, fed us on the day of election and contributed in every possible way” to the campaign.⁵² In later episodes, white female Georgians embraced a much more aggressive and political role than they had in Atlanta in 1885.

At the polls, the crowd specifically gathered to spot local and national celebrities, who generated quite a bit of excitement and, therefore, contributed to the festive atmosphere of election day. The polling stations became the sites of spectacular displays of wealth. At 1 P.M., Senator Joseph Brown arrived at the polls to vote, “and the mob began cheering loudly,” which became “louder and more furious as the carriage drove up and through the crowd.” At other polling stations, private carriages with blue ribbons arrived to drop off voters. One wealthy man arrived via horse and carriage with the “silver mounted harness of the horses arrayed with blue

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ “A Moral Struggle,” *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), Nov. 25, 1885, 2.

⁵² “Dry It Is,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 26, 1885, 1.

ribbons and a large blue bow caught half way up to the driver's whip." When he arrived, the crowd received him with generous applause.⁵³ With these demonstrations, wealthy voters indicated their lofty social status to crowds of spectators and made a scene at election day worth beholding.

At each polling station, crowds gathered to watch the battle of the ballots unfold, and they witnessed quite a bit of noteworthy developments. Despite the cold weather, people engaged in a contest that "was literally a craze on both sides" and that outsiders could never appreciate. At the Pryor Street courthouse, a band led a long prohibition procession, which energized their supporters, who "jumped, pranced, danced and yelled themselves hoarse." During the fracas, the "air was full of flying tickets and hats, men climbed up each other's shoulders to see the advancing column and when the band passed through the throng the music the music could not be heard." The anti-prohibitionists gathered strength from this display, and with "renewed energy they searched the approaching crowds for voters." Pandemonium prevailed throughout the day as the crowds mingled and struggled to mobilize voters and persuade undecided neighbors. At 4 P.M., a black man appeared with a large pole draped in red, which he had topped with a live rabbit, which may have referenced the trickster Brer Rabbit from black folklore, and a straight-flush poker hand. Under the cards, he wrote, "You can't blame me. Liquor wins." Like the amusing trickster, the story told by this black man appeared humorous to audiences yet nonetheless entailed important, serious social critique. With this display, he suggested that Atlanta's liquor interests, like a gambling house or the trickster rabbit, had used unscrupulous methods to defeat a more powerful opponent and affect the outcome in their favor. He suggests, furthermore, that prohibitionists should not blame African Americans,

⁵³ Ibid.

specifically him, for the results of the local-option election if it did not go their way.⁵⁴ At this point, the election started to come to a close, but the spectacle did not end. People moved to each polling station to await results and circulate rumors about the outcome.

Leaders and spectators on both sides of the campaign gathered and eagerly awaited updates from each of the polling places across the city and Fulton County. Upon hearing the results from each polling station, they checked the reality of the results against the predictions, which contributed to successive waves of optimism and pessimism. The crowd moved to each polling place as it closed, thus making it possible for spectators to watch the counting of the ballots.⁵⁵ The announcement of results became a key feature of the election day spectacle because it provided prohibitionists and anti-prohibitionists a chance to congregate with one another and share a collective experience, thus forging a political community that celebrated democracy through its rituals.

Outside of the city, a crowd gathered at the engine house and watched the counting of the votes through frosty windows. The spectators could not hear updates from inside the building, but they guessed and debated with one another. Prohibitionists had hoped for a 250 vote majority at this specific location, but the vote count appeared much closer. At one point, a “rumor stole out from a broken pane that where was not fifty votes difference.” Soon, prohibitionists started to worry that the anti-prohibitionists had actually prevailed outside the city. Uplifted by the news, the anti-prohibitionists felt quite confident in an overall victory. At 6:43 P.M., poll workers

⁵⁴ “Dry It Is,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 26, 1885, 1; Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, 122; John W. Roberts, *From Trickster to Badman: The Black Folk Hero in Slavery and Freedom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 1; Bernard Wolfe, “Uncle Remus & the Malevolent Rabbit” in *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 524-540; Trudier Harris, “The Trickster in African American Literature,” National Humanities Center, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1865-1917/essays/trickster.htm>. In 1881, Joel Chandler Harris, from Atlanta, published a compilation of Uncle Remus tales, which gave these characters from black folklore a national audience. I am especially grateful for the insights of Professor Harris and our discussion regarding this strange event.

⁵⁵ “Dry It Is,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 26, 1885, 1.

declared that the prohibitionists had won the vote at the fire station by five votes, which put an immense amount of pressure on the outcome of the ballots at the Pryor Street courthouse.

After the news at the engine house, a crowd braved a brisk wind to await the results at the courthouse. Discouraged by previous results, the fearful prohibitionists hunted for information. The prohibitionists had a 537 vote lead. The crowd buzzed and wondered if the anti-prohibitionists would make up enough votes to win the election. They debated whether or not the prohibitionists would challenge the election in case of that result. They “besieged” the windows with “frantic inquiries.” To accommodate the desires of the crowd and feed their enthusiasm, the clerks announced the results after they had counted a set of 1,000 ballots. After the first 1,000 votes, the anti-prohibitionists led the courthouse vote by only 78 votes, which alleviated the anxieties of some of the crowd because it indicated that the prohibitionists had won the county. After counting two-thirds of the votes, the anti-prohibitionists had a lead at the courthouse of 220 votes, which put them well behind the prohibitionists overall. At 10:13 P.M., the manager of the polling booth announced that the anti-prohibitionists had carried the courthouse by 326 votes, which did not erase the majority the prohibitionists had secured at the other polling locations throughout Fulton County. Upon learning of the victory, the prohibitionists exclaimed and rejoiced. Having won at the polls, the prohibitionists sealed their victory with “a procession that seemed endless.”⁵⁶ Atlanta’s voters had supported prohibition with their ballots, and its black and white residents legitimized the result with their popular demonstrations in the streets.

Across the country, newspaper editors carried the news from the election, which helped people from outside of the city feel connected by emphasizing the sense of urgency with which Atlantians carried out their work. “After the most exciting election ever held in the State, Fulton County has adopted prohibition,” announced *New York Times*, which proceeded to provide the

⁵⁶ Ibid.

details of the election day spectacle as it had done over the course of the entire campaign. “At 6 A.M. the colored voters who had been locked up in the various halls were marched to the different polls, and the battle of the ballot began in dead earnest,” explained a reporter. In these newspapers, reporters repeated the stories of African Americans at the polls, the opossum lunch, and the sighting of celebrities and dignitaries at the polls.⁵⁷ They became especially enchanted by the activity of African Americans. They described how the anti-prohibitionists “provided barbecues, a big possum supper and an all-night frolic for the negro voters” and that the prohibitionists “sent a barrel of oysters and dozen boxes of oyster crackers to each of the negro churches, to be converted into stews for their own swarthy recruits.”⁵⁸ After calculating the results, prohibitionists paraded “the streets by thousands, and torches and bonfires light the heavens.”⁵⁹

In black newspapers, editors applauded the passage of the local-option law in Atlanta and emphasized the collective effort of black and white prohibitionists. In Philadelphia’s *The Christian Recorder*, an editor regarded the law as “a mighty movement in favor of civilization and Christianity.” He took the “union of black and white men on both sides of this fearful moral struggle” as a “hopeful sign” of reconciliation between the regions and the races. In this contest, he explained, there was not “democrat nor republican, federal nor confederate, white nor black.” Instead, he portrayed this election as a righteous triumph in a “struggle between right and wrong, life and death.”⁶⁰

Newspaper editors hypothesized that prohibition’s victory in Atlanta would galvanize a massive movement, especially in the South. “Naturally, too in the first flush of this success, they

⁵⁷ “A Fight Over Prohibition,” *New York Times*, Nov. 27, 1885, 1.

⁵⁸ “The Capture of Atlanta,” *Daily Courant* (Hartford, CT), Nov. 27, 1885, 2.

⁵⁹ “Atlanta Goes Dry,” *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), Nov. 26, 1885, 5.

⁶⁰ “The Triumph of Prohibition in Atlanta,” *The Christian Recorder* (Philadelphia, PA), Dec. 10, 1885.

are looking about for fresh cities to conquer, and are announcing that the war will now go on without any let-up until the last licensed liquor-saloon disappears from the social map of Georgia,” explained *Hartford Courant*’s editors, who “predicted that the prohibitionists would tackle Savannah, Macon, and Augusta next.”⁶¹ Encouraged by success, the prohibitionists declared “that not until the state is absolutely prohibition territory will the fight be stopped.”⁶² The editors of Nashville’s *Daily American* added that if “a national election were to take place this week, the State would, vote the Prohibition ticket” and explained that the African Americans “are all actively committed to Prohibition and go arm in arm with their white allies.”⁶³ *Washington Post* editors expressed quite a bit of cynicism toward the result and argued, the “fanatics of Atlanta, Ga., have voted for prohibition. This is the first and easiest step” and “the fanatics of Atlanta, Ga. [have] to enforce their prohibition law, and that they will never do.”⁶⁴ Most people believed that the results in Atlanta entailed national implications for the future of prohibition across the country.

Despite the energy generated by the campaign, prohibition did not last long in Atlanta. For two years, Atlanta stood as the largest city in the country that did not permit the sale of alcohol. The prohibitionists had won by an extremely slim margin, thus making it almost impossible to enforce the law. Within a week of the victory, people already had doubts about the law’s utility. In a report to *Frank Leslie’s Weekly*, a reporter indicated that the law was “likely to be overthrown” by legal proceedings.⁶⁵ Although the local-option law survived a federal court injunction, it took an entire year to actually close down all the saloons and liquor retailers in the city, but the law never stopped the distribution and consumption of alcohol. Across the South,

⁶¹ “The Capture of Atlanta,” *Daily Courant* (Hartford, CT), Nov. 27, 1885, 2.

⁶² “A Prohibition Victory,” *New York Times*, Nov. 26, 1885, 5.

⁶³ “Atlanta Goes Dry,” *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), Nov. 26, 1885, 5.

⁶⁴ “Editorial,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 26, 1885, 2.

⁶⁵ “At Home and Abroad,” *Frank Leslie’s Weekly*, Dec. 12, 1885.

prohibitionists failed to advance their cause. In Texas, voters refused a prohibition amendment to the state's constitution. In 1887, Atlanta's voters revisited the issue in yet another local option election. For two years, the anti-prohibitionists organized and mobilized their forces to overturn the law, which made an immense difference in the outcome. They received support from former Confederate president Jefferson Davis, who portrayed personal liberty as the cornerstone of the nation and the South. In this election, black clergymen no longer generally supported prohibition. For the most part, anti-prohibitionists successfully persuaded working-class black and white Atlantians to overturn prohibition because the law privileged middle-class and upper-class white Atlantians, who could still procure alcohol through private clubs and importers. They expressed resentment at wealthier white Atlantian's patronizing position and argued that they could take care of themselves without interference from upper-class reformers.⁶⁶

After another spirited campaign, Atlanta's voters overturned prohibition in their city. In the final week of the contest, both sides held nightly events often featuring local and national celebrities. Yellowstone Kit, who worked as a traveling salesman and showman, arrived in Atlanta to speak against prohibition. He attracted audiences of thousands of people, especially African Americans, and provided the anti-prohibitionists with plenty of energy. The two sides of the issue held separate rallies in the days leading up to the election, which featured torchlight parades, drummers, outdoor meetings, and brass bands. On election day, the spectacle reached its climax. People adorned their blue and red badges and hit the streets. The anti-prohibitionists led a procession with brass bands and banners. Once again, female prohibitionists served lunch to prohibition's supporters. On this election day, a group of women marched to each polling station to lead prayers. At one point, prohibitionists started to circulate reports that the mayor had voted the dry ticket, which encouraged the prohibitionists to keep up the fight. The anti-prohibitionists

⁶⁶ Thompson, Jr., *A Most Stirring and Significant Episode*, 196-197, 214-215, 219-220, 227-228.

spread a rumor that a policeman had shot at a black anti-prohibitionist. At the end of the day, the anti-prohibitionists prevailed with 5,183 votes compared to only 4,061 votes for prohibition, which far exceeded the majority the prohibitionists had won only two years earlier.⁶⁷

Although Atlanta's voters defeated prohibition, the movement did not end in Georgia but continued to dominate headlines. In 1889, voters defeated prohibition in Floyd County after "a vigorous and exciting campaign of three weeks."⁶⁸ In 1891, however, Governor William J. Northen signed a law to ban the sale of alcohol within three miles of a church or school, except in incorporated cities, thus effectively outlawing alcohol in most of Georgia because "either schools or churches exist almost every three miles, and where they do not exist cheap structures will be erected at once."⁶⁹ In 1895, "a general awakening of the prohibitionists" resulted in a prohibition bill before the state legislature. To mobilize support for the bill, Georgia's prohibitionists gathered in a series of conventions.⁷⁰ Despite the energy of the prohibitionists, the Georgia House of Representatives did not pass the bill because they could not muster the required supermajority.⁷¹

In 1898, Macon's residents waged a campaign on the subject of prohibition in their own city, which became quite spectacular and perhaps exceeded the drama generated by the movement in Atlanta. On September 27, 1898, the civic leaders of Bibb County announced that the county's prohibitionists had collected enough signatures to hold a local-option election. "The election will no doubt be attended with great excitement and interest," explained a reporter to the *Atlanta Constitution*. Macon had always had the retail sale of alcohol but Bibb County had not seen liquor sales since the state law of 1891 banned the sale of liquor within three miles of a

⁶⁷ Thompson, Jr., *A Most Stirring and Significant Episode*, 233-235.

⁶⁸ "A Prohibition Defeat in Georgia," *New York Times*, Aug. 7, 1889, 1.

⁶⁹ "Means Prohibition for Rural Georgia," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug. 12, 1891, 1.

⁷⁰ "Prohibition in Georgia," *Atlanta Constitution*, July 14, 1895, 9.

⁷¹ "Bush Bill Beaten," *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 5, 1895, 3.

church or school.⁷² For the most part, the campaign looked and sounded like the previous contests in Atlanta. Celebrities came to present speeches. Macon activists debated one another in the newspapers and paraded through the streets, thus utilizing informative and popular campaign strategies. In fact, the two forms crossed over. Evangelist Sam Jones made his way to Macon to entertain massive audiences with his temperance message. As he had done in Atlanta, he preached at the prohibition tent on numerous occasions to large audiences. In the newspapers, anti-prohibitionists took on his views and challenged him to respond to their arguments. The debates raged along similar lines as they had in previous contests. Prohibitionists emphasized spirituality and crime whereas anti-prohibitionists focused on the economy, liberty, and prohibition's lack of utility. In one letter, P. C. Rittenhouse challenged Jones, "I have asked you, Brother Jones, to point out prohibition in the Bible. You have not done it. You cannot do it." After chronicling a series of instances in which biblical characters used wine, Rittenhouse provoked Jones, "I maintain respectfully, reverently, and with a full knowledge of all that it means, that these things establish the moral right to manufacture, sell, buy and drink alcoholic liquors in moderation." Then, he added, "If not, then the Bible is false, or else I have misquoted it. Get your book and see."⁷³ During the campaign, Macon's residents had numerous ways to participate either by hitting the streets or keeping up-to-date with news from the campaign. Similar in tone and spirit, the Macon campaign did differ from the contests in Atlanta because of changes in the relationship between black and white people.

For residents in Macon and the rest of Middle Georgia, prohibition had become a black versus white issue, which did not occur in previous elections because circumstances, such as Wilmington and the Spanish-American War, had changed the perception of black intemperance.

⁷² "Bibb Will Have a Liquor Election," *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 28, 1898, 3.

⁷³ "An Open Letter to Sam Jones," *Macon Telegraph*, Nov. 23, 1898, 5.

During the 1885 local-option contest in Atlanta, prohibitionists courted and drew support from black and white voters. Despite centuries-old stereotypes that linked African Americans to intemperance and insurrection, Atlanta's newspapers did not make this connection.⁷⁴ During the 1885 campaign, *Atlanta Constitution* editors argued that "every negro liked his dram" during slavery "but when they were freed they did not become drunkards." In fact, they declared that African Americans had "developed an astonishing streak of sobriety" after emancipation.⁷⁵ At the time, newspaper editors did not tend to carry stories about black intemperance.⁷⁶ At the 1888 Georgia W.C.T.U convention held at First Baptist Church in Atlanta, female temperance activists expressed their commitment to temperance among African Americans. They concluded that they must court black voters for "the cause of morality, religion, and the right." They acknowledged, "much of the success of the prohibition victories is largely due to them" and praised them for "the decrease of drunkenness and crimes and imprisonment amongst them and in their improved condition in every way."⁷⁷ These statements did not appear in future meetings of the W.C.T.U. in Georgia. In 1900, Georgia's female temperance activists continued to canvass black schools and black churches for support, but the link between black intemperance and rebelliousness reappeared. At the convention, Georgia W.C.T.U. President Mrs. W. C. Sibley argued that the

⁷⁴ The link between alcohol, slavery, and insurrection has deep roots. For more information, consult: Patrick H. Breen, "A Prophet in His Own Land: Support for Nat Turn and His Rebellion within Southampton's Black Community," in *Nat Turner: A Slavery Rebellion in History and Memory*, edited by Kenneth S. Greenberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 115-118; Mark Edward Lender and James Kirby Martin, *Drinking in America: A History* (New York: The Free Press), 26-30.

⁷⁵ "About Prohibition in Georgia," *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 4, 1885, 4; Thompson, Jr., *A Most Stirring and Significant Episode*, 61-63.

⁷⁶ Thompson, Jr., *A Most Stirring and Significant Episode*, 63.

⁷⁷ *Minutes of the Sixth Annual Convention of the Women's Christian Temperance Union of Georgia*, Georgia Women's Christian Temperance Union, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Books Library, Emory University, Box 23, Folder 1, pg. 18.

‘negro problem,’ ‘race troubles,’ and trouble with foreign immigrants resulted from the liquor traffic. She concluded, “Settle that question and the others will settle themselves.”⁷⁸

During the 1898 Macon campaign, newspaper editors carried numerous reports of drunk and disorderly African Americans with an often-humorous tone. In February, an African American “reached Villa Rica last night loaded with mean liquor,” and local residents found him dead the next morning because he had consumed too much “wood alcohol.”⁷⁹ At a school meeting in Tweed, “whisky flowed in abundance and many of the colored ‘gentlemen’ appeared lively during the day. Amid the black crowd, two African Americans started to fight and one of them stabbed his opponent in the hand.”⁸⁰ The newspapers disseminated these and other stories about black intemperance, which strengthened the association between African Americans and intemperance.

By June 1898, middle Georgia’s residents had become quite distrustful of African Americans, especially the intemperate ones, and feared riots amid mobilization for the Spanish-American War. On June 7, 1898, Captain J. S. Jones from Georgia pursued and confronted an intoxicated black soldier in Tampa, Florida. Jones decided to arrest the black soldier using physical force. The black soldier fought back until “the unruly negro realized that he was resisting the wrong man.” Within minutes of the scuffle, more than a hundred black soldiers arrived on the scene, and “soon the storm burst.” They harassed the arresting officer and released the black soldier from his custody. The Georgian soldiers in the camp convened and considered “annihilating the negro troops.”⁸¹ That night, the black soldiers “broke loose” and had “a wild

⁷⁸ I have consulted minutes from the Georgia W.C.T.U meetings from 1888, 1890, 1891, 1892, 1893, 1894, and 1900. President Sibley’s speech comes from *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Convention of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union of Georgia*, Georgia Women’s Christian Temperance Union, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Books Library, Emory University, Box 23, Folder 1, pg. 19.

⁷⁹ “Drank Too Much Whisky,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Feb. 17, 1898, 3.

⁸⁰ “Stabbed at a School Meeting,” *Macon Telegraph*, Aug. 3, 1898, 3.

⁸¹ “Georgians Stand By Each Other,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Jun. 8, 1898, 3.

time.” The black soldiers became drunk and nearly destroyed the nearby neighborhood of Ybor City by firing “forty or fifty shots into some of the houses.” During the riot, a black soldier shot and seriously wounded a white officer. “While the negroes were at the height of their wild revelry a company of Southern white volunteers appeared and promptly attacked the rioters,” which resulted in the death of seven black troops. To resolve the issue, the soldiers of the Second Georgia regiment took over guard duty.⁸²

The residents of middle Georgia became quite interested in the riots. According to the editors of *Atlanta Constitution*, the black troops “have disgraced their own race, and have planted in the minds of thoughtful people new seeds of distrust, doubt and suspicion.” The editors worried about the effects of the riot on the war effort and asked, rhetorically, “If these negro troops perform like wild beasts and demons in the country they call their own, and whose flag they are serving, what is to be expected of them when in Spanish-held towns in Cuba?” The editors concluded, “the violent and criminal antics of these negro soldiers (unparalleled in the history of our army) are comparable only to the rapacity and brutality of the Spaniards in their treatment of the Cubans.” The editors added that the event only served to “revive all the gloomy views and lively apprehensions that once made the negro problem so vexatious an issue” and that military discipline had no “real effect on the negroes who have been subjected to it.” Without white supervision, black soldiers became “seized with the temper and rage of demons and savages” and “begin to rob and steal, assault women and perform all the acts possible to men with brute natures.”⁸³ In response, at least one white citizen felt the editors went a bit too far. He lamented that the editors offered such a “sweeping condemnation of all negro troops because of the reported violence and drunken lawlessness of one company of negro troops” but admitted

⁸² “Rioting Negroes,” *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), Jun. 10, 1898, 2.

⁸³ “The Affair at Tampa,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Jun. 12, 1898, 16.

that these soldiers “cannot be too strongly condemned” and that they have “brought a stigma upon their fellow soldiers of the negro race.”⁸⁴

In Macon, residents had their own fears of black intemperance and insurrection. The news of the Tampa riots reached these residents through the *Macon Telegraph* and the *Macon News*. Robert Patillo, a soldier from Company D of the Second Georgia Regiment, returned to Macon on furlough after contracting typhoid fever. *Macon Telegraph* praised him for his “active part in quelling the famous riot at Tampa, in which seven rioting negro soldiers were killed.”⁸⁵ As the election drew near, *Macon Telegraph* editors highlighted another case of drunk and disorderly black soldiers. In November, a riot in Anniston, Alabama, resulted when a black soldier interfered with the arrest of an inebriated black soldier. After the arrest, “an angry mob of white soldiers” gathered around the jail “clamoring for his blood.”⁸⁶ In late November, the black soldiers stationed in Macon caused quite a stir with their own behavior. “After loading up on whisky,” the black soldiers armed themselves with bayonets and rampaged through the city’s suburbs with intention “to take possession of several stores.” Upon arrest, the black soldiers stated their intention to “make graveyards for some of the people before they left here” on deployment.⁸⁷ A few days later, a rumor emerged that black soldiers from Virginia intended to arrive in town to attack the camp. Although nothing materialized, the guards arrested and returned any black soldier who did not have a pass and ordered that the black soldiers “must behave or they would all be shot.” It seemed that white officers could not control the black soldiers.⁸⁸ Around the time of the local-option election, Macon’s white residents had become

⁸⁴ Thirkfield, Wilbur P., “As to the Colored Troops,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 19, 1898, 24.

⁸⁵ “A Visiting Soldier,” *Macon Telegraph*, Sept. 24, 1898, 5.

⁸⁶ “Riot Imminent at Anniston,” *Macon Telegraph*, Nov. 20, 1898, 10.

⁸⁷ “Negro Troops Make Trouble in Macon,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 17, 1898, 4.

⁸⁸ “Soldiers Quiet in Macon Yesterday,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 21, 1898, 3.

quite fearful of black unruliness and expressed a desire to reassert their control through white supremacy in politics and society.

Before 1898, Georgians had not spent much time worrying about the Populist insurrection and the power of black voters because they had already taken measures to disfranchise most of the black population. In 1877, Georgians passed a cumulative poll tax. In 1892, they permitted whites-only primaries for nominating candidates. With these measures, Georgians nearly eliminated black voting. By 1900, for example, only eight percent of African Americans could cast ballots in Georgia. In Bibb County, even fewer African Americans could vote. These measures had eliminated black voting to such a degree that disfranchisement legislation and amendments gained little interest from state legislators. As other states responded to the Populist insurgency with demands for disfranchisement, Populists posed little threat. The Populists had limited success in Georgia because of the effective disfranchisement of half the electorate. In 1894, Populists successfully polled about forty percent of the total vote, but it only gained the party forty-seven seats in the 200-seat legislature. In 1896, Populists increased their tally to almost forty-five percent of the total vote, but the party only managed to win thirty-six seats. After defeating the Populists, the Democrats assumed some of its new adversary's most effective tenets into its own platform, thus immobilizing the party in Georgia. In most southern states, Democrats called for disfranchisement in reaction to the Populist insurgency. In Georgia, however, Populists led by Tom Watson, who had originally supported black voting rights, ignited the effort for more effective disfranchisement measures because he believed that the Democrats effectively bought black votes. He did not gain much ground in these endeavors because of the cumulative poll tax and white primary already on the books. Although Georgians

did not respond to the Populism with calls for more voting restrictions, they did respond to the Wilmington Riots.⁸⁹

In November 1898, riots in Wilmington, North Carolina, inspired fear among Georgia's white residents, who blamed black office holding and voting for the violence and trouble in the Old North State. "The wave of negro outrages began soon after the republican government came into power in North Carolina," explained *Atlanta Constitution*, which "would never have passed over the state, with all its horrors if the men who believe in white supremacy had remained in power in North Carolina." The editors lamented that "decent white people have little or no voice in the government in the black belt counties" of North Carolina. They warned against the intrusion of Populists into the state government of Georgia. They declared, "This is but a reminder of what would occur in Georgia if the populists and republicans could successfully combine and lull the democrats in a state of over-confidence."⁹⁰ Specifically, middle Georgia residents worried about the dangers of "black ruffians." In North Carolina, a black woman apparently confronted a prominent, young white woman, insulted her, and "struck her with an umbrella without the slightest provocation." In another case, a black man stole a bicycle from a white woman. Reporter Frank Weldon argued that African Americans "feel the most bitter hatred for the whites and when no white men are in sight are offensive in the worst degree" and added that black women "are maddened at the sight of well dressed, respectable white women and seek opportunities to insult." These events had a transforming effect on race relations in the South

⁸⁹ Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*, 281-298; Andrew M. Manis, *Macon Black and White: An Unutterable Separation in the American Century* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004), 16-20.

⁹⁰ Frank Weldon, "The Lesson of North Carolina Applied to the Present Situation in Georgia," *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 4, 1898, 5.

because it heightened distrust in black voters. With these perceived injuries in mind, Georgians worried about the effects of “negro domination” in their own state.⁹¹

Macon’s residents blamed the events in North Carolina and the results of the midterm elections on African Americans, specifically black voters. *Macon Telegraph* editors “waited long and looked anxiously for something in the recent elections to encourage the Democrats of the country” but “found nothing except such lessons may be found in defeat.”⁹² In November, the local-option election in Macon reached a fever pitch, and events in North Carolina started to become heated after white Democrats seized control of Wilmington’s government. In North Carolina, a “genuine uprising of the whites” pledged “to restore white supremacy” after years of Republican and Populist power. On November 8, white Democrats overthrew the local government in Wilmington, North Carolina, and drove a black newspaper editor out of town. The city’s white residents patrolled the streets of the city, which had a black majority, in an attempt to keep African Americans away from the polls. They killed many black residents and forced others to flee the city. According to Weldon, North Carolina’s black population “had a dream of sovereignty, of black statehood” and “hoped to gain absolute control of the political machinery” in the election, but white North Carolinians protected the state from Republican and Populist rule with their violent efforts. The federal government refused to intervene in the affairs of Wilmington.⁹³

Amid the turmoil, white southerners pushed their agenda for black disfranchisement and stressed the importance of lynching. Rufus B. Bullock, who has served as the governor of

⁹¹ Frank Weldon, “Ladies of North Carolina Aroused to their Danger: The Terrors Negro Domination Holds for Them,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 30, 1898, 1; For more on the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898, see Cecelski and Tyson, *Democracy Betrayed*; H. Leon Prather, *We Have Taken a City: Wilmington Racial Massacre and Coup of 1898* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1984); Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 300-304.

⁹² “The Lessons of the Election,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 15, 1898, 4.

⁹³ Frank Weldon, “Old North State Redeemed from Negro Rule at Last,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 9, 1898, 1; “Will Keep Out,” *Macon Telegraph*, Nov. 13, 1898, 1;

Georgia, praised the state's "improved systems of election laws" for removing the threat of "negro domination."⁹⁴ A few years earlier, Rebecca Lattimore Felton had spoken before an audience at the Georgia Agricultural Society on the subject of lynching, to which Wilmington editor Alexander Manly replied in his newspaper. Manly had been forced out of Wilmington during the riots, and Felton repeated her arguments in the aftermath of the Wilmington insurrection. She explained, "I saw that when you take the negro into your embraces on election day to control his vote and use liquor to befuddle his understanding and make him believe he is your man and brother" and "honey-snuggle him at the polls and make him familiar with dirty tricks in politics" that "lynching will prevail" because "the cause will grow and increase with every election." She encouraged lynching because of the "crying need of women on farms is security in their lives and homes." She specifically condemned Manly for his comments and argued that the slanderer should be made to fear a lyncher's rope rather than occupy a place in newspapers."⁹⁵ The Wilmington Riot had a transforming effect on race relations in the South because it helped generate region-wide support for poll taxes, residency requirements, and other fraudulent methods.⁹⁶ Although Georgians had already adopted these measures, the Wilmington Riots cast a large shadow over the events in Macon.

By the time election day arrived, Macon's voters perceived many reasons to fear black voters, especially those with a tendency toward intemperance. On the eve of the election, prohibitionists channeled their newfound distrust in black voters and charged their opponents with election fraud. After a period of heavier-than-anticipated registration, the prohibitionists

⁹⁴ "The Great Revolution at the South," *Macon Telegraph*, Nov. 29, 1898, 4.

⁹⁵ "Lynching the Only Law," *Macon Telegraph*, Nov. 16, 1898, 2.

⁹⁶ Cecelski and Tyson, *Democracy Betrayed*; Prather, *We Have Taken a City*; Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 300-304.

became suspicious.⁹⁷ They accused the anti-prohibitionists with printing forged and fraudulent ballots and sending them to known prohibitionists, especially those “who were supposed to be so unintelligent as to be deceived by the letter and ticket.” The Bibb County Anti-Saloon League deposited \$1,000 into a local bank for the purpose of rewarding informants who came forward with evidence to convict fraudulent voters. They explained that the anti-prohibitionists had registered a thousand illegal voters, which consisted of felons and tax evaders, and thereby had “insulted the intelligence and virtue” of Macon’s citizens.⁹⁸

Macon’s female temperance activists intended to play a major role in the work on election day. The prohibitionists had informed the city’s mayor that they “intended to avail themselves of every means to drive whisky out” and guaranteed him, despite objections, that “the women would surely be at the polls” to “exert a large influence” on people who might change their minds if exposed to “proper pressure.”⁹⁹ Mrs. W. G. Solomon published a letter in *Macon News* to justify women’s activity on behalf of prohibition. She asked, rhetorically, “Is it not in woman’s sphere to raise a protest against that which brings her down to wretchedness and poverty, and which makes her life a burden and misery which no tongue can describe?” She continued, “Does it not come within her province to seek relief from the curse which follows her husband, her son, or her brother like a dark shadow?” She explained that the temperance women had no intention to clamor for the ballot and preferred that voting remain a masculine endeavor. Instead, she simply wrote the letter to “catch the conscience of some man who will cast his vote in the place of some mother who has realized the misery of this traffic.”¹⁰⁰ In the morning, the

⁹⁷ “Registration in Macon Is Heavy,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 14, 1898, 3.

⁹⁸ Advertisement, *Macon Telegraph*, Dec. 1, 1898, 7.

⁹⁹ “Call It Intimidation,” *Herald Dispatch* (Decatur, IL), Dec. 2, 1898, 6.

¹⁰⁰ “Open Letter,” *Macon News*, Nov. 28, 1898, 4.

prohibitionists reminded everyone that the city's women and children could not vote, so "it will be the pleasure of every gentleman in this city to vote for them."¹⁰¹

Before sunrise on December 1, 1898, temperance reformers Sallie B. Hill and Hattie Gibson Jobe Harris led an army, perhaps numbering more than 500, of Georgia's white female prohibitionists onto Macon's cold, windy streets to wage the battle of water versus wine. At 6:34 a.m., the polls opened throughout the city, which became the site of "the most remarkable election the people of [the] community have ever experienced." When each male voter arrived at his designated polling site "to cast his ballot according to the dictates of his conscience," he encountered choirs of ten to twenty women, who had positioned themselves in each of Macon's precincts with "tearful eyes to make an impression" on undecided voters. They wanted to prohibit the retail sale of alcohol in the city and county. "By the time business began its usual routine," explained a reporter, "the entire city was echoing beautiful church and temperance songs...often to the accompaniment of church organs, which had been moved to the polling places." The temperance women carried banners throughout the city, distributed coffee and sandwiches, and challenged opposing voters to change their votes at the last second. At one point, a leader of the prohibition movement confronted the city's fire chief and asked him, "Will you not be on the Lord's side today?"¹⁰² Even though they could not vote, Macon's female temperance reformers earned local and national fame by participating in the election day spectacle.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Advertisement, *Macon Telegraph*, Dec. 1, 1898, 7.

¹⁰² "The Weather Today," *Macon Telegraph*, Dec. 1, 1898, 4; "Women at the Polls: Ladies of Macon, GA., Do Earnest Work for Prohibition's Cause," *The American* (Nashville, TN), Dec. 2, 1898, 1; "The Antis Won," *Macon Telegraph*, Dec. 2, 1898, 1; "The Election Today: It Will Be a Hard Fought Battle," *Macon Telegraph*, Dec. 1, 1898, 8; "Women Pray at the Polls," *Trenton Evening Times*, Dec. 2, 1898, 4; "Prohibition Defeated in Bibb County by a Majority of 1,398," *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 2, 1898, 1; "Woman's Work in Politics: She Can Do Heroic Work for the Cause of Good, but She Can Also Be Mighty Cute," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Dec. 2, 1898, 3.

¹⁰³ American women have made themselves part of the political sphere for a long time. Please consult: Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell

Anticipating these methods, anti-prohibitionists organized their own musicians to harass prohibitionist forces at each major polling place. In appearance and tune, these musicians stood in stark contrast to the white female temperance singers. Outside of Macon's City Hall, a procession of fifty white women marched down First Street and sang:

We are coming, we are coming, for the light has dawned at last.
Hark, hark, the battle cry is ringing, and our line is lengthening fast,
For God and home and native land our ballots shall be cast.¹⁰⁴

Simultaneously, a band of black musicians led a parade of African Americans to the voting booths. With regard to the significance of this display, *Atlanta Constitution* editor and correspondent P. J. Moran remarked that the black band assembled across the street from the choirs "as though to challenge a contest in music." After the riots in Wilmington, these black musicians exhibited extremely bold behavior by confronting white women on the streets. When the band arrived, white spectators cried, "Shame!" and forced the band to march away. As they left, they commenced an original composition set to the popular Civil War tune "Battle Cry of Freedom" by George F. Root. In their version, they encourage their wet friends:

Oh, rally round the jug, boys,
Rally round the jug,
Let us drink our beer, boys,
From over-flowing mug.

University Press, 1980); Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect & Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery*; McGerr, "Political Style": 864-885; Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," *American Historical Review* 89 (1984): 620-647; Robert Dinkin, *Before Equal Suffrage: Women in Partisan Politics from Colonial Times to 1920* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995); Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Julie Roy Jeffrey, "Women in the Southern Farmers' Alliance: A Reconsideration of the Role and Status of Women in the Late Nineteenth-Century South," *Feminist Studies* 3 (1975): 72-91; Melanie Susan Gustafson, "Partisan Women in the Progressive Era: The Struggle for Inclusion in American Political Parties," *Journal of Women's History* 9: 2 (Summer 1997): 8-30.

¹⁰⁴ P. J. Moran, "Prohibition Defeated in Bibb County by a Majority of 1,398," *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 2, 1898, 1; P. H. Carder, *George F. Root, Civil War Songwriter: A Biography* (Jefferson, N. C.: McFarland & Company, Inc, 2008), 118-119, 147.

By changing the lyrics of this famous song, which has traditional verses about brotherhood and emancipation, the black musicians connected their emancipation and the cause of the union with drinking, camaraderie, and, above all else, individual liberty.¹⁰⁵

At the East Macon polling station, a similar drama unfolded. When the ladies commenced their rendition of “Vote as You Pray,” another group of black musicians countered with the ragtime tune “There Will Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight.”¹⁰⁶ With this choice of music, the black musicians expropriated a ragtime hit focusing on good times with religion and women to counter the religious hymns. The song, written by Joe Hayden and Theodore A. Metz in 1896, had become extremely popular. In the first verse, the song suggests a black revival meeting with the speaker claiming:

When you hear that the preaching does begin,
Bend down low for to drive away your sin,
and when you gets religion,
You want to shout and sing,
there’ll be a hot time in the old town tonight, my baby.

By using this song, the black musicians suggested that their religious beliefs do not necessarily require temperance and prohibition. In fact, they imply that their religion compels them to have a good time. The song also tells the story of a courtship, in which the song’s speaker claims “there’ll be girls for ev’ry body in that good old town,” who will beg:

You’re all mind and I love you best of all,
And you must be my man, or I’ll have no man at all,

If the black musicians sang the lyrics in addition to the music, they would have been suggesting that the white women stationed across the street preferred them to white men. Given the

¹⁰⁵ P. J. Moran, “Prohibition Defeated in Bibb County by a Majority of 1,398,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 2, 1898, pg. 1; Carder, *George F. Root*, 118-119, 147.

¹⁰⁶ “A Hot Time in Macon,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD) Dec. 2, 1898, 2; “Prohibition Defeated in Bibb County by a Majority of 1,398,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 2, 1898, 1; “Woman’s Work in Politics: She Can Do Heroic Work for the Cause of Good, but She Can Also Be Mighty Cute,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Dec. 2, 1898, 3; “The Antis Won,” *Macon Telegraph*, Dec. 2, 1898, 1.

emphasis on attacks on white women in the reporting of the Wilmington Riots, it would have been a dangerous argument for them to make in a biracial crowd. The black musicians may have only played the tune. Without the lyrics, the tune nonetheless suggests marching and had become associated with militancy, which had significance given recently escalating fears of black soldiers.¹⁰⁷ During the Spanish-American War, soldiers played this song extensively because they found it an energizing and joyful marching and fighting companion.¹⁰⁸ They chose joyful music that in terms of melody and timbre expressed joy, which contrasted with the solemn hymns sang by white women. With this song, they challenged prohibition and offered an alternative, in which everyone would have a splendid time.

After months of anticipation, people left work to vote and watch the spectacle unfold. Throughout the day, “business was practically suspended, while professional men, bankers, merchants, clerks, all gathered to watch the battle of wine and water.” The scene enchanted the spectators because the drama seemed real. The roles of the black musicians and white choirs appealed to their gender and racial prejudices. White women had gained a reputation for their domestic virtue and piety partly through their association with the prohibition movement. For the city’s white residents, black men had become a symbol of intemperance, foolishness, dishonesty, and corruption. Throughout the day, these stereotypes played out on the streets of Macon.¹⁰⁹

White female temperance workers resorted to emotional persuasion and emphasized their domestic duties with their work at the polls. In the voting lines, female workers appealed with

¹⁰⁷ Turpie, “A Voluntary War”: 862-865, 876-880.

¹⁰⁸ Joe Hayden and Theo A. Metz, “A Hot Time in the Old Town” Duke University Libraries Digital Collections, Item b0570, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/hasm_b0570/#info; Jon W. Finson, *The Voices That Are Gone: Themes in Nineteenth-Century American Popular Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 222-223, 229, 238; C. A. Browne, *The Story of Our National Ballads* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1919), 208-209.

¹⁰⁹ In *Jim Crow’s Counterculture*, Lawson demonstrates how white Americans flocked to see blues and ragtime musicians because they seemed like authentic plantation products. Leadbelly, for example, would adorn plantation garb and exaggerate his southern vernacular for the audience’s sake. For more information, consult Lott, *Love & Theft*.

sentiment rather than “materialism of wordly things” to aid their cause and persuade voters.¹¹⁰ The “undaunted and hopeful” women made their way to the polls to pin white bows on the lapels of voters and pleaded with them to prohibit alcohol.¹¹¹ For the most part, the female temperance workers gained attention for their portrayal of piety. As the election started to swing in the favor of the anti-prohibitionists, the prohibitionists’ cause was “upheld by the hands of fair women, who pleaded and prayed and prayed and pleaded for sons and husbands and fathers gone astray.”¹¹² To this point, many wives and sisters followed their male relatives to the polls in a last-ditch effort to persuade them to vote for prohibition.¹¹³ Female temperance activists carried banners with signs, such as “God Save Our Boys,” and sang hymns, including “Vote for Jesus.”¹¹⁴ They sang in choirs and “sending up prayers for the success of their cause.”¹¹⁵ They fulfilled their domestic duties by serving sandwiches and hot coffee to the voters in line.¹¹⁶ Throughout the country, newspaper editors reprinted these exploits in their local papers, which enhanced the reputation of the virtuous women at the polls on election day.

At the end of the day, the women earned praise for their work from people across the country. *Davenport Daily Leader* explained, “At no time during the day did their work lag, and even toward the evening, when it became apparent that the antis would carry the day, they prayed and sang and pleaded harder than ever to turn the tide in their favor.”¹¹⁷ *The Sun* reported that the female temperance workers “were not daunted by the discord of the negro bands and the jeers and shouts of their opponents” but instead continued to sing and plead with voters.¹¹⁸ In *St.*

¹¹⁰ “Prohibition Defeated in Bibb County by a Majority of 1,398,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 2, 1898, 1.

¹¹¹ “Pray at the Polls,” *Davenport Daily Leader* (Davenport, IA), Dec. 2, 1898, 1.

¹¹² “Prohibition Defeated in Bibb County by a Majority of 1,398,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 2, 1898, 1.

¹¹³ “The Antis Won,” *Macon Telegraph*, Dec. 2, 1898, 6.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹¹⁵ “Pray at the Polls,” *Davenport Daily Leader* (Davenport, IA), Dec. 2, 1898, 1.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ “A Hot Time in Macon,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Dec. 2, 1898, 2.

Louis-Dispatch, the editors printed the headline: “Woman’s Work in Politics: She Can Do Heroic Work for the Cause of Good, but She Can Also Be Mighty Cute.”¹¹⁹ Across the country, Americans learned of the exploits of these white women through their local newspapers, which often pitted these women in a contest against the city’s black musicians.

Opposing the white female temperance workers, black men and women appeared on the scene with red ribbons.¹²⁰ “The almost simultaneous appearance of a body of brazen negro women, flaunting red ribbons attracted the attention of the leaders of both sides,” commented a reporter on the scene. The black female anti-prohibitionists “took their stand on the sidewalk,” and “hummed occasionally songs with such expressions as “I am a rummy, I love my liquor, and I will have it, too.”¹²¹ Throughout the day, black musicians organized in brass bands paraded through the city playing drinking songs on their instruments. By disseminating these images, newspaper editors helped strengthen the link between African Americans, intemperance, and unruliness. By manipulating these stereotypes, black Maconites made themselves visible members of the political sphere. The brass bands mobilized voters and led the black voters to the polls. They drowned out white women with their music. They articulated their politics in the street, where they helped defeat prohibition.

Prohibition failed in Macon. In the aftermath of the election day spectacle, Macon temperance reformers condemned black voters for the failure of the initiative. Prohibitionists charged black voters with selling their votes to the anti-prohibitionists. Leading the charge, lawyer Walter B. Hill argued that the anti-prohibitionists had purchased their victory at the

¹¹⁹ “Woman’s Work in Politics,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Dec. 2, 1898, 3.

¹²⁰ The color of the ribbons worn by prohibitionists and anti-prohibitionists vary across time and space. For more information, see J. R. Meader, *The Cyclopaedia of Temperance and Prohibition: A Reference Book of Facts, Statistics, and General Information on All Phases of the Drink Question, the Temperance Movement, and the Prohibition Agitation* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls 1891), 57.

¹²¹ “Prohibition Defeated in Bibb County by a Majority of 1,398,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 2, 1898, 1.

expense of honesty and “that their only salvation is in a corrupt and debased suffrage.” He claimed, “No intelligent honest man in Bibb county doubts that the antis won the election by repeating negro votes, using the same men under different names, at the different precincts.”¹²² In response to the outcome, one Macon resident explained, “North Carolina taught us a lesson.” He added, “We have lost through the negro vote, and if we do as they did in the Old North State, it will be found that white men can settle this difficulty without further ado.”¹²³

In fact, black and white voters seemed to have both helped defeat the prohibition initiative. Overall, white voters numbered 2,972 but black voters had only 2,174. After counting the ballots, the wets prevailed by a count of 2,678 votes to only 1,280 dry votes. In Macon, black and white voters did not vote on this issue as blocs. At the Godfrey polling station, white voters had their largest majority over black voters. Here, white voters outnumbered black voters 500 to 186, yet the anti-prohibitionists carried the precinct by 79 votes. At the Howard precinct, white voters had a slight advantage in registration. Here, the prohibition ticket claimed its only victory of the day. The 99 white voters and 69 black voters who cast their ballots at the Howard precinct helped prohibition win there by 50 votes. When the election concluded, therefore, black people had not helped the wet ticket prevail in any insurmountable measure.¹²⁴ The issue split white voters and black voters, but white Maconites had associated African Americans with intemperance and blamed them for the result.

In the aftermath of prohibition’s defeat, middle Georgia’s white residents joined the crusade to more effectively eliminate black voters. A few days before the election, white temperance leaders proposed electoral changes to guarantee that “the voice of the best people of

¹²² “The Prohis Will Contest Election,” *Macon News*, Dec. 2, 1898, 5; “Women Took Part,” *Sandusky Star* (Sandusky, OH), Dec. 2, 1898, 1.

¹²³ “Prohibition Defeated in Bibb County by a Majority of 1,398,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 2, 1898, 1.

¹²⁴ “The Antis Won: Big Majority Over Prohibition in Yesterday’s Election,” *Macon Telegraph*, Dec. 2, 1898, 1.

the community” made the decisions with regard to prohibition. These changes purported that future elections would run “on a perfectly clean basis” and “make the politics as clean as possible, free from all taint of bribery and anything else.”¹²⁵ In reality, such changes intended to deprive African Americans of the right to vote in order that middle-class reformers could more easily get their way in local politics. The defeat in the prohibition campaign spurred white Maconites to create a white primary for local elections and white Democratic executive council to ensure white control in Bibb County, which a reporter deemed “one of the inevitables” of this election. Apparently, both sides paid the taxes of 1,700 ineligible or otherwise unwilling African Americans. A leading prohibitionist claimed that neither prohibitionists nor anti-prohibitionists would object to the changes and “that both sides look up on it as a necessity.”¹²⁶ *Macon News* editors chimed in on the subject, arguing that black voters probably did not change the outcome of the election, but they did admit that the present system made it “absolutely impossible to have a perfect election.” Journalists encouraged Macon residents to “condemn the present system of balloting” and suggested a new constitutional amendment to “eliminate that element whose vote at any and all times fails to secure the public’s confidence and respect.”¹²⁷ The editors of *Atlanta Constitution* argued that African Americans “cannot take the fullest advantage of (practical and material opportunities) as long as he remains an active political partisan.” They added, “It is true that negro domination is intolerable to the whites, but the affair at Wilmington would have had a different beginning if the negro rulers had been conservative, considerate and fair.” Based on the events in Wilmington and most certainly in Macon, as well, the editors concluded, “we advise

¹²⁵ “To Purify Politics,” *Macon Telegraph*, Nov. 27, 1898, 5.

¹²⁶ “Move On Foot to Bar Negro Out of Municipal Affairs,” *Augusta Chronicle*, Dec. 8, 1898.

¹²⁷ “Cause and Effect,” *Macon News*, Dec. 2, 1898, 4.

negroes to let partisan politics alone, and address themselves to the practical work of building up the material interests of their race.”¹²⁸

Regardless of the cries of fraud and scandal, Macon’s editors expressed satisfaction that the city’s residents had conducted an orderly and quiet election. “Whatever else may be said of yesterday’s election it was an orderly one,” opened *Macon News* editors. They praised the “perfect order and good feeling in the closely contested election” and commended the opposing sides for their efforts. Despite the incessant blaring of brass bands and the cries and prayers of female temperance activists, the newspaper reporters focused on serenity, peace, and order. It seems that the presence of the women caused the most stir at the polls. When the prohibitionists stated their intentions to use female workers at the polls, it seems to have bothered or worried some of the city’s men. In *Macon News*, editors explained that “notwithstanding the ante-election talk of ladies at the polls and of ‘crowding,’ all fears of trouble in this direction proved to have been ill founded.” Despite these anxieties, in other words, the election went off without any trouble. In fact, *Macon News* editors argued that the presence of the female workers and spectators “allayed any turbulent spirit that might have animated a few and caused everyone to conduct themselves in that respectful, gentlemanly manner that always characterizes” black and white southern men.¹²⁹ The black musicians received only isolated criticism. According to Baltimore’s *The Sun*, the “band started to cross the street to the choir, but was stopped by a party of white men, acting in behalf of the women.”¹³⁰ If this incident occurred, it represents a remarkable yet tacit admission on behalf of white men of black men’s political rights. By taking a step in the direction of the black men, white men ceremoniously played their role as the protector of white women without violating black rights to the polling stations. In contrast to the

¹²⁸ “The Condition of the Negroes,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 8, 1898, 4.

¹²⁹ “An Orderly Election,” *Macon News*, Dec. 2, 1898, 4.

¹³⁰ “A Hot Time in Macon,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Dec. 2, 1898, 2.

consequences usually reserved for black political activity, especially in the wake of the deadly events in Wilmington, the musicians avoided trouble, yet they made a nationally recognized contribution to the spectacle and outcome. They marched black voters to the polls and articulated their politics with songs and music. They gained access to the formal levels of power, which had been restricted in Georgia for decades. They confronted white women in the streets. Despite these seemingly atrocious breaches of protocol and the law, newspapers reported that the election “passed away without any disturbance worth mentioning.”¹³¹

From 1885 to 1898, black and white Georgians participated in a series of prohibition campaigns filled with spectacle and amusement, which did not disappear in an era and region infamous for disfranchisement and elitist politics. African Americans had a constant but not unchanged presence in these campaigns. In 1885, Atlanta residents carried out their local-option campaign. Throughout the campaign, African Americans participated on both sides of the campaign with their presence and active work in rallies, parades, meetings, and speaking engagements. On election day, black men voted alongside white men. During the 1890s, however, the dynamics of racial politics changed in the region to the disadvantage of African Americans. By the 1898 Macon temperance campaign, the city’s residents had become openly hostile to black voters, but African Americans remained active and visible members of the political sphere by voting, parading, singing, and playing music. During the 1900s, it would only get harder for black southerners to maintain their place in the political sphere as more southern states took steps to disfranchise black voters and turn back the gains they had made during Reconstruction.

¹³¹ “The Antis Won,” *Macon Telegraph*, Dec. 2, 1898, 1.

CHAPTER 3

“I’M A REBEL”: AFRICAN AMERICAN PARTICIPATION IN LOST CAUSE SPECTACLES

On July 2, 1896, thousands of people gathered in Richmond’s streets under a bright, midday sun to watch a parade of Confederate veterans march toward Monroe Park, where veterans and freemasons laid the cornerstone for the Jefferson Davis monument. At the front of the procession, 200 young people of the Children’s Brigade adorned in red and white sashes presented themselves to the crowd as the next generation of ardent Lost Cause advocates. Following them, General John B. Gordon, who served as Commander in Chief of the United Confederate Veterans, had the honor of presiding as Chief Marshal of the parade, and he rode with many distinguished veterans and dignitaries, including multiple state governors. Among the Lost Cause celebrities, Varina Davis and a host of “lovely young ladies,” who participated as female sponsors and maids-of-honor, rode in carriages immediately ahead of the veterans. Despite old age and weakness, the veterans summoned their remaining strength and marched “with pride and pleasure” toward the site of the ceremony. As they marched, veterans wore coats torn with bullet holes and carried canteens, knapsacks, and tattered battle flags just as they had done in the war. The column of 15,000 marchers moved slowly. Although a faint breeze provided some relief from the unrelenting sun in “the azure skies overhead,” the numbers

dissipated along the parade route due to the heat.¹ When they arrived at Monroe Park, they formed a square around the park where the ceremony commenced.

To many observers, Monroe Park seemed like an obvious choice for the Davis monument because of its past utility for the veterans and present proximity to the equestrian statue of Robert E. Lee. During the war, it had served as a campground of Confederate soldiers, who knew the space as Camp Winder. They “seemed charmed with the beauties of Monroe Park, and delighted that so beautiful a spot had been selected for the monument.” There, they honored Jefferson Davis, who one reporter characterized as “patriot, soldier, statesman, orator, stainless knight, and Christian soldier.”² At Monroe Park, a ceremony commenced that featured the ritualistic laying of the cornerstone.

During the ceremony, General Stephen D. Lee’s keynote address focused on numerous themes of the Lost Cause, specifically the question of slavery and the long odds of Confederate victory. First, he provided his perspective on the causes of the Civil War, which *Richmond Dispatch* editors believed he did with “great precision, clearness, and force.”³ In the speech, Lee emphasized the constitutionality of secession. He explained, “I should be false to the memory of the dead if I did not remind you that he, the man we all adore, battled for the constitutional right to dissolve the Union, not for revolution, not for slavery—that the war was fought upon a legal, not a moral, issue.”⁴ Then, he summed up the life of Jefferson Davis. He argued that people adored Jefferson Davis because he led his people bravely against an enemy “outnumbering them four to one in arms” and “incomparably better prepared for war.” Summarizing the Civil War, he

¹ “The Stone Was Laid,” *Richmond Dispatch*, July 3, 1896, 1; “Grand Parade of the Confederate Veterans at Richmond,” *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), Jul. 3, 1896, 8.

² “The Stone Was Laid,” *Richmond Dispatch*, July 3, 1896, 1.

³ “Stephen Lee’s Oration,” *Richmond Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), July 3, 1896, 4.

⁴ “Oration of General Lee,” *Southern Historical Society Papers* 24, ed. by R. A. Brock (Richmond, Va: Southern Historical Society, 1896), 370.

declared, “When we look back now at the mighty contest, we wonder how we ever held out so long.”⁵ With these arguments, Lee shaped the way white southerners remembered the antebellum past and the Civil War. By emphasizing that slavery had not caused the war, he hoped to erase any moral judgment posterity might make on the Confederacy’s cause.

Inspired by the ceremony, local white southerners praised reconciliation with their former enemies, but they gushed sectionalism and nostalgia for the Old South. The editors of *Richmond Dispatch* observed at the ceremony that the “feelings of the people were profoundly moved” and that “old times came back again.” They especially enjoyed seeing the battle flags and hearing “Dixie” and the rebel yell. In addition to the sectional spirit, they expressed satisfaction at seeing the Confederate battle flag flown alongside the American flag. They explained, “Our people are well on with the new love, but they are by no means off with the old one; nor will they ever be.” They praised Richmond’s citizens for their understanding and exhibition of an “intense love for the southern cause,” of which they had become increasingly proud.⁶ “It was a grand spectacle,” commented a reporter, who added that spectators would likely not see this sight again for years.⁷ The ceremony and keynote address celebrated the Confederacy and venerated an interpretation of the Civil War that pleased the white southerners in the audience because it justified the Lost Cause and emphasized reconciliation. At this spectacle, white southerners separated the war from the issue of slavery, but formerly enslaved people remained in plain sight for everyone to see.⁸

Amid thousands of white Confederate veterans, African Americans participated in spectacle in the role of former faithful slaves. According to a reporter, several black marchers

⁵ *Ibid.*, 374-375.

⁶ “July 2d, 1896,” *Richmond Dispatch*, July 3, 1896, 4.

⁷ “The Stone Was Laid,” *Richmond Dispatch*, July 3, 1896, 1; “Grand Parade of the Confederate Veterans at Richmond,” *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), Jul. 3, 1896, 8.

⁸ Historian David W. Blight observes that “virtually all major spokespersons for the Lost Cause could not develop their story of a heroic, victimized South without the images of faithful slaves and benevolent masters.” *Race and Reunion: The Civil War and American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2001), 260.

remained “true to their old masters” and accompanied them in the parade. Among them, Phil Valentine, who had been General J.E.B. Stuart’s slave and accompanied his master during the war, marched in the parade with the white soldiers of the Tenth Virginia Cavalry. He suffered a wound to his forehead during the war, but he remained by General Stuart’s side as he died at the Battle of Yellow Tavern. After the war and emancipation, he went to work on a farm in nearby Henrico County. During the parade, he grinned and remarked that he was “certainly glad to be with the old boys again.” The other former faithful slaves marched alongside their former masters. At the back of the parade, a dozen black cooks marched, as well.⁹ The presence of these African Americans helped strengthen white southerners’ version of the history of the Old South and the Civil War because it demonstrated that slavery had been a benevolent, mutually beneficial labor system. Although this event and similar spectacles strengthened white supremacy, African Americans had many of their own reasons to participate.

After the Civil War, Americans immediately set to work trying to shape interpretations of the conflict for contemporary purposes. In the postwar period, white northerners, white southerners, and African Americans attempted to disseminate their own regionally and racially satisfying interpretations of the Civil War, which they embedded into contemporary notions of time and space. They built monuments to their causes to stand as everlasting testimonies to the past. They created new holidays, which they hoped would serve as annual reminders to themselves and the rest of the nation about what had happened and what it meant. Often, northerners, southerners, and African Americans celebrated or memorialized different people and

⁹ “General Stuart’s Servant,” *Richmond Dispatch*, July 3, 1896, 3; “Grand Parade of the Confederate Veterans at Richmond,” *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), Jul. 3, 1896, 8.

places. They had different ideas about what had caused the war and what its results meant for the future of the country.¹⁰

Among the many interpretations of the Civil War, white southerners remembered the antebellum past and the Civil War according to the tenets of the Lost Cause. The Lost Cause had many elements and complexities. The Lost Cause separated the war from the issue of slavery and justified secession. In the Lost Cause, white southerners portrayed the South as impossibly overmatched in the conflict. As the story goes, the Confederacy did not lose the war because of a lack of nationalism, patriotism, or moral inferiority, but military weakness. Given that southern soldiers faced long odds of victory, the Lost Cause emphasized the gallantry and bravery of southern soldiers, who marched to their certain deaths. Finally, it characterized Reconstruction as a humiliating failure and an insult to the South because it empowered formerly enslaved people with political rights. Although the Lost Cause focused on the past, it served white southerners' immediate needs by reconstructing racial hierarchy and rallying the Democratic Party to overthrow Republican governments in the region. The Lost Cause, therefore, threatened black political and social aspirations because it condemned emancipation and black political power. Among the many interpretations of the Civil War that emerged in the late-nineteenth century, the Lost Cause espoused by white southerners became one of the most familiar and politically potent.¹¹

The image of the faithful slave became a key part of white southerners' musings of the Old South and central tenet of the Lost Cause. Before the Civil War, white southerners used the

¹⁰ Blight, *Race and Reunion*; W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000); William A. Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

¹¹ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 255-299; Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 133-159; Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 2-4.

image of the faithful slave to defend their peculiar institution from a burgeoning abolition movement. After the fighting ended, white southerners continued to deploy the image of the faithful slave to romanticize the Old South. In that imagined time and place, white benevolent masters and faithful slaves lived harmoniously with one another, which served as a testimony of white southerners' ability to handle racial matters without interference from the federal government. For white southerners, the image of the faithful slave became a means to reconstruct antebellum racial hierarchy after emancipation.¹²

Black and white northerners and southerners often staged separate events to commemorate and memorialize the Civil War, but African Americans had a strange but notable presence at many of the spectacles staged by white southerners on behalf of the Lost Cause. For white southerners, Lost Cause celebrations represented exclusive events. Surrounded by supporters and former comrades, white southerners crafted their own interpretation of the war, espoused the virtues of former slaves, and condemned the present generation of African Americans by denouncing emancipation and black political rights. For the most part, white southerners staged these events for other white people and inscribed their own meaning of the past onto the southern and national and landscape. African Americans challenged their memory of the Old South and the Civil War. They opposed the construction of Confederate symbols but also worked to memorialize their own memory of the Old South and the Civil War. They also challenged the Lost Cause at the events staged by white southerners for the purposes of commemorating it. In some cases, white southerners welcomed the participation of African Americans at their events to bolster the image of the faithful slave, a cherished fictional figure unspoiled by freedom and voting rights, African Americans manipulated the image of the faithful

¹² Micki McElya, *Clinging to Mammy: The Faithful Slave in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 3-7, 10-11.

slave to accomplish their own goals. African Americans, especially performers, participated in these events to take advantage of economic opportunity, gain fame or social status, and access mainstream white audiences during a period of limited opportunity.

After the Confederacy lost the Civil War, white southerners avoided activities that might seem treasonous and incite retribution from the federal government, so white women led the initial efforts to commemorate the Confederacy and celebrate the Lost Cause. To these ends, they staged spectacular events on behalf of the deceased. By focusing on the dead, white southerners placed honor on people who had never capitulated because they had died before Confederate defeat. Thus, these soldiers remained eternally loyal the Confederacy.¹³ To demonstrate their own everlasting loyalty to the Confederacy, the women of Ladies' Memorial Associations tended cemeteries and organized Memorial Day, which entailed grand spectacles filled with parades and memorial services. On May 10, 1866, the women of Richmond's Oakwood Memorial Association organized a ceremony to commemorate the Confederate dead. At St. John's Church, more than a thousand people gathered for a religious service and then marched to Oakwood Cemetery, where they decorated thousands of soldiers' graves with flowers.¹⁴ Southern women established monuments at burial grounds to honor dead soldiers, which would stand as indestructible monuments to the Confederate cause. In 1869, for example, the women of Hollywood Memorial Association erected a stone pyramid to the Confederate dead in Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery.¹⁵ By focusing initial memorial efforts on the dead, white southerners intended to keep their cause alive. These spectacular memorial activities proliferated across the South. On Memorial Day, white southerners gathered with one another to reconcile

¹³ Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 94-95.

¹⁴ Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past*, 2, 13, 58-63.

¹⁵ Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 133-135.

with their enemies, keep their cause alive, and celebrate an idealized antebellum of benevolent masters and grateful, obedient enslaved servants.

At Memorial Day spectacles, white southerners reached out to their former enemies and expressed sentiments of reconciliation. At Memorial Day exercises in Mobile, Alabama, a federal veteran participated as an orator. During his speech, he reached out to his former enemies. He explained, “Fresh be the memory of those under the sod and the dew, awaiting the judgment day, under the one of the blue, under the other the grey.”¹⁶ On April 26, 1875, the residents of Augusta, Georgia, participated in a massive Memorial Day ceremony. They marched in a large parade and then laid the cornerstone of a monument to the Confederacy. At the ceremony, General Clement A. Evans, who became a minister after the war, explained that monument would stand not “for war but for peace.” He did not hope to revive the passions of sectionalism. Instead, he declared, “Sadly we parted with the dear old cross of Stars which we followed through many a storm of shot and shell; but we take with the true hand of Southern honor the staff that holds the flag of Stars and Stripes.” After laying the cornerstone to the Confederate monument, the women of the local Ladies’ Memorial Association decorated the graves of both Confederate and Federal soldiers at Augusta Cemetery.¹⁷ When white northerners and southerners reached out to one another with a friendly hand, they rarely discussed causes and outcomes, which jeopardized postwar attempts at reform and helped reinstate the antebellum racial status quo. Although southerners took steps to reconcile with their former enemies, they used Memorial Day, monument dedication ceremonies, and veterans’ reunions to create and spread the Lost Cause.

¹⁶ “Confederate Memorial Day in the South,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Apr. 28, 1874, 1.

¹⁷ “Memorial Day,” *New York Times*, Apr. 27, 1875, 7.

In the speeches at Confederate Memorial Day spectacles, speakers might extend a friendly hand to former enemies yet insist on the righteousness of their cause. In 1877, Captain McHenry Howard spoke at Baltimore's Memorial Day exercises. He lamented defeat but asserted, "We stand fast in the belief that the cause was a just one and its principles are yet true, and if we are not here in that faith this ceremony is an idle mockery." He insisted that true reconciliation could not occur until "until they even recognize the integrity of purpose and purity of heart and hand" of "these fallen comrades." At the same event, Captain Randolph Barton declared, "Let us never forget that we were right, but let us quickly forget that our foemen were wrong; let us never forget that our dead were brave men, but let us always remember that our enemies were not cowards. I glory in falling into the sentiment drifting to a perfect reconciliation."¹⁸ Although reconciliation occurred at Confederate Memorial Days, it had its limits because neither side would concede the illegitimacy of their cause. When Confederates refused to acknowledge the role of slavery in the war, they endangered African Americans' newfound political and social rights because it suggested that emancipation had been an unfair result of northern victory.¹⁹

Under the auspices of mourning, Memorial Day became a key holiday for Confederate veterans and white southerners to celebrate the Lost Cause, which often entailed vehement defenses of the South and condemnation of present circumstances, especially the freedom of African Americans.²⁰ On May 10, 1876, S. Taylor Martin, whom people considered "a notorious secessionist" and "one of the most bitter men" in North Carolina, gave a rousing speech in Charlotte, in which he defended slavery and condemned Reconstruction. He exclaimed, "The South is today ruled over by the miserable thrall of Yankeedom; but they cannot muzzle our

¹⁸ "Confederate Memorial Day," *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Jun. 8, 1877, 1.

¹⁹ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 2, 98-139, 255-299; Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 160-231.

²⁰ Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past*, 58-67.

chivalry and patriotic devotion to the Lost Cause.” He explained that southerners had fought for their rights. He argued that slavery represented “a divine institution” and that the South “must have that institution or the South will ever be bankrupt.” He incited sectional passions by declaring that a new generation of southerners would soon fly the Confederate flag. He continued, “In the next political campaign we must, even if in the minority, support a Southern man who will build up our interests and hurl the Yankee pickpockets from our midst.”²¹ By advocating the election of a southerner to office, Martin hoped to remove northern interference in southern affairs. Left to their own devices, Martin reasoned, southerners could reinvigorate antebellum racial hierarchy and help their region prosper. Although Martin had been particularly harsh with his words, many southerners shared similar sentiments about Reconstruction and the Lost Cause.

At Memorial Day, many speakers defended and even glorified the institution of slavery. In 1879, Senator John T. Morgan of Alabama justified secession and defended a war to protect slavery at Memorial Day in Winchester, Virginia. In his address, he asked “Was the cause in which these men died worthy of such sacrifice?” Then, he vindicated secession by claiming that “all that the South demanded was the faithful performance of the stipulations” of the Constitution. Southerners did not fear emancipation, he insisted, but bloody race war. Morgan referenced the bloody Haitian Revolution as the inspiration for their terror. He justified southerners’ secession on behalf of slavery because they had the right to defend their property, which included the enslaved humans in which so many people “had invested the earnings of many years of toil.” He explained that southerners feared “the total overthrow of their social system and their personal and political subordination to a race of slaves suddenly lifted into power, and sustained in it by a cruel and remorseless fanaticism.” After emancipation, he argued,

²¹ “The Lost Cause Not Dead,” *New York Times*, May 11, 1876, 7.

“there is still doubt and apprehension in every locality where his race is numerous.”²² Based on this reasoning, Morgan believed that people should not harshly judge southerners for wanting to protect slavery by means of secession. As the war became more distant, white southerners like Morgan had more opportunities to articulate a regionalized interpretation of the war.

After Reconstruction, Memorial Day became just one of many events at which Confederate veterans could spread Lost Cause mythology. During the 1870s, southern states started to rejoin the Union, and southerners redeemed their states from Republican control, which opened up many new opportunities to commemorate the Lost Cause. In 1872, the Republican Party displayed signs of weakening but successfully re-nominated President Ulysses S. Grant. At the time, Liberal Republicans opposed the older Radical Republicans, who had stood up for black political and civil rights in the South. These Radical Republicans wanted to punish the South, but Liberal Republicans wanted to end Reconstruction. Before the 1874 midterm elections, Grant’s administration came under fire for scandal and economic depression, which jeopardized Republican power. In the 1874 elections, Democrats gained ground. In 1876, Reconstruction ended as Republicans bartered for a victory for their candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes. When he won a contested election, he adopted a position of neglect toward the South and its race relations, thus leaving the South to govern itself. After these developments, white southerners became more aggressive with their attempt to inscribe the Lost Cause in history books, monuments, and memorials. Confederate veterans started to organize reunions on the local, state, and national levels, and they embedded Lost Cause rhetoric into their meetings and parades. At these events, veterans and Lost Cause supporters expressed hostility to black civil

²² “Memorial Day at Winchester, VA,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Jun. 7, 1879, 1.

and political rights, which would have made them a seemingly strange and dangerous place for black participation.²³

At reunions and dedications, white southerners continued to emphasize the major themes of the Lost Cause by justifying the cause of the Confederate soldiers and commending their bravery. In May 1889, Dr. W. J. McMurray gave a speech at the unveiling of a Confederate monument in Nashville. In this speech, McMurray argued that the South had lost the war because of the numerous advantages of the North and not because it had fought on behalf of an unjust cause. The North, from his perspective, had more soldiers and better weapons. Despite the disadvantages, southerners bravely marched to their certain deaths behind gallant leadership. He explained, “It is through the same devotion to principle, that same fidelity to a cause they thought to be right, and their love and devotion for the unfortunate brave, that this magnificent monument stands here as an emblem of her untiring zeal.”²⁴ In this speech, McMurray emphasized some of the central tenets of the Lost Cause, and other southerners expressed similar values in their speeches.

At the same event, Colonel W. C. P. Breckinridge justified the South’s determination to maintain the institution of slavery, and he lamented current racial problems. First, he explained that the institution of slavery “became interwove in the civilization and industry and habits of life and of thought of a great section of the people” to such an extent that “it seemed to be incapable of being destroyed without destroying the whole fabric.” He portrayed race relations during the antebellum period as harmonious, even intimate. With regard to enslaved people, he explained, “They were in every house. They stood at every table. They nursed in early and formative years of childhood the children of the whites.” More than just ever-present, enslaved people’s “lives

²³ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 122-139; Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 133-135.

²⁴ “Unveiled: The Monument to the Heroic Dead,” *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), May 17, 1889, 5.

and influences and destinies were interwoven with the lives and destinies of the white people among whom they lived.” By characterizing slavery as a benevolent, intimate, and familial institution, Breckinridge defined post-emancipation social order as unnatural and particularly harsh. After emancipation, for example, southern states faced “the problem of the dissolution of the relations which for over 200 years had subsisted between these two races.” He expressed resentment that emancipation had not occurred as a result of mutual agreement but rather compulsion from a foreign power. In addition to the compulsory nature of emancipation, Breckinridge lamented that it had occurred “with taunts, with claims of higher piety, and with a certain self-righteousness” on behalf of northern people. He argued that emancipation, as it occurred, was “inconsistent with the fundamental principle that the consent of the governed was the basis of all government.”²⁵ When speakers made these arguments, they expressed a desire to return to the race relations of the Old South, which entailed the subordination of African Americans.

At veterans’ reunions and dedication ceremonies, keynote speakers highlighted the benevolence of white masters and the faithful service of enslaved people to justify antebellum racial hierarchy and, therefore, southern control of contemporary racial affairs.²⁶ In 1895, Federal and Confederate veterans met to dedicate the historic parks at Chickamauga and Chattanooga. During the ceremony, most speakers emphasized the common bravery of the soldiers gathered there and praised the reunion of the two regions and the reconciliation that had occurred between the people. Alabama Governor William C. Oates, however, blamed northerners for causing the war. He defended the constitutionality of slavery and described it as a benevolent, mutually beneficial institution. He blamed northerners for inciting slave insurrection and specifically

²⁵ “Unveiled: The Monument to the Heroic Dead,” *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), May 17, 1889, 5.

²⁶ Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 197-199, 209-211.

highlighted the actions of John Brown at Harper's Ferry.²⁷ By portraying the Old South as a harmonious place, these speakers argued that Reconstruction had been the true cause of racial conflict in the post-bellum South.

For historians, authors, politicians, and veterans, the stories and images of faithful slaves served as central figures in the defense of the institution of slavery, so Lost Cause advocates worked to cultivate the legend of the faithful slave through print, film, advertisements, and other media. In 1881, Jefferson Davis made a significant contribution to the development of the image of the faithful slave. In his memoirs, he portrayed plantations as blissful spaces of racial cooperation. He characterized enslaved people as peaceful, happy dependents who white masters had rescued from savagery.²⁸ During the 1880s and 1890s, the Virginia-born author Thomas Nelson Page entertained northern and southern readers with fictitious accounts from faithful slaves about the Old South. With these stories, Nelson intended to capture the harmonious and utopian race relations of the Old South.²⁹ In the early twentieth century, historians William A. Dunning and Ulrich B. Phillips described slavery as a benevolent institution. Phillips claimed that they had better lives than any other group of peasants in history.³⁰ From 1911 to 1915, Mildred Lewis Rutherford, who worked as the historian general of the U.D.C., aggressively searched for stories of faithful slaves and compiled them for publication in *Confederate Veteran* and in a scrapbook titled "Tributes to Faithful Slaves." In these accounts, the white authors wrote to their white audiences about their nostalgia for antebellum racial hierarchy.³¹ The faithful slave became central to the myth of the Lost Cause, so white southerners immortalized the faithful slave across the country.

²⁷ Ibid., 197.

²⁸ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 260.

²⁹ Ibid., 222.

³⁰ Ibid., 295; McElya, *Clinging to Mammy*, 55-56.

³¹ McElya, *Clinging to Mammy*, 52-58; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 289-290.

At Lost Cause celebrations and institutions, white southerners memorialized the faithful slave as a vestige of the antebellum past and as an example for contemporary society. In 1896, the women of the Confederate Memorial Literary Society founded the Confederate Museum in Richmond. They intended the museum to memorialize the Lost Cause and the Old South racial hierarchy and social norms. They defended Jim Crow by depicting slavery as a mutually beneficial racial arrangement. With the image of the faithful slave as a counterpoint to contemporary racial discord, they argued that Reconstruction and emancipation had failed by forcing an unnatural relationship on black and white southerners. They filled the museum's collections with books on racial conflict, black violence against white women, and documents from the Ku Klux Klan.³² In 1903, members of the Daughters of the Confederacy gathered in Baltimore to commemorate General Robert E. Lee's birthday. During the program, the women viewed a white man perform "a series of recitations and impersonations of the old-time negro."³³ At a reunion in Memphis in 1903, General Fitzhugh Lee gave an address. At the conclusion of his speech, he adoringly told the story of an enslaved man "who always sought a place of safety during battles by hunting up 'the place where the Generals were.'"³⁴ Although African Americans did not often have a visible presence at reunions and Lost Cause spectacles, white southerners frequently invoked the image of the faithful, content slave to remind their audiences about a nostalgic, imagined antebellum past to serve as an example and counterpoint for the present.

In the late nineteenth century, white southerners turned the rhetoric of Memorial Day and veterans' reunions into a bona fide movement to memorialize faithful slaves. In 1896, Samuel E.

³² Reiko Hillyer, "Relics of Reconciliation: The Confederate Museum and Civil War Memory in the New South," *The Public Historian* 33 (November 2011): 35-38, 51-55.

³³ "Crosses to Men in Gray," *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Jan. 21, 1903, 6.

³⁴ "Ranks of the Gray Reunited in Memphis," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), May 29, 1901, 1.

White erected four monuments at his own expense on the village green of Fort Mill, South Carolina; among them, he erected an obelisk dedicated to faithful slaves. On two panels, the obelisk depicts the venerated mammy sitting on the front porch of a plantation mansion. In her arms, she holds a white child. On the other panel, the obelisk depicts a black male laboring in the fields. The monument features the inscriptions of twelve names of formerly enslaved people. At the dedication ceremony, White employed local African Americans to pull the cords to remove the veil. In newspaper coverage of the event, reporters explained that “nor insurrection, no runaways and no trouble whatever” had occurred when white men left their homes to fight in the war, which testified to the loyalty of enslaved people.³⁵

At the turn of the century, the movement to memorialize faithful slaves picked up considerable momentum as the war became increasingly distant. During the 1907 annual meeting of Tennessee veterans, General George W. Gordon suggested that they should recognize “the faithful and praiseworthy” service of formerly enslaved people. He praised “the peaceful and lawful course and conduct” of these formerly enslaved people toward their former masters. In conclusion, he suggested that “a stately and durable monument should be erected at some central and appropriate site in the South” to the memory of these faithful slaves.³⁶ In 1916, a white Virginia woman, known as Mrs. A. Moore, Jr., led an effort to construct a church for African Americans. She raised money by receiving donations from people across the country. On September 29, 1916, St. Mary’s Protestant Episcopal Church was consecrated. Moore intended the church to serve as “a memorial to the old colored women of the South who remained faithful

³⁵ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 295; Caroline E. Janney, “Written in Stone: Gender, Race, and the Heyward Shepherd Memorial,” *Civil War History* 52 (2006): 120-121; McElya, *Clinging to Mammy*, 288; “Two Unique Monuments,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Jul. 19, 1896, 32; “Fort Mill’s Monument,” *The American* (Nashville, TN), Sept. 13, 1907, A4.

³⁶ Old Soldiers in Annual Meeting,” *The American* (Nashville, TN), Oct. 11, 1907, 7.

to their masters during and after the days of slavery.”³⁷ In addition to these small-scale attempts to memorialize faithful slaves, major commemoration organizations adopted the cause.

During the twentieth century, the United Daughters of the Confederacy organized many notable movements to celebrate the image of the faithful slave, especially the caricature of black mammy. In 1904, the U.D.C. hoped to erect a national monument to faithful slaves, but they did not succeed. Like other monuments, its supporters had an eye toward the present. In support of the monument, one author argued that it would “influence for good the present and coming generations.”³⁸ In 1905, the U.D.C. launched an effort to erect a “black mammy” monument in every state.³⁹ For white Americans, mammy represented a particularly useful image and character. The image of black mammy reminded people of the Old South and demonstrated the continued dependence and obedience of African Americans, which helped ease national reconciliation and provided a model on how to assimilate formerly enslaved people into post-emancipation society.⁴⁰

In 1923, the Jefferson Davis Chapter of the U.D.C. made a failed attempt to cooperate with southern senators and congressmen to erect a national monument in Washington, D.C., intended to honor the mythical black mammy of the Old South. The proposed monument gained some ground in the Senate, but it raised indignation from many African Americans. In defense of the monument, the editors of *The State* remarked that the monument intended to honor “those servants who before, during and after the Civil war were faithful, devoted and respected members of their households.” Commenting on the present, they added, “thousands and tens of thousands of their sons and daughters, far less worthy, and not at all faithful, have had helping

³⁷ “Memorial to Faithful Slaves,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Sept. 30, 1916, 3.

³⁸ “Slave Monument Question,” *Confederate Veteran* 12 (1904): 52; Janney, “Written in Stone”: 120-121.

³⁹ Janney, “Written in Stone”: 120-121.

⁴⁰ Jo-Ann Morgan, “Mammy the Huckster: Selling the Old South for the New Century,” *American Art* 9 (Spring 1995): 86-88.

hands extended to them, have been forgiven their sins and rescued from innumerable difficulties by the children of those their mothers served.”⁴¹ Interestingly, the black editors of *The New Journal and Guide* supported the monument because they wanted to honor “the mothers who delivered us into life.” They claimed that “no stronger and more heroic women” had ever faced “the problems of freedom with more resolution and success in helping their husbands to make homes and educate their children after the Civil War.” In fact, they concluded that African Americans should reclaim the right to honor black women by erecting their own monument to their mothers alongside the proposed monument from the U.D.C.⁴² The black editors agreed that black women deserved recognition, but they wanted to remind everyone about what these women had done, first and foremost, for the black community. By accommodating, to an extent, the white perspective on black women, the editors could challenge white memory of black women’ contributions during enslavement and, instead, focus on emancipation and freedom.

In response to the proposed monument, African Americans argued that white Americans should offer more protection for the black citizens that they claimed to adore. Neval. H. Thomas argued that white southerners should support the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill and provide more funds to black schools as a sign of their gratitude for “the centuries of enforced toil that they wrung from these devoted ‘mammies.’” Rather than a monument, he concluded, “let us have liberty” as “an enduring monument which will show true appreciation” for the work of enslaved people.⁴³ Although neither of these efforts succeeded, the U.D.C. did not stop working to memorialize faithful slaves.

⁴¹ “‘Mammy’ Statue Not Race Issue Says Dixieites,” *Chicago Defender*, Feb. 24, 1923, 3.

⁴² “Monument to ‘Southern Mammies,’” *New Journal and Guide* (Norfolk, VA), Feb. 17, 1923, 4.

⁴³ “Proposed Mammy Monument Raises Much Commotion,” *New Journal and Guide* (Norfolk, VA), Mar. 10, 1923, 1.

In 1931, the U.D.C. dedicated a monument in Harper's Ferry, West Virginia to the memory of Heyward Shepherd, who died during John Brown's raid at the arsenal. On the morning of the raid, Shepherd became the first victim. He worked as a railroad porter and had gone looking for the night watchman, whom John Brown's raiders had captured. When the raiders demanded Shepherd to halt, Shepherd ran and suffered a gunshot wound to the back. He died a few hours later. After the Civil War, white southerners venerated Shepherd because he represented a counterpoint to John Brown's radicalism and the militancy of post-emancipation African Americans. In the South, white people detested John Brown and did not hesitate to point out that his raiders, who supposedly had come to liberate enslaved people, had killed a black man. Although Shepherd lived as a free man, the U.D.C. and other Lost Cause advocates assumed that he had been enslaved and portrayed him as an obedient, honorable servant. By failing to recognize Shepherd's status as a free black man, the U.D.C. and its supporters solidified the perspective that all black people had served as slaves. In the dedication ceremony of the monument, white orators, including the white president of a local black college, emphasized Shepherd's faithful service and sense of honor. In support of the monument, a local white author praised Shepherd and suggested that African Americans should idolize Shepherd rather than Brown. Many African Americans opposed the Heyward Shepherd memorial. First, they claimed that Shepherd had not done anything to warrant a monument except show up at the wrong place at the wrong time. Second, they portrayed Brown as the true hero of the episode and as a martyr for their cause. Shepherd, from their perspective, had betrayed the race.⁴⁴

Even though speakers frequently spoke on the subject of faithful slaves and veterans erected many monuments to their memory, African Americans of the living and breathing sort rarely participated in Lost Cause spectacles. When they did, however, these Lost Cause events

⁴⁴ Janney, "Written in Stone": 117-121, 124-125.

became a crucible of racial and sectional interests. At Lost Cause events, white southerners embraced the presence of African Americans to justify antebellum social order in the attempt to reconstruct it in the post-bellum South. They manipulated the presence of African Americans at their Lost Cause events to provide an example for racial harmony and strengthen racist stereotypes.

At the events and ceremonies of the Lost Cause, white southerners demonstrated their benevolence by venerating faithful slaves and thanking them for their loyalty with gifts and honors. On May 18, 1911, white North Carolinians celebrated Memorial Day by providing dinner to formerly enslaved African Americans. “It was a reunion of old retainers, their former masters and mistresses and the descendants of the former slave-holders,” commented a reporter to Baltimore’s *The Sun*. The reporter added, “Those who have never lived in the South can hardly understand the affection for the Southern whites for the colored people with whom they were reared, or the attachment of the negroes to the families they have served and, in many instances, whose names they bear.” According to the reporter, white southern men knew “how faithful, capable and devoted they were” and mourned “the passing of the old days.” He lamented that “the races in some respect seem to be growing farther apart all the time” and blamed the younger generation of African Americans for these problems. In conclusion, he remarked that the white southerners represented the “best and truest friend” of black southerners because he would always “extend a helping hand to the colored people.” Then, the reporter made a comment about the present state of race relations by claiming that southerners know “instinctually how to deal with the colored man, to hold his affection and respect.”⁴⁵ In the postwar South, the image of benevolent, paternalistic white masters would have served to portray white southerners as the capable governors of the black race.

⁴⁵ “Confederates Give a Dinner to their Former Slaves,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), May 18, 1911, 6.

On many occasions, white southerners staged events to relive the Old South and reconstruct racial hierarchy after emancipation. At the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Virginians created a replica of George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate as the main display in the Virginia Building. In the Virginia Building, bands played Dixie and crowds hollered the rebel yell. They included a portrayal of slavery in the Mount Vernon replica, including the employment of several African Americans as attendants. Among them, Sarah Robinson, who had worked for the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, played the role of Sarah Washington, a descendant of a Mount Vernon slave. At the time, African Americans like Robinson provided tourists with their interpretation of the Mount Vernon site. In the Virginia Building, however, it seemed as if the Civil War and Reconstruction had never occurred. In this imagined reminiscence of a real time and place, African Americans gleefully served their distinguished white masters as part of a mutually beneficial arrangement. At the Mount Vernon replica, slavery had never ended. These slaves had never taken their shot at freedom. With this exhibit, the Virginians provided a markedly different portrayal of race relations than did Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells, who used the Columbian Exposition as an opportunity to denounce racism.⁴⁶

Elsewhere, white southerners staged events to relive the Old South and its race relations. In 1894, Confederate veterans gathered for a reunion in Birmingham, Alabama, and it featured a variety of entertainment. On two different nights, organizers arranged for dramatic re-enactments of historical and cultural importance. Among these performances, African Americans took the

⁴⁶ Lydia Mattice Brandt, "Re-creating Mount Vernon: The Virginia Building at the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition," *Wintherthur Portfolio* 43 (Spring 2009): 110-111; Scott E. Casper, *Sarah Johnson's Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008); "Tell of Early Days," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 14, 1893, 7.

stage to “sing famous plantation songs” and “render favorite and famous Southern melodies.”⁴⁷ In 1912, Confederate veterans gathered in Washington, D.C. for a reunion dinner in celebration of National Decoration Day, and they used it as an opportunity to relive the days of the Old South, specifically its race relations. Colorado Congressman A. W. Rucker hosted the dinner on behalf of the thirteen remaining Confederate veterans in Congress, who attended the dinner staged in his apartment. In addition to the veterans in Congress, Chief Justice Edward Douglass White, who had served as a private in the Confederate Army, attended the dinner as the guest of honor. Although the dinner honored Confederate veterans, a reporter explained that it would not feature any Confederate flags. They only put American flags on display. A reporter characterized the menu as “typical of the old South.” According to a reporter, southern black women, known as “experts in the culinary art of Southern cookery,” prepared the meal. In addition to these black cooks, “trained negro boys, who know the art of Southern serving,” provided the food service because they knew how to “anticipate every wish of the old Southern gentlemen.”⁴⁸ For white southerners, this dinner provided an opportunity to replicate Old South racial norms. Although demeaning, the dinner would have provided black cooks and black servers as an opportunity to make some money, which represented one of the many reasons African Americans might take up this kind of employment.

Many African Americans popped up at Confederate events, and white southerners turned them into symbols of an idealized Old South. In 1900, Amos Rucker marched in a gray suit alongside fellow Georgia veterans at a reunion in Augusta, Georgia. According to *Atlanta Constitution*, Rucker had followed his master and continued to serve him throughout the war.

⁴⁷ “Confederate Veterans: Fourth Annual Reunion of the Old Soldiers,” *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), Apr. 22, 1894, 9.

⁴⁸ “Confederates in House to Attend Reunion Dinner,” *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), May 26, 1912, 1; “Members of Congress Who Wore Gray to Meet and Dine on Memorial Day,” *Washington Post*, May 26, 1912, 5.

The editors claimed that Rucker had never wanted freedom. Instead, he “handled a musket whenever he got the opportunity” and suffered a wound at Murfreesboro, Tennessee. After the war, he joined the U.C.V.’s Camp Walker and followed the veterans to every reunion. Of the many so-called black Confederates, Rucker remained a famous example celebrated by Lost Cause advocates deep into the twentieth and even the twenty-first centuries.⁴⁹ In 1924, twenty African Americans, “who ‘fit and bled’ in battles while accompanying their masters at the front during the Civil War,” participated in a reunion of Confederate soldiers in Memphis, Tennessee. They came from all the states of the former Confederacy. Among them, General Robert E. Lee’s former cook, who had become known as the “champion chef of the Confederate Army,” received special honors. According to a reporter to *The Sun*, the white veterans and white residents of Memphis felt satisfied “to see that the faithful negroes of the old South enjoyed the reunion.”⁵⁰ Four years later, Lee’s enslaved cook, known as William Mack Lee, made an appearance in Atlanta for the unveiling of the Lee sculpture on Stone Mountain.⁵¹ On June 7, 1929, Confederate veterans met for a reunion in Charlotte, North Carolina. During the reunion, two thousand veterans marched in a six-mile long parade. At the front of the parade, the officers of the United Confederate Veterans led the way. At the back of the parade, “automobiles bearing whiteheaded Negroes who had been slaves and officers’ servants in the war” brought the procession to a close.⁵² On June 6, 1930, Confederate veterans gathered in Biloxi, Mississippi, for a reunion. The reunion featured a parade of 3,000 veterans, who rode in automobiles because the elderly men could not handle the midday heat. At the back of the parade, “trucks filled with

⁴⁹ “Augusta Yesterday,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 14, 1900, 7; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 289; Harold Harrison, Jr., “The True Story of Amos Rucker,” http://www.knowsouthernhistory.net/Articles/Minorities/true_story_of_amos_rucker.html

⁵⁰ “Faithful Negroes of Old South Attend Confederate Reunion,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Jun. 8, 1924, 15.

⁵¹ “Crowds Reach Atlanta for Lee Memorial Rite,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 9, 1928, 2.

⁵² “Confederates End Reunion in Parade,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Jun. 8, 1929, 7.

old Negro former slaves and Negro servants” made their way down the city’s streets.⁵³ In July 1932, eleven African Americans attended a reunion in Richmond, Virginia, of the United Confederate Veterans. While in Richmond, they stayed in the soldiers’ home alongside the white veterans.⁵⁴ If white southerners demonstrated a willingness to live and work alongside African Americans in a mutually beneficial arrangement, they would have a claim to govern their own racial affairs.

In newspaper accounts of faithful slaves, reporters depicted African Americans as battle participants, often suffering wounds or saving their masters from harm. In 1899, *Atlanta Constitution* reported that Clinton Rodgers, who went by the nickname “Jeff Davis,” journeyed to the reunion in Charleston, South Carolina because he “believes he has as much right to be with the veterans as any man who wore the gray.” According to the report, Rodgers had followed his master during the war. He received a wound, and he showed the scar “as if it was the grandest trophy with which he could be possessed.” When asked about his attendance at the reunion, Rodgers explained that he had seen battle alongside his master. He remarked, “Habn’t de ole nigger bin wid massa all fru de smoke ob de battle and he’ped ter take ole massa’s boy frum offer de field when he war shot mo’ ter death?” In 1917, several “gray clad negroes” mingled with Confederate veterans at a reunion in Washington, D.C. Among them, 88-year-old Howard Divinity attended the reunion. During the war, he had reportedly followed his master, Robert Scott, with the Twelfth Mississippi Regiment. At the Battle of Seven Pines, he “went on the field of battle and carried his wounded master to a place of safety.” According to the reporter, Divinity “surrendered at Appomattox and declares that he is still an unreconstructed Confederate.”⁵⁵ On December 10, 1931, Bill Yopp attended a reunion of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in

⁵³ “Old Confederates Ride in Big Review,” *Washington Post*, Jun. 7, 1930, 5.

⁵⁴ “11 Colored Vets Attend Confederate Veterans Reunion,” *Atlanta Daily World*, Jul. 14, 1932, 8.

⁵⁵ “Confederates Reach Capital by Thousands,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Jun. 5, 1917, 1.

Dublin, Georgia. According to the story, which appeared in a northern newspaper, Yopp had served his master throughout the war and “rescued his young master when the white rebel was severely wounded.”⁵⁶ From the perspective of white southerners, these African Americans had put their lives on the line to protect their white masters, which made them notable and exemplary faithful slaves.

In stories about faithful slaves at Lost Cause events, white southerners described them as disdainful toward the younger generations of African Americans and intensely loyal to the Confederacy. Writing about Clinton Rodgers, for example, the reporter explained, “Like old-time darkies he, of course, has contempt for many things of the present time.” When Rodgers saw black soldiers on the streets, he would remark, “Nebber smelt gunpoweder and nebber will. Dese play soldiers sho does make dis ole chile tired.”⁵⁷ Unlike contemporary generations of African Americans, Rodgers had reportedly had his loyalty tested in the trials of war, and he remained unrelentingly faithful to his master and the Confederacy. Like Rodgers, many African Americans exhibited their loyalty. In 1904, veterans gathered in Nashville for a reunion, which featured African Americans. Among them, Bob Chism had served with the 46th Mississippi Regiment in the Army of Northern Virginia. He explained, “I’m er rebel.” He shouted, “Don’t you all ask who dis yer nigger is. I’m a rebel.” Likewise, E. L. Sims, who reportedly served in the 24th Alabama, marched in the parade with a yellowhammer feather in his hat “like the great majority of the veteran ‘yellerhammers’ in the parade.” He “shouted like a demon” every time one of the bands struck up the tune “Dixie.”⁵⁸ The image of the black Confederate helped solidify claims that enslaved people had embraced their dependence and the benevolence of their

⁵⁶ “Negro Confederate at Rebel Reunion,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, Dec. 12, 1931, A10.

⁵⁷ “A Picturesque Darkey Who Follows The Vets,” *Atlanta Constitution*, May 17, 1899, 4.

⁵⁸ “Old Confederates Reviewed by Gen. Lee,” *The American* (Nashville, TN), Jun. 17, 1904, 1.

white masters. By portraying formerly enslaved people as perpetually loyal to the Confederacy, white southerners rebuked post-emancipation racial hierarchy.

At parades and reunions, white southerners portrayed the faithful slaves as comical and feckless, and these traits satisfied white spectators. At the 1904 reunion in Nashville, several African Americans marched in the parade. Among them, Henry Church marched alongside white veterans. He carried “a half dozen live chickens” with him in the parade. He explained to the spectators, “Huh! I rise ter do this every’ day endurin’ the wah. Hit’s stealin’ now but hit was only foragin’ then.” He earned many cheers from the gathered spectators. At the same parade, another old black man gained notoriety for marching with “a large but broken satchel, a dented coffee pot, a rusty skillet, half a dozen ears of corn, and three or four live ducks.” He wore a sign on his back, which claimed that he had stolen the ducks. Another black man, identified as E. L. Sims, marched in the parade. During the march, he would periodically stop to “cut a pigeon wing and give other evidence of his still youthful limbs.”⁵⁹ With this portrayal, white southerners hoped to revive a stereotype rooted in minstrel performances. By cultivating the image of the foolish and humorous black man or black woman, white southerners could deny any suggestion that black presence at Lost Cause events entailed resistance or retaliation against their memory of the Old South and hopes for the New South.

In the post-Reconstruction South, the image of the faithful slave became the example that white Americans wanted African Americans to follow. In 1904, Preston Roberts, who had reportedly served as a cook in General Nathan Bedford Forrest’s cavalry unit, received an award for his service to the Confederacy. Roberts became the first African American to receive the “cross of honor,” which southern women gave to soldiers “who actually saw fire in the Confederate ranks.” According to *The Washington Post* editors, “Uncle Preston served his young

⁵⁹ “Old Confederates Reviewed by Gen. Lee,” *The American* (Nashville TN), Jun. 17, 1904, 1.

master, a Confederate officer, throughout the four years of the war.” In addition to his services as a cook, he fought alongside Confederate soldiers although he could not officially join the army on account of his race. “His courage, his faithfulness, his regard for good discipline, all won the respect and worked upon the sympathies of the Confederate veterans,” they explained. When Roberts decided to put his name in for consideration for the honor, so many people supported him that “he seemed to have only just discovered how many white friends he had.” The editors of *The Washington Post* praised Roberts for the process by which he sought recognition of his service to the Confederacy. After referencing Booker T. Washington, they praised him for “going calmly about his daily work and keeping himself in mind by doing his duty as well as he knew how” rather than taking “a college course in oratory” to express “an argument on his rights and wrongs in magnificent language.” By taking this approach, they believed, Roberts earned “appreciation and good will from white neighbors.” In conclusion, the editors remarked, “There is a heap of common sense in the lesson of the Preston Roberts incident.”⁶⁰ With these comments, the editors expressed a preference for more humble, dependent, and grateful African Americans, who did not cause trouble in search of recognition or equality.

When African Americans showed up or otherwise supported Confederate events, white southerners portrayed them as living proof that the South should handle its own racial problems. In 1901, William A. Gordon, a white man, served as the president of the Washington, D.C., camp of Confederate veterans. He joined his fellow veterans at the annual reunion in Memphis. In a letter back to the *The Washington Post*, he reported that a prominent black citizen of Memphis, named Robert R. Church, had given the veterans a generous donation of \$1,000 to make the reunion a success and to guarantee “real, genuine feeling between the races.” According to Gordon, Church had lived his early life as an enslaved person in Mississippi. After

⁶⁰ “A Negro’s Recognition,” *Washington Post*, Mar. 6, 1904, E6; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 289.

the war, Church became wealthy by “frugality and thrifty attention to business.” In fact, Church became a real estate guru, and he turned Beale Street into a center for black businesses. By investing in real estate, Church became the south’s first black millionaire. Although Church suffered a gunshot wound to the head during the 1866 Memphis riot, Church seemed to harbor no ill-will toward Confederate veterans or white Memphians. In a newspaper interview, Church claimed, “I want to see the veterans enjoy themselves, and I want to see Memphis do herself credit in the matter of entertainment.” He praised white southerners for their treatment of him and his fellow African Americans. Specifically, he highlighted spending on schools and the abundance of opportunity. He declared, “No persons on earth are more disposed to help the former slaves than are the veterans of the Confederacy; those old men who yet remember the negro in slavery.” Church believed that Memphians should put the war behind them. After all, Church had quite a bit to lose given his financial success, so it seems likely that he supported the Confederate reunion to maintain an alliance with white Memphians, who had already targeted him once. When Church donated the money, however, Memphis’s black community condemned him.⁶¹

Although these statements earned him scorn from the black community, these sentiments appealed to Gordon and other Confederate supporters. He wrote, “The Southern people have not forgotten how devoted the former slaves were to the families of their masters during the war.” He applauded “these faithful friends and servants” because they “remained on the plantations” and “provided food and raiment for the women and children” and “watched over and protected them from harm.” He praised his fellow white southerners for their efforts to uplift the black race. He concluded, “The race problem, and there is such a problem, can most safely be left to

⁶¹ William A. Gordon, “Natural Home of the Negro: The South Can Safely Be Trusted with Solution of the Race Problem,” *Washington Post*, May 29, 1901, 10; Elizabeth Gritter, *River of Hope: Black Politics and the Memphis Freedom Movement, 1865-1954* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 16-17, 26-28.

the people of the South, white and colored, who understand and mutually appreciate each other, and who will in time work out a solution of the question, which will be for the best interests of all.” In this letter, Gordon explicitly stated how the image of the grateful, benevolent black person supported white southerners’ claims to govern their own racial affairs. The editors of *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* expressed similar sentiments by referring to him as a credit to his race.⁶²

At some of the most popular Lost Cause spectacles, African Americans had a notable presence. On May 29, 1890, thousands of people gathered in Richmond for the unveiling of the Lee Monument, including some of the most prominent Confederate veterans and formerly enslaved African Americans. Among the dignitaries, General Fitzhugh Lee, General Joseph E. Johnston, General Jubal Early, and General John B. Gordon marched in the procession. During the ceremony, “nothing but the best of feelings, not only toward each other but for all sections of the country, prevailed.” During the speeches, veterans and dignitaries praised southerners for their undying love of the Confederacy. They praised Lee relentlessly for his service and honor. In the procession, a handful of black men participated in the day’s events. According to reports, these men had “followed the army from the opening of the war to its close.” At the Lee unveiling ceremony, these black men received many honors and special recognitions. Tarleton Alexander made the trip to Richmond from Charlottesville. According to the reporter, Alexander “always voted the Democratic ticket” and wore Confederate badges to the event. General Early brought two formerly enslaved people with him, whom he introduced to his friends as “respectable darkies” and not “scalawag niggers.” When he introduced these black men to fellow veterans, the black men would respond, “We is Mars’ Jubal’s niggers. We is, and we done cum over two

⁶² William A. Gordon, “Natural Home of the Negro: The South Can Safely Be Trusted with Solution of the Race Problem,” *Washington Post* May 29, 1901, 10; Gritter, *River of Hope*, 16-17, 26-28.

hundred miles to pay our ‘specs to him.’” Among the handful of black men at the event, one black man from Huntington, West Virginia, had made the trip thanks to financial assistance from “those whom he served so faithfully during the war.” He had dozens of confederate badges on his breast, which he had received as gifts from numerous veterans.⁶³ When news spread that African Americans had made the journey to Richmond to pay their respects to Robert E. Lee and fraternize with Confederate veterans, some black journalists became incensed.

When African Americans participated at these Lost Cause events, they risked insulting black leaders and black neighbors. Editor William Calvin Chase of *The Washington Bee* heard a rumor that the local black militia had filed an application to participate in the procession, which inspired heated remarks directed toward African Americans and the South. On the subject of the Lee Monument, he lambasted local black southerners for wanting to participate in a ceremony on behalf of Lee, “who attempted by force and arms to destroy a republic and to perpetuate slavery.” He argued, “It is a most damnable outrage on civilization; it is a mockery to the memory of those many thousand union heroes that fell in defense of liberty.” Although it turned out that the militia had not made an application, the editor did remark, “Every negro that participated in these ceremonies ought to have a rope around his neck and swung to the tail of the horse upon which the dead ex-Confederate is mounted.” He berated these people for participating “in an arch traitors ceremonies.” He concluded the remarks by claiming that these ceremonies should raise the suspicions of the North because the South seems “just as ready to secede to-day as it was in ’61.” He warned, “Let the North beware and abandon its cowardice and strike for liberty.”⁶⁴ Although the role of the faithful slave legitimized white supremacy and

⁶³ “The Lee Statue Unveiled,” *New York Times*, May 30, 1890, 1-2; Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 219-220.

⁶⁴ “When Will They Learn Sense,” *Washington Bee*, May 31, 1890, 2; Editorial, *Richmond Planet*, June 14, 1890, 2; Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 220.

alienated black leaders, African Americans might have taken on the role for any number of reasons.

At Lost Cause spectacles, white southerners spoke degradingly of African Americans to justify their exclusive right to exercise power in the region, but African Americans nonetheless participated at these events because negative stereotypes provided opportunities for upward mobility and social status. African Americans attended Lost Cause events in an effort to demonstrate their loyalty, which could earn them favor, money, or social status. They appealed to white southerners' desires for loyal, faithful African Americans because it might lead to financial rewards, such as inheritance or employment. They could also earn small tokens of favor, such as free transportation or public praise. Sometimes, African Americans used these means to achieve national and global fame. Among the people who played the role of the faithful slave, black performers and entertainers infiltrated Lost Cause events and assumed demeaning roles to reach wider audiences, earn money with their talents, and gain recognition of their professional status.

Some African Americans may have portrayed themselves as faithful to their masters to earn favors and rewards from former masters. In 1879, Jesse H. Drake of Missouri left his estate worth \$10,000 to three formerly enslaved people. Calvin Drake, Aaron Drake, and Judah Drake inherited the entire estate. In the will, Jesse Drake emphasized that these men had served as "faithful slaves and had remained with him since freedom, nursing and caring for him in his old age." He bequeathed his estate, which consisted of about 400 acres, to them to show his gratitude. Upon hearing the news, *Courier-Journal* editors commented, "This should be noticed at the North to evince the fierce feeling of anger entertained by old slave-holders against their

slaves.”⁶⁵ In 1891, Jane Lewis earned “a large part of a fortune of \$50,000” left by her former master, a Kentucky planter, who bequeathed large sums of money to his “faithful slaves.”⁶⁶ To inherit a part or the entirety of a master’s fortune, African Americans might have remained loyal.

Similarly, African American convinced white southerners, specifically their former masters, that they had served faithfully in the war to earn a pension from the state government.⁶⁷ In 1888, Mississippi passed a pension law to provide for Confederate veterans, which included a provision to assist “colored servants of soldiers and sailors who are disabled in like manner as soldiers or sailors by reason of said service.”⁶⁸ Likewise, Tennessee’s government provided pensions for Confederate soldiers, their widows, and former servants.⁶⁹ In 1907, veterans in Raleigh, North Carolina, passed a resolution “to make a new class of pensions” for “worthy negro servants who followed the fortunes of the Southern Confederacy and rendered service to their owners or others” during the war.⁷⁰ In 1923, South Carolina’s legislators voted to provide pensions for “faithful slaves who stood by their masters during the Civil War” under “the same conditions as those now paid to Confederate veterans.”⁷¹

To receive a pension or earn favors from former masters, African Americans would have had to prove their loyalty, so they would have had to do things like attending Lost Cause events. At the 1917 reunion in Washington, D. C., Josh Robinson from Kentucky attended. Robinson had earned the Cross of Honor from the United Daughters of the Confederacy because he

⁶⁵ “Willing His Estate to His Former Slaves,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Aug. 19, 1879, 3; “Remembering His Old Slaves,” *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), Aug. 11, 1879, 3.

⁶⁶ “After Thirty Years,” *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), Jun. 15, 1891, 1.

⁶⁷ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 289.

⁶⁸ “Mississippi’s Pension Law,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Feb. 23, 1888, 5.

⁶⁹ “Quarter’s Pensions Quarter Million,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Aug. 4, 1921, 2.

⁷⁰ “Would Pension Negro Servants,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Jan. 7, 1907, 11.

⁷¹ “Old Slaves to Get Pensions in S. Carolina,” *Chicago Defender*, Mar. 17, 1923, 2.

“shouldered a musket in 1862” Robinson drew a pension for his service.⁷² The promise of a pension might have encouraged other African Americans that had involuntarily served the Confederacy to take on the role of the faithful slave. In 1922, a group of Huntsville women in the United Daughters of the Confederacy requested a raise in pensions for Confederate veterans and “to place the faithful negroes who served as company cooks or servants for their masters on the pension rolls to receive the full amount of pensions,” as well.⁷³ Although they had involuntarily served in the Confederate Army, they might play up their willingness to serve as a testament to their loyalty. In a period of limited opportunity, African Americans might portray themselves as loyal, faithful slaves to earn extra income.

In some cases, African Americans gathered to celebrate their own fraternal bonds forged during the war, which they did without the participation of white veterans. In 1889, African Americans gathered in Jacksonville, Alabama, for a reunion. These men had served, likely involuntarily, as teamsters, servants, and cooks during the war. At the reunion, they played baseball and enjoyed a barbecue meal, and “good humor prevailed throughout.” According to the reporter, the “negroes who were in the war and heard the bullets whistle are very proud of it.” They did not gather to commemorate their former masters. The event featured no white people. Instead, the African Americans staged a mock debate with regard to the best political party for the future of the race. As none of them supported the Democratic Party, a few black men had to play the role in the debate.⁷⁴ The reunion of these black Confederates demonstrate that African Americans who worked involuntarily for the Confederate Army did not have to support the cause

⁷² Daisy Fitzhugh Ayres, “Confederate Veterans Gathering For Reunion at Capital,” *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), Jun. 3, 1917, C2.

⁷³ “Pension Raise Asked for Alabama Veterans,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Dec. 13, 1922, 8.

⁷⁴ “Confederate Negroes Hold a Reunion,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 3, 1889, 1.

to forge bonds with one another and, in some cases, their white comrades, which represents one of the many reasons African Americans might participate in these events.

For some African Americans, the role of the faithful slave became a means to earn money. In 1897, a group of northern tourists to the South stopped at a railroad station, and they encountered an “old, gray-wooled darky” with his arm in a sling “made of faded blue bandanna.” He came up to the train and passed his hat along for spare change. They asked him about his war service, and he explained that he had hurt himself in the war. He had followed his master to the battlefield. He told his audience, “I was right by Mars’ Robert’s side when I got hurt. Dem was sho’ mighty troublous times.” Upon hearing the story, the tourists dropped nickels and dimes into his hat, which the tourists passed throughout the train.⁷⁵ In the account of Clinton Rodgers, the reporter explained, “He is a pet of nearly all the old confederate veterans in Atlanta, and they humor him in all his whims.” At Rodgers’ recent wedding, a white judge performed the ceremony for free, and many white veterans paid the license fees. Rodgers attended as many reunions as possible. At a reunion in Texas, he reportedly met Varina Davis, who he considered “to be the greatest and the grandest lady in all the world.” He attended the reunions without paying train fare. Instead, he relied on white veterans on the train to pay for him. On the train, he sang plantation songs, which earned him a few dollars here and there.⁷⁶ Similarly, many African Americans, often in the role of performers, manipulated the image of the faithful slave to their advantage, and they achieved national and global acclaim.

During a period of restrained opportunities for African Americans, black performers might take the stage in character as former slaves or sharecroppers to gain access to white middle-class audiences, move their music toward the mainstream, and earn some money. At the

⁷⁵ “How He Was Wounded,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Jun. 20, 1897, C6.

⁷⁶ “A Picturesque Darkey Who Follows The Vets,” *Atlanta Constitution*, May 17, 1899, 4.

end of the nineteenth century, many black composers created “coon songs” for black and white audiences. These songs employed dialect and stereotypical black characters to satisfy their audiences. Despite the racist undertones, black composers produced these songs to gain financial success. Rather than let white Americans continue to exploit their talent, many African Americans took the stage in blackface makeup to perform stereotypical black roles in an effort to capitalize on the nation’s craving for authentic black products of the Old South. To these ends, black performers named their troops to emphasize their plantation heritage. During the 1880s, the Georgia Slave Brothers and the Georgia Slave Troupe Minstrels toured the country and gave minstrel performances. During the 1890s, black composer Will Marion Cook composed music for the popular stage. Cook had trained in classical composition in Germany but preferred to write “real Negro melodies” based off slave songs. He marketed these songs to black and white audiences as authentic black songs. Although white Americans had a concept of black music rooted in blackface minstrel performances, Cook created songs and stage performances that satisfied white America yet inspired pride among African Americans. In 1898, he debuted his all-black variety show *Clorindy* for white audiences on Broadway.⁷⁷ During a time in which African Americans primarily worked in southern agriculture, stage performances, however degrading, provided an opportunity for financial success and upward mobility.

In the twentieth century, African Americans continued to assume degrading roles to improve their economic condition and reach wider audiences. In 1935, blues musician Huddie Ledbetter made an appearance before University of Texas graduates in New York City. His managers, John and Alan Lomax, advertised him as their blues-playing chauffeur. In advertisements, they emphasized Ledbetter’s violent, criminal past and Dust Bowl origins. Although Ledbetter had become renowned for his fine taste in clothes, he wore a work shirt and

⁷⁷ Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race*, 20-22, 81-94.

overalls for his stage performance in an attempt to portray himself as an authentic plantation product. During the concert, he sang authentic blues songs in his heavy southern accent while playing an old, beat-up guitar. For Ledbetter, music provided an opportunity to escape the farm and the sharecropping system, which had ensnared his emancipated father for decades in a cycle of debt. On stage, Ledbetter became Ledbelly, an extremely influential blues musician.⁷⁸ Many black performers made similar choices to gain professional recognition of their talents and improve their financial situation.

In the quest for bigger audiences and professional recognition, black performers made unlikely allies with advocates of the Lost Cause. In 1900, Confederate veterans met in Louisville for a reunion. Event organizers arranged for concerts and other entertainment for the veterans each evening. On one of the nights of the reunion, young black chorus singers presented a musical program for the entertainment of the veterans.⁷⁹ During the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan represented the militant arm of the Lost Cause, but African Americans attended events alongside the hooded Klansmen, which earned them scorn but also provided opportunities to humiliate the white supremacists and to demonstrate their patriotism. In 1925, the Ku Klux Klan arranged to have a picnic in Council Bluffs, Iowa. For the picnic, they reached out to the largest black band in Omaha, Nebraska, to provide the music. The black leader of the band, Dan Desdunes, claimed to have accepted the contract, but he withdrew the offer after “an avalanche of public opinion” caused him to cancel.⁸⁰ On November 11, 1925, an Armistice Day parade in St. Petersburg, Florida featured the KKK. Although the KKK had a well-known white supremacist and Protestant Christian ideology, Jews and African Americans participated. At the back of the

⁷⁸ Lawson, *Jim Crow's Counterculture*, 28-33.

⁷⁹ “The Confederate Veteran,” *Courier-Journal*, May 2, 1900, 5.

⁸⁰ “Negro Band Cuts Ku Klux Picnic,” *The Helena Independent*, Jul. 26, 1925, 1.

parade, black schoolchildren and black military veterans marched.⁸¹ The On November 14, 1927, black musicians participated alongside white people in an Armistice Day parade in Ft. Worth, Texas. During the parade, the black musicians marched behind the Ku Klux Klan. As they marched behind the white-hooded Klansmen, the black musicians played “The Old Gray Mare Ain’t What She Used to Be.” By selecting this music, the musicians hoped to portray the Klan members as outdated, useless remnants of the past. In addition to these seemingly small forms of resistance, some African Americans achieved global fame for their work as faithful slaves.

African Americans often took on the demeaning role of the faithful slave to earn local, regional, and global fame. On December 14, 1910, *The Sun* celebrated the life of Angelina Sutton, who had just died at the age of 92. They praised her as a faithful slave before and after the war. She had achieved fame for her cooking, “which has made Southern dishes famous the world over.” They characterized her as a person of “cheerful disposition” and “at all times faithful to her superiors.”⁸² In 1893, Nancy Green famously appeared on behalf of the R. T. Davis Milling Company at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. She played the role of Aunt Jemima to sell the company’s pancake mix. At the fair, she cooked pancakes for hungry audiences and told fantastical plantation stories and sang spirituals. The crowds devoured the pancakes, and Aunt Jemima became a sensation. Aunt Jemima had been born into servitude in Kentucky, but Green had never worked as an enslaved person. Instead, she worked as a domestic servant in Chicago, where a R. T. Davis Milling Company employee discovered her and offered her the job. Green used her work as Aunt Jemima to supplement her income from her primary work as a cook and housekeeper. By the end of her life, Green had become an energetic member of the black community. In her obituary, *Chicago Defender* highlighted her work for one of

⁸¹ “Klan K. of C., Jews and Negroes Parade,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 12, 1925, 1.

⁸² “Old Slave Dies at Age of 92,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Dec. 14, 1910, 9.

Chicago's most important black churches. Across the country, black men and women would make similar choices to help themselves and their families earn money and gain social status, even if these images helped strengthen white supremacy.⁸³

In 1927, Universal Studios released a film version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe published the novel, which changed how many Americans viewed slavery by turning many northerners against it. In the film version, however, producers and screenwriters adapted the story to appeal to southern audiences. Universal Studios promoted the use of white actors and actresses in blackface makeup to generate enthusiasm in the South. Director Harry Pollard hired Margarita Fischer, a white woman, to play Eliza. She died her hair for the role, but she did not wear blackface makeup and appeared light-skinned on screen. Similarly, white actresses Lassie Lou Ahern and Eulalie Jensen appeared as light-skinned African Americans. Actress Mona Ray, however, donned blackface makeup to play Topsy, a feckless character in the movie who appealed to audiences familiar with minstrel shows. Originally, Pollard hired black stage actor Charles Gilpin to play Uncle Tom, but he quit the picture because of its portrayal of African Americans. To replace him, Pollard hired James Lowe. Although Lowe had many reservations about the script, he kept these comments to himself until they had filmed too many scenes to cut him out. For African Americans, these stereotypical and demeaning roles offered exposure and opportunity. They found ways to strike back without jeopardizing their precarious employment.⁸⁴

African Americans often protested demeaning and insensitive portrayals of black slaves on film, which black actors and actresses parlayed these racist roles into financial opportunity and acclaim. In 1939, *Gone With the Wind* premiered, which became one of the most successful

⁸³ McElya, *Clinging to Mammy*, 1-4, 13-14, 22-32.

⁸⁴ David Pierce, "'Carl Laemmle's Outstanding Achievement': Harry Pollard and the Struggle to Film 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,'" *Film History* 10 (1998): 460-466.

movies of all time, but it embarrassed black audiences with its portrayal of faithful slaves. The film portrayed enslaved African Americans as faithful and obedient. Black men dig trenches to protect the white residents of Atlanta. For the movie, black actress Butterfly McQueen portrayed Prissy, a character that humiliated many African Americans because of her incompetence. The character frequently suffered physical abuse from Scarlet O'Hara. After many decades, McQueen lamented the backwardness of the role, but she commented, "I am very glad I made the film because I make a living off of it. You wouldn't be here if I hadn't been Prissy." Hattie McDaniel played Mammy in *Gone With the Wind*, which earned her an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress. McDaniel remarked that she would rather play a maid on screen than work as one, which testified to the choice these black women often had to make. For *Gone With the Wind*, many of the black actors and actresses made more money than some of their white counterparts. When confronted about the pay scale, producers justified the pay because these black actors had to play demeaning, stereotypical roles, which they believed would ultimately strengthen white supremacy. On set, McDaniel had many privileges of her white counterparts, such as her own chair. Off the set, she faced the same Jim Crow regulations. She could not even attend the premiere of the movie in Atlanta.⁸⁵ Among the numerous African Americans that took on the role of the faithful slave to improve their lives, McDaniel represents the most successful and prominent.

When African Americans and white southerners collided in historical memory, they each brought with them their own aspirations for the future. After the Civil War, white southerners hoped to create an idealized image of the Old South because it would justify their continued power over African Americans. To these ends, they welcomed the sight of black people at Lost

⁸⁵ "Obituary: Butterfly McQueen Was Maid in *Gone With the Wind*," *Globe & Mail* (Toronto, ON), Dec. 26, 1995, C3 qtd. in *Opposing Viewpoints in Context*. Web. 21 May 2015; Jill Watts, "Hattie McDaniel," *Interview* 35 (September 2005): 126-130.

Cause events. From their perspective, black presence at Lost Cause events would signal black consent to the restoration of antebellum racial hierarchy. As the story goes, African Americans had been content in slavery and served their masters faithfully. Lost Cause advocates used the image of the faithful slave for white supremacist purposes. Although demeaning and damaging to the effort to secure equal social and political rights, African Americans had numerous reasons to play along. Of course, some African Americans, in a period of limited choices, may have forged bonds with their white masters and continued to support them after their enslavement ended. By playing the role of the faithful slave, African Americans could enter white spaces, such as Lost Cause spectacles. African Americans manipulated the role of the faithful slave to earn money, gain fame, and otherwise improve their lives amid harsh postwar conditions.

In the South, Lost Cause events drew massive crowds and entailed lucrative financial opportunity. Despite derogatory remarks and open hostility at these types of events, African Americans mobilized their labor unions to fight for their right to play at these events without discrimination. When African Americans looked to infiltrate off-limits spaces, white southerners had to portray them as faithful dependents and friends while maintaining their strict stance on discrimination. In 1903, these dynamics played out in New Orleans.

CHAPTER 4

“A STRICTLY SOCIAL FUNCTION”: THE CONTEST OF BLACK LABOR AND CONFEDERATE MEMORY IN THE 1903 U.C.V. REUNION

“The spirit of the people is more intense than it has ever been on any occasion,” commented a journalist from New Orleans on the eve of the United Confederate Veterans annual reunion in 1903.¹ “In every feature and in every line of wonderful New Orleans, there were signs of joyous welcome. Laughter rose high above the tumult of trafficked streets. Flags waved from every window... in the thoroughfares men marched and instruments made music,” described another observer, who added that “[not] except during the most crowded days of Carnival had the streets been as full nor the street cars crowded throughout the day.”² The people of New Orleans anticipated the arrival of the Confederate veterans and the commencement of the annual reunion with great excitement, but the city’s black and white laborers threatened to destroy the celebration as a means to obtain equal opportunities for African Americans.

“A curious combination of race, labor and sentimental prejudices has arisen in connection with the Confederate reunion to be held here next month,” explained a reporter from New Orleans to Baltimore’s *The Sun* in April of 1903.³ The U.C.V. required bands to lead their parade, which many considered the climax of the event. The Musicians Union consisted of separate but cooperating chapters of black and white musicians, but they could not meet the

¹ “Big Success Will Be Reunion All Signs Point that Way: True Spirit Takes Hold of a City and a Magnificent Welcome is Promised Those Who Wore the Grey,” *Sunday States* (New Orleans, LA), May 17, 1903, 11.

² “The South’s Defenders are Gathered Here: Reunion of the United Confederate Veterans to be Opened at Noon,” *Times Democrat* (New Orleans, LA), May, 19, 1903.

³ “Unions May Fight Reunion,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Apr. 13, 1903, 1.

veterans' demands for twenty white bands and offered to supply black bands to fulfill the request. According to a reporter, a "negro band would be like a red flag before an army of old vets who fought for four long years over the black man," and many veterans do not "care for any colored bands to lead them in the big parade."⁴ Some veterans, however, expressed their desire to have black musicians lead the parade. Reflecting on the Old South, one veteran explained that the "old vets are willing for the sons of their old plantation darkies to make music for them anywhere."⁵ In the struggle over the reunion music at the 1903 United Confederate Veterans reunion in New Orleans, Confederate veterans and black musicians fought about more than musical tastes.

During the 1903 U.C.V. reunion, black and white southerners fought over historical memory of the antebellum period and the Civil War, which had implications for turn-of-the-century politics, specifically the labor movements, and revealed attitudes toward black participation in spectacular culture. As Lost Cause mythology dominated southern interpretation of antebellum and Civil War history, the Confederate veterans refused to employ black musicians for their parade because they rejected their professional status and feared biracialism in the labor movement. Confederate veterans, nonetheless, manipulated the images of black musicians playing for white masters to reinforce racist stereotypes and craft an idealistic image of the Old South. Although the veterans used the reunion to celebrate the Lost Cause, black musicians argued that they had the right to play at the event. For the Musicians' Union, the reunion represented an important opportunity to take a stand on behalf of the benefits of union labor. Black musicians achieved recognition of their professional status and union rights from

⁴ "Musicians' Union: Two Interesting Questions Arise Over Reunion Music," *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), March 29, 1903, 9.

⁵ "No Color Line in Music: A Southern Tribute to the Melodies of the Darkies," *St. Paul Globe*, June 6, 1903, 4.

their peers, and by doing so, manipulated southern memory and advocated their own hopes for the future for the South.

After the Civil War, Confederate veterans organized first on the state level but eventually created national organizations. In 1883, veterans from Richmond formed the Lee Camp of Confederate Veterans, which led to the creation of similar organizations across the state. Veterans in Tennessee and Georgia followed this pattern in their establishment of veterans' organizations on the state level. In Louisiana, veterans wanted to create a regional organization, and they combined with the veterans from Tennessee and Mississippi and called themselves the United Confederate Veterans. The Virginians joined the organization in 1890. By 1890, Confederate veterans had an organized, national institution of their own.⁶

By 1903, the U.C.V. had spread throughout the South and involved most of the living Confederate veterans. According to a reporter, the U.C.V. made an effort to "organize camps in every town and district of the south." Despite high death rates, the "United Confederate Veterans have steadily grown in strength." At the time of the New Orleans reunion in 1903, 1,532 camps belonged to the U.C.V. with more joining the nationwide organization every day. Of the 100,000 estimated surviving veterans in 1903, 65,000 of them participated in the organization.⁷

The Confederate veterans gave the U.C.V. a specific mission to care for and honor aging and deceased veterans and to advocate a regionally satisfying interpretation of the Civil War. Before the founding of the U.C.V., the Lee Camp and Ladies Memorial Associations had memorialized the victims of the war and cared for disabled veterans.⁸ The U.C.V. assimilated these goals into its own mission to create employment agencies for veterans, build soldiers' homes, disseminate pensions, tend tombs and graves, and fund monuments and memorials. The

⁶ Janney, *Burying the Dead But Not the Past*, 146, 244 (fn. 38).

⁷ "For Grizzled Veterans of Dixie Crescent City Gates are Ajar," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 5, 1903, B2.

⁸ Janney, *Burying the Dead*, 146.

U.C.V. advocated a “correct history of the civil war that will do the southern cause justice.” They sought to accomplish this goal by “making sure that the textbooks used in the southern schools do not teach the youth of this section erroneous ideas as to the war and the cause leading up to it.”⁹ With the Confederacy defeated in a military and political sense, white southerners created a regional cultural and intellectual identity rooted in their particular vision of the Old South, which they hoped would survive long beyond the demise of their beloved Confederate nation. The U.C.V. played a fundamental role in this project. Through control of the past, it intended to influence the future of the South, and the annual reunion represented a key to achieving these goals.¹⁰

The U.C.V. and other veterans’ organizations celebrated white southern identity and the Lost Cause at numerous spectacles, such as reunions, monument dedications, and Memorial Day events. At these gatherings, former Confederates gathered with comrades, friends, and family for social purposes, which they infused with sectionalism. They decorated buildings and ballrooms with Confederate flags and banners. Veterans, women, and children paraded through the streets. Former officers and local leaders spoke of heroism and virulently defended the cause of the Confederacy. In these speeches, they emphasized individual liberty, state sovereignty, local self-government, and white supremacy. Despite military defeat, many speakers remained unrepentant over secession and promised to make the same decision if confronted with the choice. In general, they argued that northern military might had overwhelmed Confederate soldiers on the battlefield, but military defeat did not make their cause illegal or unjust. Unable to realize their dream of an independent South, unrepentant southerners looked to conquer the present and future by taking control of the past. They separated their cause from the slavery issue, yet they

⁹ “For Grizzled Veterans of Dixie Crescent City Gates are Ajar,” *Atlanta Constitution*, May 5, 1903, B2.

¹⁰ Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 136, 148.

portrayed slavery as a mutually beneficial institution by disseminating stories of faithful slaves. Based on this imagined antebellum past, they condemned Reconstruction and Republican governments in the South. They abhorred enfranchised and office-holding black southerners.¹¹

In early 1903, the U.C.V. decided to hold its annual reunion in New Orleans from May 19 through May 22. General John B. Gordon served as the General Commanding, later known as the Commander in Chief, of the U.C.V. from 1890 until 1904, and he had ultimate control over the reunion and most of the U.C.V.'s affairs. The Adjutant General, William E. Mickle, had primary responsibility of the reunion arrangements, such as the time and place. On the local level, E. B. Kruttschnitt served as the President of the Reunion Committee. Kruttschnitt, a prominent man in New Orleans, worked as a lawyer and businessman. In 1898, he had served as chairman of the state's disfranchisement convention. He headed the state's Democratic Party and campaigned heavily among white labor unions in New Orleans on the party's behalf. As chair of the reunion committee, he had authority over the various subcommittees, such as the Committee on Music. James Walton Gaines served as the Chairman of the Music Committee. In addition to the six members of the committee, J. C. Febiger, Jr. served as an advisory manager.¹² Within this hierarchy, the U.C.V. planned and executed its annual reunion to accomplish its business, social, and educational goals.¹³ To make the reunion a success, they had to organize a massive parade of veterans, friends, and family.

For the veterans and the New Orleans community at large, the veterans' parade represented the most anticipated event of the U.C.V. reunion. One reporter characterized the

¹¹ Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 154-159; Janney, "Written In Stone": 117-141.

¹² The Committee on Music consisted of John W. Carnahan, Tom Elliott, Sidney F. Lewis, L. C. Quintero, and Ed. D. Walshe.

¹³ "Reunion to Be Held in May," *Savannah Tribune*, Jan. 31, 1903; "Confederate Reunion Arrangements," *Confederate Veteran* 11 (January 1903): 3; Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers: Race, Labor, and Unionism, 1892-1923* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 20-21.

parade as the “climax of the reunion” and described it as “always inspiring.” He acknowledged that spectators should not expect to see the old veterans march with military precision, but he assured them, “the confederate yell that goes up as the procession marches by recalls one of the striking features of the civil war.”¹⁴ Journalists estimated between 20,000 and 25,000 veterans would march in the parade. In Louisiana and Mississippi, public school officials cancelled Friday classes to permit students to “witness what they will probably never have a chance to see again.”¹⁵ Journalists estimated that 150,000 people would come to New Orleans for the festivities, including “tens of thousands of school children” from Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.¹⁶ The business owners along the parade route, which stretched for four miles, had the responsibility to decorate their property for the parade with bunting, flags, portraits of Confederate generals, and Civil War relics. The parade represented the most anticipated and the most remembered event from the reunion. To the supporters of the Confederacy, the parade provided a memorable occasion and inspired sentimental and nostalgic feelings for the Old South. In opposition, the Musicians’ Union, which consisted of black and white members, intended to stop the parade from happening in an attempt to gain recognition of their labor rights.

In the 1880s, New Orleans workers cultivated a radical, militant, and biracial labor movement. As a cosmopolitan city, New Orleans hosted people from around the world. These visitors brought their own ideas on labor politics, which radicalized the workers in the city. After emancipation, black residents faced segregation in schools and public services, but they lived alongside white neighbors and fraternized with them. In the 1880s, black and white workers

¹⁴ “For Grizzled Veterans of Dixie,” *Atlanta Constitution*, May 17, 1903, B2

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*; Kruttschnitt, E. B., Letter to Gen. Bennett H. Young, May 14, 1903 in United Confederate Veterans Association Records, Baton Rouge. LSU Special Collections, Mss. 1357. Box 22. Folder G.; Kruttschnitt, E. B., Letter to General John B. Gordon, May 14, 1903 in United Confederate Veterans Association Records, Baton Rouge. LSU Special Collections, Mss. 1357. Box 22. Folder G,

organized the Central Trades and Labor Assembly. In addition to the biracial Knights of Labor, which had a presence in New Orleans, the CTLA facilitated cooperation across racial lines. In 1881, the organization enlisted 5,000 members and grew to 20,000 members by the mid-1880s. In 1888, the CTLA folded, but biracialism did not fail. In New Orleans, it persisted into the twentieth century.¹⁷

In the early twentieth century, race relations deteriorated in New Orleans and across the South, but the working classes in New Orleans cooperated across racial lines in their quest for labor rights. In 1899, American Federation of Labor organizer James Leonard led the effort to create the Central Trades and Labor Council to represent white unions. In 1900, black workers formed the Black Central Trades and Labor Council, which eventually became known as the Central Labor Union. During the 1900s and 1910s, these organizations consisted of 30,000 to 40,000 members. Although separate, these organizations cooperated with one another. New Orleans dockworkers, for example, successfully executed a biracial strike of the port of New Orleans for nearly a month in 1907. Of the nearly 10,000 dock workers in New Orleans, African Americans accounted for nearly half of these well-paid workers. The white and black dockworkers formed their own unions, but they cooperated on major issues, such as the passage of a half-and-half plan that required the equal hiring of black and white workers. In addition to the dockworkers, carriage drivers, carpenters, and other laborers formed biracial unions in the city. Despite attempts to break up the biracial cooperation of the unions, the dockworkers, specifically, remained united until World War I.¹⁸ In New Orleans, white and black workers had

¹⁷ Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers*, 1—2, 6-8, 12-18.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1—2, 6-8, 12-18, 20-42; In his book, Rosenberg explains that the dockworkers had taken the half-and-half system and implemented it in all of their cooperation. They appointed black and white guards and sentries at their union hall. During their meetings, they permitted black and white speakers to alternate turns. In 1907, mayor Martin Behrman asked the biracial union to withdraw its two black delegates on the negotiating committee, which represented the union in negotiations with employers. When they voted on the proposal, every white delegate voted against it.

a strong tradition of cooperation with one another on labor issues at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In a similar fashion, white and black musicians in New Orleans formed their separate unions but often cooperated with one another to protect their labor rights and to maintain the city's proud reputation for musical tastes and talents. Many visitors to New Orleans recognized its residents' preferences for the fine arts, specifically music, and gave the city the nickname "Paris of America." The black musicians, according to observers, played an integral part of this music culture and contributed, even more than white musicians, to its fame. In 1902, white and black musicians each formed their own local chapters of the American Federation of Musicians. The white musicians formed Local 174 and the black musicians followed a few months later with the creation of Local 242.¹⁹ In the constitution of Local 174, the founders explicitly limited membership to "all white male or female musicians recommended by the Examining Committee."²⁰ Despite this fact, the two unions cooperated with one another because, according to a journalist, the white musicians "thought it well to have [the black musicians] in at Mardi Gras time."²¹ The cooperation between white and black musicians in New Orleans deviated from the norm. In New York, for example, black musicians could not join the local chapter of the A.F.M., which left black musicians without much opportunity to play for white audiences in the city.²² In New Orleans, white and black musicians had taken steps to professionalize their industry, and white musicians recognized the proficiency of and demand for their black colleagues and hoped to benefit from black success through a labor alliance.

¹⁹ Lawrence Gushee, "Black Professional Musicians in New Orleans c1880," in *The Inter-American Music Review* 11 (Spring Summer 1991): 54, 57n.

²⁰ Musicians' Mutual Protective Union, Local no. 74, A.F. of M., New Orleans, *Constitution, By-Laws and Price List* (New Orleans: W. Miller, Printer, 1903), 4, Box 28, Item 2, American Federation of Musicians Local 174-496, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

²¹ "Musicians' Union: Two Interesting Questions Arise Over Reunion Music," *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Mar. 29, 1903, 9.

²² Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race*, 212.

When it came time to negotiate with the U.C.V., the history of biracial cooperation in New Orleans, specifically within the Musicians' Union, presented the white musicians with a quandary. The reunion committee clearly indicated a preference for white musicians and a desire to exclude black performers, so the leadership of Local 174 had to sacrifice either cooperation with the black Local 242 and their stance against scab musicians or the opportunity to play at the reunion. In the founding constitution of Local 174, the union explicitly stated, with few exceptions, "[no] band or bands, belonging to the Union are allowed to play publicly in parades, concerts or other occasions within a radius of ten miles from the point of intersection of Royal and Canal Streets of this city, where non-union bands are engaged." In addition to the rule, the union offered to reimburse its musicians who lost engagements by following the rule. According to the document, any "member finding non-union members employed at an engagement where he is engaged, and declines to play, shall, on personally notifying the Board of Directors of the fact, be entitled to the amount of the engagement" paid for on behalf of the union's funds.²³ In the document, the founders expressly permitted the members of Local 174 to reach out beyond their own organization and cooperate with other union musicians.²⁴ According to a leader of Local 174, they could navigate the problem and participate in the union by temporarily disaffecting the black musicians. This leader argued that the African Americans had their own union for protection. The leaders of Local 242, however, threatened to take the matter to the national headquarters of the A.F.M. if the white bands alienated them.²⁵ Given the conditions prescribed in the constitution, the leaders of Local 174 had an obligation to stand by fellow union musicians regardless of their race.

²³ Local no. 174, *Constitution, By-Laws and Price List*, 15.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ "Musicians' Union: Two Interesting Questions Arise Over Reunion Music," *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Mar. 29, 1903, 9.

In a special meeting on March 30, 1903, the white musicians of Local 174 met and resolved not to participate in the U.C.V. parade if nonunion bands also played at the event, which necessarily though not explicitly meant that they determined to stand with their black colleagues. The chapter's leadership went to the reunion committee's headquarters within the city to deliver their ultimatum in person to Committee on Music Chairman John W. Gaines. They explained to the chairman that they could provide fifteen bands for the parade, which still fell short of the committee's desire for twenty bands and argued that they could meet the requirements better than a combination of independent bands. In response to this news, an official in the U.C.V. lamented, "I do not think their proposition will be acceptable to the Music Committee. I think they might be more liberal in this matter. It is not an ordinary occasion. We feel that they could put aside these union rules for the day, as other unions have done."²⁶ The musicians had taken their stand and waited for a response.

On April 2, 1903, the members of the Committee on Music unanimously rejected the Musicians' Union's proposal and stated its intention to fill their need with nonunion bands. At the beginning of Chairman Gaines's statement rejecting the offer, he expressed his regret that they could not use the union bands. He explained that the Committee on Music rejected the offer because the union could not meet its full demand for music. He stated, the "very best they could do would be in the neighborhood of a dozen, and I understand some of them are negro bands."²⁷ Journalists had speculated that the U.C.V. would balk at the thought of having black musicians at their parade. According to one reporter, the "old veterans are said to have plainly stipulated that

²⁶ "Musicians' Union: Faces the Reunion with the Regular Kick," *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 1, 1903, 8.

²⁷ "Reunion Music Will Not Be Played by the Musicians' Union," *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 2, 1903, 9.

there must be no negro bands heading their line of march.”²⁸ Gaines confirmed these suspicions in his statement. He explained, “I made it very plain that we would not have a colored band in our parade. Therefore, it seemed the number of bands the Union could furnish us would not be over ten, at the most.” After making this statement, he confidently asserted that many bands had already contacted them to play at the event. Gaines informed the Musicians Union that they would accept these offers and secure enough music for the parade on their own. After making the decision, Director General James Dinkins, a member of the Executive Committee for the U.C.V. reunion, sent out a call to all the U.C.V. chapters to bring their own bands.²⁹

When the U.C.V. rejected the offer to accept the black musicians and decided to employ non-union bands from across the South, southern musicians came to their aid to play at the reunion and in the parade. The Committee on Music hired the Memphis Drum and Bugle Corps to lead the parade, which local journalists characterized as “an elite organization” of 45 members.³⁰ In addition to the Memphis buglers, the parade also featured the “famous Atlanta Fire Department Drum Corps.” According to a reporter, “they are really the fire fighters of Atlanta.” He explained that 32 of the 150 members of the firefighting brigade “decided to learn music, and the result of their combined effort is the drum corps, which has been all over the South, and which is everywhere received as one of the features of all occasions in which Atlanta is interested.”³¹ In addition to these famous bands, many camps of the U.C.V. brought their own musicians to the reunion. A U.C.V. camp based in Jackson, Tennessee, for example, brought

²⁸ “Musicians’ Union: Faces the Reunion with the Regular Kick,” *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 1, 1903, 8.

²⁹ “Reunion Music Will Not Be Played by the Musicians’ Union,” *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 3, 1903, 9.

³⁰ “Hotels Will All Be Filled After To-day by Veterans,” *Sunday States* (New Orleans, LA), May 17, 1903, 2.

³¹ “Atlanta Firemen: Drum Corps Will be a Feature at Parade,” *Times-Democrat* (New Orleans, LA), May 19, 1903, 3.

their own “splendid bugle and drum corps.”³² Many divisions asked and received permission to bring their own musicians to the event. Executive Committee Chairman James Dinkins assured everyone that they would have enough music for the reunion.³³ Due to the number of bands brought by state delegations, the U.C.V. decided to put a band in front of every state in the parade, which had not been done in previous years. More than a month before the reunion, the Committee on Music had already employed sixteen of the necessary twenty bands with “more in sight.” The U.C.V. made arrangements to feed these musicians and pay for their other accommodations.³⁴ The U.C.V. had more than enough support across the South for the reunion, and many groups brought plenty of music to meet the need for the parade. The U.C.V. denied the black musicians an opportunity to play and framed their objections as a response to the unions’ unreasonable demands, but other factors may have contributed to their decision.

After learning of the U.C.V.’s decision to use nonunion bands, the Musicians’ Union took a bold stand. On April 11, 1903, the leadership of the Local 174 took their case before the white-led Central Trades and Labor Council and requested the addition of the U.C.V. reunion to the unfair to labor list because “of its attitude in refusing to employ only union bands for the big parade.” In the case against the U.C.V., Local 174 President George De Droit specifically highlighted the U.C.V.’s unwillingness to “march behind negro bands.” He characterized the U.C.V.’s actions as unfair and unprecedented. To these ends, he highlighted previous instances of black participation at Confederate reunions, specifically highlighting a reunion in Memphis. At this reunion, a black man reportedly donated a generous sum to the reunion fund and black bands had “taken a prominent part in the music.” After completing his argument with regard to the U.C.V.’s inconsistencies on racial issues, he pointed out that union rules prohibited them

³² “Fine Band of Heroes,” *Daily States* (New Orleans, LA), May 19, 1903, 4.

³³ “The Reunion Hall is Now Well Under Way,” *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 2, 1903.

³⁴ “Come Forward with Your Subscription For the Veterans,” *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 18, 1903, 4.

from participating in “a parade with nonunion bands.” After concluding his remarks, he requested a complete boycott by all the city’s unions against the U.C.V, which had significant implications for the U.C.V.’s ability to carry out its plans.

The leadership of the Central Trades and Labor Council had a difficult decision because they had to choose between supporting their nostalgia for the Old South and reaffirming their modern labor positions. Robert E. Lee served as the organization’s president. Born amid war in 1863, Lee had come of age in the post-Civil War South and worked as a machinist. He had attended the 1898 disfranchisement convention as a delegate and had little contact with black workers. Commenting on the plan to boycott the reunion, he explained, “[no] union labor could serve the Reunion if it should be declared unfair to union principles.”³⁵ If the Trades Council passed the measure to put the reunion on the unfair list, it would devastate the veterans’ ability to stage the reunion because carpenters, painters, and other laborers would walk off the job. The Trades Council did not make a decision on the boycott at this meeting because “of the sentiment surrounding the Confederate Veterans.”³⁶ The recognition of overwhelming feeling for the U.C.V. within the Trades Council testifies to the limits of the labor movement in the early twentieth century. At this point, the Musicians’ Union’s struggle against the U.C.V. gained national attention, and the black musicians and Musicians’ Union received encouragement and disdain from people across the country.

When the news broke, some Confederate veterans and newspaper editors voiced support for the black musicians because the black musicians appealed to their nostalgic memory of the antebellum past. According to one veteran, the black musicians “will furnish more really inspiring music than all the other bands—composed of foreigners as they are—ever dreamed of,

³⁵ “Musicians’ Union Wants Reunion on Unfair List,” *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 11, 1903, 2.

³⁶ “Unions May Fight Reunion: Boycott Threatened Unless Confederates Follow Negro Bands,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Apr. 13, 1903, 1; Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworker*, 20-21.

and more reaching after the Southern heart.” He characterized black music as the only true form of American music.³⁷ He remembered how white southerners “danced all night till broad daylight and gone home with the girls in the morning to the inspiring strains of ‘Old Frank Johnson’ and ‘Pompey Long.’” Looking forward, he explained, “we old veterans can afford to march to the strains of ‘Dixie,’ or the ‘Mocking Bird,’ of the ‘Suwanee River,’ when rendered by our Southern darkies.”³⁸ These memories, according to the veteran, had their roots in the experiences of slavery, but he assured the readers that the enslaved black musicians they had known before the war had “successors who are quite as responsive to demands upon them.”³⁹ This Confederate veteran was not alone in his support of the black musicians.

Newspaper editors supported the presence of the black musicians because their participation would revive a nostalgic vision of the Old South. From the 1890s to the 1930s, former Confederates disseminated hundreds of stories of faithful slaves, in which they emphasized the devotion and loyalty of enslaved people. In fact, they portrayed enslaved people defending their masters during the war and detested the Emancipation Proclamation. Often written by former masters, these stories characterized slavery as the ideal situation for both black and white people. In these stories, music often played a prominent role. Many white southerners rejected contemporary blues and work songs and longed to hear old plantation songs played by black musicians.⁴⁰ The editors of the *Washington Post*, for example, explained that before the Civil War, white southerners “danced to the fiddle, flute, guitar, and bass viol of the colored artist. No picnic was complete without a colored orchestra; no ball so much as dreamed of with the colored Orpheus left out.” Commenting on the present, this editor explained that black

³⁷ “No Color Line in Music: A Southern Tribute to the Melodies of the Darkies,” *St. Paul Globe*, Jun. 6, 1903, 4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 286-289.

musicians represented the “most favored and sought-for” in the city. He concluded, “it seems to us that this squabble is beyond the reach of serious consideration.”⁴¹ Upon learning about the disagreement between the Musicians’ Union and the black musicians, the editors of *The Richmond News-Leader* remarked, “[this] is nonsense. Southern white people have marched behind Negro musicians and have danced to the music of Negro fiddlers all their lives.”⁴² The veterans continued this theme. In these arguments, the writer expressed an idealized vision of the Old South in which slaves willingly made music for their masters and white southerners enjoyed their music at social events.

The white supporters of the black musicians wished to see the black bands at the reunion because of their musical abilities, deemed as a natural talent. In his letter, the veteran emphasized the talents of black musicians as one of the reasons they should play. He wrote, “if any one on earth ever threw his soul into his music it is our Southern negro when he is glorying hallelujah, touching the light guitar or tooting a familiar Southern melody on a horn.”⁴³ Similarly, the editors of *The Richmond News-Leader* explained, “[certainly] there is nothing involving social equality in the employment of one Negro or a band of Negroes to make music. This is folly number one.”⁴⁴ By portraying musical ability as a natural talent, veterans could deny that African Americans had any political value at the reunion and reinforce white stereotypes of the feckless black performer and deny the political significance of their participation.

To ameliorate any anxiety over the presence of black musicians, Confederate veterans and newspaper editors argued that the social elements of the reunion did not entail any political significance. In the earliest days of the U.C.V., Confederate veterans argued that their reunions

⁴¹ “Negro Music and Ex-Confederates,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 13, 1903, 6.

⁴² “To Be or Not To Be?” *The Freeman* (Indianapolis, IN), Apr. 25, 1903, 4.

⁴³ “No Color Line in Music: A Southern Tribute to the Melodies of the Darkies,” *St. Paul Globe*, Jun. 6, 1903, 4.

⁴⁴ “To Be or Not To Be?” *The Freeman* (Indianapolis, IN), Apr. 25, 1903, 4.

had no political significance. If they admitted that these reunions had a political motive, they would appear disloyal.⁴⁵ Using similar reasoning, many people, including some veterans, expressed their support for the black musicians by arguing that the musicians had no political significance at the reunion, and therefore, should receive permission to play. “Where the objection to the colored musicians can come in we fail to see,” opened the Confederate veteran in his letter to *Raleigh Post*. He explained that the black musicians “will only be employed for their music and nothing more.”⁴⁶ According to newspaper editors, African Americans did not belong at a political event, but they should play at a social event. In the *Washington Post* editorial, the editors asked, “when did Southern people cease employing the colored band, string or tooting instrument, or both, for their strictly social function?”⁴⁷ From the perspective of some white southerners, black participation at the reunion possessed no political significance, but their presence did have cultural value because their presence would reaffirm a picture of harmonious race relations in the Old South and revive nostalgia for southern traditions. For white southerners, the presence of African Americans at a social event, such as they portrayed the U.C.V. reunion, entailed no threat to white supremacy but instead reinforced it. It would also testify to southerners’ abilities to handle racial matters on their own. As Musicians Union President De Droit pointed out, U.C.V. reunions had welcomed black contributions and participation at past reunions. In fact, they had been fundamental to strengthening the image of the faithful slave in post-bellum America. These particular black and white musicians in New Orleans, however, had struck the wrong chord with the U.C.V. Committee on Music because of anti-labor sentiments and the ambitions of the reunions’ organizers.

⁴⁵ Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 155-156.

⁴⁶ “No Color Line in Music: A Southern Tribute to the Melodies of the Darkies,” *St. Paul Globe*, Jun. 6, 1903, 4.

⁴⁷ “Negro Music and Ex-Confederates,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 13, 1903, 6.

Old South apologists and New South advocates condemned the labor movement in an attempt to compete with established manufacturing centers in the North. After the switch to a free labor system, southern entrepreneurs and their elected officials wanted the region to compete with more-established northern manufacturers. To accomplish this goal, middle-class southerners hoped to suppress wages and unions in the South in contrast to the higher-paying North and take advantage of rampant southern poverty to help grow industry in the region.⁴⁸ In 1873, Americans suffered through an economic depression, which generated class conflict. As poverty and labor violence ravaged the country, labor unions became a public enemy, especially in the South. By the late nineteenth century, the Old South had become celebrated as an alternative to the presence chaos of industrialization and urbanization. For many Americans, the Old South seemed idyllic because of its lack of industry. In literature, writers depicted the Old South as a place of orderly race relations unencumbered by machines, urbanization, and labor unrest. Attracted by these themes, readers flocked to pick up books about the romantic Old South.⁴⁹ To many white southerners, biracial unionism was anathema to the imagined Old South that they hoped to revive in the New South.

In the post-Reconstruction South, many New South advocates and white workers hoped that cheap black labor would attract industry and modernize the region, so they specifically attacked black and biracial labor organization. In a vision for the future, New South industrialists hoped to revive the antebellum social order, in which white masters exploited labor from enslaved people. Similarly, these industrialists possessed a paternalistic view of black laborers based on nostalgia for antebellum slavery. They emphasized a need for “cheap, docile, black

⁴⁸ James C. Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society, 1877-1984* (Lexington, Kent., 1984), 1-4, 27-50.

⁴⁹ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 41, 47, 129, 211, 286.

labor.”⁵⁰ In fact, they referred to black labor as one of the region’s greatest assets because they could cheaply exploit it. In addition to these industrialists, white working-class southerners viewed black labor as cheap and docile, which made them dangerous to white workers. They argued that black workers threatened their jobs because they required lower wages, so they launched protests and strikes to prevent the hiring of black workers and the admission of black laborers into unions.⁵¹ At both ends of the socioeconomic spectrum, white southerners wanted to keep black labor as cheap and unorganized as possible. Within the black community, many middle-class blacks shared the same views. Booker T. Washington helped advocate on behalf of the New South, and he hoped that black Americans would have a place in it as disciplined, cheap workers. In his famous 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition speech, he reminded his white audience that black laborers had worked without striking.⁵² In 1898, he repeated a similar argument and stated that black workers did not want labor unrest because they preferred the open-shop policies prevalent in the South.⁵³ In 1903, he reminded readers of *Southern States Farm Magazine* that African Americans had given “peaceful, faithful service.”⁵⁴ At the beginning of the twentieth century, professionalization did not always earn African Americans respect from white Americans, who condemned black labor organization because it obstructed the New South vision.

⁵⁰ George Gordon Crawford, Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad executive, cited in George R. Leighton, *Five Cities: the Story of Their Youth and Old Age* (New York: Ayer, 1998) qtd. in Brian Kelly, “Sentinels for New South Industry: Booker T. Washington, Industrial Accommodation and Black Workers in the Jim Crow South,” *Labor History* 44 (2003): 339-341.

⁵¹ Kelly, “Sentinels for New South Industry”: 339-343; Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 431-432.

⁵² Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1986), 218-225; Kelly, “Sentinels for New South Industry”: 343.

⁵³ Booker T. Washington, “The Education and Industrial Emancipation of the Negro: An Address before the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences,” Feb. 22, 1903, qtd. in Kelly, “Sentinels for New South Industry”: 343.

⁵⁴ Booker T. Washington, *Southern States Farm Magazine*, Jan. 1898 qtd. in Kelly, “Sentinels for New South Industry”: 34.

White residents in New Orleans had many of the same views toward African Americans in the labor movement and politics, which they expressed in local newspapers. One writer to *Sunday States* declared, the “time is to come when every effort should be made to discourage in every way an alliance between white and black labor, because it not only menaces the peace of the South, but the welfare of every white workingman in the South.” He warned against admitting African Americans into the trade unions of the city because they might perceive themselves as “the social equal of the white men” working with them. African Americans, according to the writer, put white workers in economic and physical danger. He explained, “by his willingness to work for less money either drive the white artisans to the wall or cause a race war.” After chronicling a list of reasons why African Americans can survive without much money, he argued:

a great mistake was made when negroes were admitted to labor organizations in this city and unless a halt is called social equality between the working classes of the whites and blacks is inevitable. It is impossible for the two to work side by side and sit in meetings and conventions without the white man sinking to the social level of the negro.⁵⁵

He explained that African Americans belonged in the agricultural sector, and he wanted them out of the city because they believed African Americans turned to laziness, crime, and vices such as gambling.⁵⁶ In a *New Orleans Daily States* editorial, the editors argued that the mixing of the races would lead to the downfall of both of them. They characterized enfranchisement of African Americans as a punishment to the South because “it was desired that the Southern whites should be subjected to the most abject form of humiliation that the most cruel mind could

⁵⁵ “The Alliance of White and Negro Labor,” *Sunday States* (New Orleans, LA), May 17, 1903, 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

devise.”⁵⁷ New Orleans had a long history of racial cooperation in the labor movement, which recognized black professionalism and their right to labor protection. Yet, their inclusion in professional organizations sparked intense reactions.

For many white residents in New Orleans, the U.C.V. reunion served as a vital opportunity to honor the veterans and the Lost Cause, so it must encounter no obstacles, especially from labor organizations at odds with the New South. The reunion must succeed because, according to *Daily Picayune* editors, it represented the “only reward which the grand old heroes of the most tremendous warfare of almost any age get and can ever hope for in return for their magnificent devotion to the cause they had espoused and for their unsurpassed gallantry in battle in its behalf.” In support of the reunion, the editors preached, “let us give them the best we have, the best the city affords.” They described generous contributions as the “duty of the people of this good city.”⁵⁸ For supporters of the former Confederacy, residents had the civic responsibility to guarantee the success of the reunion.

For the business and tourist industries in New Orleans, the U.C.V. reunion provided an occasion to enhance the city’s reputation among travelers, and they feared that special interests, such as labor organizations, could threaten its success. Some supporters of the Confederate reunion did not address the situation with the Musicians’ Union directly, but they emphasized the need for a successful reunion. With thousands of people expected to attend the reunion, city leaders asserted, much “of the city’s future depends on the reports they will take back to their people.”⁵⁹ The editors of the *Daily Picayune* launched a massive campaign to raise funds for the reunion. In one appeal for financial support, a supporter remarked, “the coming Reunion should be made one which visitors will never forget.” They emphasized that everyone would benefit

⁵⁷ “The Black Specter,” *Daily States* (New Orleans, LA), May 19, 1903, 4.

⁵⁸ “The Confederate Veterans and Their Reunion,” *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 12, 1903, 5.

⁵⁹ “Confederate Reunion Must be Made a Success,” *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 14, 1903, 4.

from contributing to the city's reputation. With regard to business interests, the editors argued that it "is even more important that everybody should go away praising the great port and its advantages."⁶⁰ The responsibility of upholding the city's fame for entertainment and hospitality depended on the support from all classes of the city's citizens, but especially those who "profit by the coming of the visitors."⁶¹ For the cause of sectionalism and profit, the reunion must encounter no obstacles.

In New Orleans, many white residents and Confederate veterans opposed the Musicians' Union because of anti-labor platforms in their vision for the future of the New South. Upon learning that the Musicians' Union threatened to destroy the U.C.V. reunion by putting them on the unfair to labor list, some people attacked the union for putting their labor agenda ahead of the success of the reunion. The leaders of the city of New Orleans had put much effort into making the reunion a success. In a letter to the editor of the *Daily Picayune*, one Confederate supporter understood the city's efforts to make this reunion a success and lamented that the union sought to destroy it. He explained, it "is to be regretted that there is an organization of men who are so much opposed to public enterprise that they will not only not contribute themselves, but would tear down and prevent others from making the Reunion a success." He specifically condemned their willingness to "stop the work on the auditorium and kill the enterprise" and for wanting "exclusive privileges over every one else." He proceeded to use the case of the Musicians' Union to make a larger point about civic awareness by arguing that if everyone in the city adopted the attitude of the union, the city "would be enclosed in little, narrow bounds, so measly and dwarfed that the outer world would never know we existed." He damned the Musicians' Union, stating that "the act deserves the contempt of every right-minded man and woman of this

⁶⁰ "The Honor of the City, and Glory of the Cause," *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 12, 1903, 12.

⁶¹ "New Orleans as a Convention City," *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 12, 1903, 5.

city. It should be cried down until those who thought of such an act should feel ashamed of themselves and hunt a dark spot to hide.”⁶² From the perspective of the musicians’ opponents, the reunion required a high level of civic virtue and sacrifice. The reunion, according to its supporters, benefited everyone in the city.

In addition to the contempt for the union’s attempt to destroy the reunion, labor’s opponents argued that the policies and actions of the Musicians’ Union damaged the city’s culture and reputation. In the same letter to the *Daily Picayune*, the writer explained, “a majority of the brass bands have left the Musicians’ Union because of the rule or ruin spirit displayed in it.” He explained that the union tried to destroy “every public benefit or enterprise” that had given them an opportunity to play. At previous festivals that the city held at its own expense for its citizens, the Musicians’ Union refused to play unless the managers only employed union bands. At two festivals, the Musicians’ Union asked the Trades Council to put the city’s festivals on the unfair to labor list. He also pointed out an episode in which the city of New Orleans hosted a relief campaign for the Louisiana Field Artillery, and the Musicians’ Union boycotted the event because their rules prevented them for playing for free. He concluded his attack on the union by noting:

[this] is just a glimpse of the history of the organization that has now come so particularly to the front and demands that the Confederate Reunion be placed on the unfair list; that it be boycotted and blacklisted; that all union labor be pulled away from it and not allowed to assist in its enterprise, even though paid their wages demanded.⁶³

Certainly, this writer condemned the idea that the reunion might suffer because of labor activism. He asked, “[is] it not a blot on our community that good, fair-minded and patriotic laboringmen

⁶² “Musicians’ Attack on the Confederate Reunion,” *Daily Picayune (New Orleans, LA)*, Apr. 12, 1903, 14.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

and their organizations should suffer for the actions of one union?”⁶⁴ To support the Confederate veterans, the devotee emphasized the potential benefits for the city and its reputation in his argument that the Musicians’ Union should set aside its rules and stop threatening to destroy the reunion. Amid the general disapproval of the labor movement, the black musicians would have been especially unwelcome at the parade given the prevalent condemnation of biracialism in the labor.

In contrast to these anti-labor sentiments, New Orleans’ labor leaders supported black participation at the reunion by focusing on the benefits of unions to the city’s reputation. In an initial defense of the union’s position, Recording Secretary of Local 174 Frank Sporer explained his organization’s position to *Daily Picayune*. He characterized the union as beneficial to the art of music and the culture of the city. He asked, “[would] it not be better to assist in elevating the art, than to crush it?—which surely tends to weaken the reputation which New Orleans claims as a musical center.” He described the Musicians’ Union as a movement to “sustain the quality and grade of music which is expected to be found in a city enjoying such a reputation as New Orleans for its love of good music.”⁶⁵ Labor leaders viewed their organizations as beneficial to the community, and they used that premise to defend their rights to organize.

Outside of New Orleans, the editors of *The Washington Post* weighed in on the debate between the Confederate veterans and the Musicians’ Union on the side of labor by stressing the need for black laborers to have union protection. They explained, in “this controversy we think the Trades Council has the best of it. The negro musicians belong to the union, they pay their dues, and they are entitled to protection.” They explained that the black musicians have an equal

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ “The Musicians’ Union Presents an Explanation of Its Attitude of Opposition,” *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 9, 1903. 3.

right to the revenue and recognition of their talents.⁶⁶ By taking this stance, the editors of *The Washington Post* advocated their vision for a future of biracial labor cooperation. From the perspective of labor leaders and supporters, the black and white musicians had the right to organize and negotiate the terms of their contracts, and they did have to accept work on any conditions at any time. They also viewed the U.C.V. reunion as a job, whereas the Reunion Committee members perceived the reunion as a social, public event. Although the black musicians would perform a service that their enslaved ancestors had done, the post-bellum generation of black musicians and their supporters expected respect and recognition of their professional status.

African Americans across the country heard about the struggle between the musicians and the U.C.V. through newspapers and expressed their support for the black musicians. The editors of Indianapolis's *The Freeman* hailed, the "quarrel has assumed wide proportions, and so far the colored men seem to have the best of the situation if newspaper talk counts for anything." The editors proceeded to publish excerpts from two editorials in outside newspapers, *The Washington Post* and *The Richmond News-Leader*, and offered their own perspective on the dispute and its coverage in these widely distributed papers. They wrote, the "colored brother, however, is getting consideration and from excellent sources." They admitted that the black musicians might not achieve their goals in this instance, "but he will lose nothing by the controversy." According to the editors, "the admirable stand taken by those sheets that are not particularly in love with colored folk is but another indication of an effort to get on—to have the races to get on with the least friction possible."⁶⁷ When the editors of *The Colored American* came across the story, they reported that the "ex-Confederates threw up their hands in holy

⁶⁶ "Negro Music and Ex-Confederates," *Washington Post*, Apr. 13, 1903, 6.

⁶⁷ "To Be or Not To Be?" *The Freeman* (Indianapolis, IN), Apr. 25, 1903, 4.

horror and in indignant protest” and then praised the Trades Council for their support of the black musicians. “While we are lamenting our wrongs in the South,” concluded the editors, “it is well to point out an occasional ray of light.”⁶⁸ From the perspective of black newspaper editors, the controversy highlighted an effort by many white southerners to put racial issues behind them and move forward. In the story of the black musicians and the U.C.V., black newspaper editors found an opportunity to advocate their own vision for a future with racial equality and without racial issues.

On April 13, Local 174 President De Droit went to the local union paper to present his argument on behalf of the musicians by focusing on the city’s reputation for musical abilities. “The excellent music furnished by the union bands of new Orleans have been, on a number of occasions, a subject of comment, not only by residents... but by those visiting here from other sections of the Union,” he explained in *Union Advocate*. He compared the present circumstances to a previous Mardi Gras involving non-union bands. He characterized that parade as “badly marred by the hideous noises made by a lot of Hayseeds and ‘scabs’” and hoped that the U.C.V. would accept union music and avoid a repeat of that apparent disaster. “It seems almost incredulous,” he added, “that after that bitter and somewhat expensive experience that the committee on music of the Confederate veterans could not have adjusted the difficulty in a manner satisfactory to all concerned.” He concluded his statement by appealing again to the city’s pride in its music. He stated, “There are many reasons why home talent should be employed on occasions of this kind, and for the reputation of the city and its people, who are lovers of harmony, it is to be hoped that in the future it will be employed.”⁶⁹ In defenses of the

⁶⁸ Editorial, *Colored American* (Washington, D.C.), Apr. 18, 1903, 3.

⁶⁹ George De Droit, “Union Bands Are the Best,” *Union Advocate* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 13, 1903, 1.

Musicians' Union, the leadership of Local 174 constantly appealed to the city's pride in its music.

On April 20, Sporer presented his argument in support of the black musicians and his organization's decision to put the U.C.V. on the unfair to labor list. Sporer opened his statement with an explanation of the importance of labor unions to the musicians. He explained, "if the musicians of this city would fail to maintain this organization that he would advise that they break up their instruments and give up the business, as they would certainly starve." Sporer detailed a list of the benefits of the Musicians Union. He wrote, "I will mention: 1st, better music; 2nd, cheaper music; 3rd, the good will of the labor classes, and not to mention some small donations."⁷⁰ In addition to this list of general principles, he turned his attention to the present conflict with the U.C.V.'s Committee on Music. He condemned them for passing a resolution that the musicians "accept unconditionally all such work as the committee chose in their supremeness to allot" and "that no discrimination be allowed" between union and non-union music. With regards to the Confederate veterans, he explained, "we do not consider that we are against them, but we claim to be against their Music Committee and their Advisory Manager." Then, Sporer took a step back. He explained, "I should not mention the Music Committee, but should say their 'Dictator,' for it is he who signs all contracts for music for the Reunion."⁷¹ Apparently, the Musicians' Union had a long history of trouble with a member of the Committee on Music.

In his defense of the Musicians' Union, Sporer went on the attack and described a sour relationship between his organization and one specific member of the Committee on Music. During a previous Carnival season, J. C. Febiger worked as the manager of the Rex Association, which has annually staged one of the most celebrated and elaborate parades of the season. He

⁷⁰ "Mr. Sporer's Statement," *Union Advocate* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 20, 1903, 1.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

refused to employ the bands of the Musicians' Union unless they accepted "his proposition to do the work according to his views." When the union refused to yield, Febiger hired non-union music for their famous parade. "The bad music, and the comments of the public on the same, at the different Carnival events, are history," sneered Sporer. To arrange music of the U.C.V. parade, the Committee on Music looked for expert advice because their committee consisted of volunteer veterans. According to Sporer, these volunteers "knew nothing of the work to which they are assigned." To help, the committee hired Febiger, who Sporer characterized as "a noted Carpetbagger." From this position, Febiger resolved that each committee should maintain exclusive power over its own affairs, which meant that he had unilateral control over the hiring of musicians. With regard to the black musicians, Sporer explained that the advisory manager locked them out of the reunion as "punishment inflicted on the black man for refusing to aid... his schemes against our union."⁷² In a hostile climate for biracial unionism, it seems that the personal vendetta of an anti-labor manager may have kept the black musicians out of the reunion parade.

At the end of April 1903, the Musicians' Union withdrew its motion to add the U.C.V. to the unfair to labor list, but they still did not participate. According to a reporter, the threat of boycott raised "a storm of indignation."⁷³ On April 23, 1903, the Musicians' Union voted to withdraw their request because "the musicians were friends of the old veterans and did not wish to hamper them in any way, and would waive all feeling in the matter in an effort to make the reunion as grand an affair as possible." Despite withdrawing their demand, they explained that the musicians "still felt that its position was right, from a standpoint of principle." They admitted, the "reunion was something in which everyone should feel a personal pride in making

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ "For Grizzled Veterans of Dixie Crescent City Gates are Ajar," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 5, 1903, B2.

great.” Although the Musicians’ Union withdrew their request to add the U.C.V. to the unfair to labor list, they refused to participate, which earned praise from the national office of the A.F.M.⁷⁴

Although they withdrew their motion, they took pride in seeing the Confederate veterans struggle with nonunion bands but worried about the success of the reunion. A reporter working on behalf of the Trades Council wrote, the veterans “are so flush that they are willing to pay twice as much for unfair music as it would have cost them for first-class union music. It is hard to understand how a committee willing to treat organized labor in this manner should expect anything but expressions of loathing and disgust from that large class of our very best citizens.” The leaders of Local 174 declared their intention to “furnish no music under any circumstances or for any price, preferring to leave the odium of employing scab labor entirely with the Committee and their adviser.”⁷⁵ With the threat of the boycott eliminated, the reunion committee could complete its work over the following three weeks.

With this trouble out of the way, the reunion organizers still had much to accomplish, so the reunion organizers and newspaper editors manipulated sectional and local pride to help their cause in making the reunion a success. First and foremost, the reunion committee needed to raise funds. By April 18, the Reunion Committee reported that they had \$23,000, which totaled only one-third of their goal. They called upon the railroad, hotel, and restaurant industries to contribute more money to the cause because the reunion enables them “to make a great deal of money.”⁷⁶ They emphasized that New Orleans had put its reputation on the line to hold this reunion, and it required private citizens to help make it a success. They asked, “Is the faith of the

⁷⁴ “The Musicians’ Union Withdraws Attempt to Cloud the Confederate Reunion,” *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 24, 1903, 8.

⁷⁵ “The Music Committee Reports,” *Urban Advocate* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 27, 1903, 5.

⁷⁶ “Come Forward With Your Subscription For the Veterans,” *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 18, 1903, 4.

South justified?” and “Can New Orleans afford to have a failure?” They pitted the city in a competition with the previous reunion held in Memphis, which raised \$82,938 for their reunion. They asked, “How much more patriotic is New Orleans?”⁷⁷ In April, the Committee on Parade and Review asked local residents to donate saddle horses for the cause. They called upon citizens to help them make the reunion a success because they hoped to make it “a most notable event in the history of this metropolis of the South.”⁷⁸ By appealing to sectional and city pride, reunion organizers hoped to acquire the funds and help they needed.

New Orleans residents answered the call and gave their time, money, and possessions because it allowed them to participate in the reunion in a variety of ways. In response to the call for help, for example, eight New Orleans residents sent a letter to the reunion committee and expressed their desire to help “in any capacity.” They explained, “It has occurred to us that you might need young men, who are familiar with the city, to give information and to assist in any other manner in providing for the convention of visitors during that time.” If selected, they promised to teams of young men to help guide the city’s guests.⁷⁹ As the reunion drew closer, New Orleans residents offered to help in numerous ways.

Across the country, northerners and southerners contributed to the reunion and expressed feelings of reconciliation. From New York, Confederate veteran H. O. Seixas sent \$100 to the reunion committee because, “I hope through the efforts of all my comrades in New Orleans, that they may be able to entertain the veterans in a becoming way.” New Orleans resident O. W. Chamberlain made a small donation, but expressed that he felt “as great an interest in the cause of the Reunion as others whose contributions are large.” Born in Pennsylvania, Chamberlain’s relatives fought for the federal army, but he explained, “I have lived in this delightful city for a

⁷⁷ “The Honor of the City, and Glory of the Cause,” *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 12, 1903, 4.

⁷⁸ “To the People of New Orleans,” *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 11, 1903.

⁷⁹ “Three Letters,” *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 10, 1903.

number of years and have received such cordial friendship that my allegiance is wholly and unreservedly to the city of my adoption.” He continued, “I sincerely trust that our people, so well known for hospitality, will not fail to meet the obligation which rests upon them: certainly no band of men deserve greater honors or better tribute than the Confederate soldier.” He encouraged his fellow residents to contribute because the city “cannot afford to do less than other cities for their entertainment, and it should be the pride of every citizen of New Orleans to do more.”⁸⁰ New Orleans residents and Confederate veterans recognized the need to make the reunion a success, and they contributed in large and small ways to the cause.

On May 17 and 18, New Orleans residents made their final preparations to welcome the Confederate veterans, which seemingly put everyone in New Orleans to work. “There is a spirit akin to that of the Carnival abroad. Everywhere in New Orleans that feeling of expectancy so familiarly associated with the approach of great public events permeates the populace,” described a reporter from *The Sunday States*. The reporter continued, “If anything, the spirit of the people is more intense than it has ever been on any occasion.”⁸¹ Across the South, railroad operators arranged for special trains to New Orleans to allow all veterans to make the journey. Based on the demand for tickets to New Orleans, these managers estimated that between 150,000 and 250,000 people would attend the reunion. “These are big figures and have appalled New Orleans and the reunion committee,” explained reporter Norman Walker to *Atlanta Constitution*. Walker praised the city of New Orleans for its “reputation of handling them well,” but argued that the city had seldom had more than 90,000 visitors for any one occasion. To transport the veterans within the city, the New Orleans streetcar company arranged to have all of its 300 cars

⁸⁰ “Three Letters,” *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 10, 1903.

⁸¹ “Big Success Will Be Reunion All Signs Point That Way: True Spirit Takes Hold of City and a Magnificent Welcome is Promised Those Who Wore the Grey,” *Sunday States* (New Orleans, LA), May 17, 1903, 11 in United Confederate Veterans Reunion Scrapbooks, 1903-1914, vol. 1 U.C.V. Reunion: New Orleans, 1903, Louisiana & Lower Mississippi Valley Collections (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Libraries).

in operation, and its spokesperson claimed that they could handle 60,000 people an hour on these cars. To accommodate the veterans, the reunion committee kept a ledger of all available hotel rooms and arranged for private families to lodge veterans for the reunion. The reunion committee provided confederate veterans that wanted “a touch of the army life again” with tents and bedding to sleep at the fairgrounds. To entertain the veterans, New Orleans civic leaders constructed a new auditorium, which seated more than 10,000 people, at the Crescent City Jockey Club fairgrounds, which served as the site of the reunion. “There could be no better place for the gathering,” commented Walker.⁸² In advance of the reunion, it seems that everyone in New Orleans had a role to play in making the reunion a success.

In the days preceding the reunion, organizers and civic leaders called upon every member of the community to show their pride for the former Confederacy. In the *Sunday States*, the editors expressed their utmost respect and “admiration for the men New Orleans is about to entertain.” They explained that the reunion brought “to the surface in every true Southerner a feeling of splendid brotherhood for the old vets” because they represented the “remnants of that greatest of armies which fought for the cause which though lost, was none the less honorable.”⁸³ In the daily paper, the editors called upon every male and female citizen of New Orleans to wear Confederate buttons “to show homage to the distinguished visitors within our gates this week.” They encouraged everyone to decorate their homes and businesses with flags and memorabilia, “which will add much to the attractiveness” of the city and “cannot fail to make a pleasing

⁸² Norman Walker, “For Grizzled Veterans of Dixie Crescent City Gates are Ajar,” *Atlanta Constitution*, May 17, 1903, B2.

⁸³ “Big Success Will Be Reunion All Signs Point That Way: True Spirit Takes Hold of City and a Magnificent Welcome is Promised Those Who Wore the Grey,” *Sunday States* (New Orleans, LA), May 17, 1903, 11 in United Confederate Veterans Reunion Scrapbooks, 1903-1914, vol. 1 U.C.V. Reunion: New Orleans, 1903, Louisiana & Lower Mississippi Valley Collections (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Libraries).

impression on the veterans.”⁸⁴ It was important to please the veterans because of the potential boom in business related to the reunion.

From the beginning of the planning process, reunion organizers emphasized the need to make the reunion a success because of its potential boom to the business interests of the city. “On sentimental grounds, the coming Reunion should be made one which visitors will never forget,” explained *Daily Picayune* editors. “On the argument of business interest,” they continued, “it is even more important that everybody should go away praising the great port and its advantages.”⁸⁵ New Orleans already had a fantastic reputation as a tourist destination because of Mardi Gras, but *The Daily States* editors argued that “the present reunion will result in more substantial good to New Orleans than a dozen Mardi Gras carnivals.” They expected much larger crowds and explained that the reunion would attract visitors that would otherwise have no interest in coming to the city.⁸⁶

On the night of Monday, May 18, the reunion unofficially opened with a large parade that reportedly featured black men marching behind Confederate veterans. When seventy-five veterans from Tennessee arrived in New Orleans, they paraded through the streets before taking the streetcars to the fairgrounds. At the rear of the parade, “a number of aged negroes, old-time darkeys” followed the veterans. According to a *Daily States* reporter, these black men plodded along like “faithful old souls” and paid no attention to the insults hurled at them by “the younger elements” of their race. The older black men reportedly referred to these young black men as “young trash” and kept in step with the former soldiers “with proud demeanor.” Whether true or

⁸⁴ “Wear Buttons—Show Your Colors!” *Daily States*, May 19, 1903, 4 in United Confederate Veterans Reunion Scrapbooks, 1903-1914, vol. 1 U.C.V. Reunion: New Orleans, 1903, Louisiana & Lower Mississippi Valley Collections (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Libraries).

⁸⁵ “The Honor of the City and the Glory of the Cause,” *Daily Picayune*, Apr. 12, 1903.

⁸⁶ “A Business View of the Reunion,” *Daily States* (New Orleans, LA), May 19, 1903, 4 in United Confederate Veterans Reunion Scrapbooks, 1903-1914, vol. 1 U.C.V. Reunion: New Orleans, 1903, Louisiana & Lower Mississippi Valley Collections (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Libraries).

not, the story helped kick off the reunion, which would idealize the Old South and the relationship between masters and their slaves.

On Tuesday, May 19, the reunion commenced with a formal program to honor Confederate heroes and to welcome the veterans. Amid the joy of the occasion, the veterans gathered at 10 A.M. and held a morning memorial service for Jefferson Davis at Christ Church. At noon, General J. B. Levert of the Louisiana division of the U.C.V. called the convention to order. Rev. J. William Jones, who served as chaplain general of the U.C.V., opened the convention with a prayer. Following the prayer, Local Executive Committee Chairman E. B. Kruttschnitt welcomed the veterans and their friends and family. After this address, General John B. Gordon gave a short presentation. He hobbled up the stage with the help of Adjutant General William E. Mickle. As soon as General Gordon sat down, “a fair young woman... approached and, bending down, kissed the general,” which quickly reenergized him. After thanking the veterans, he turned the platform over local politicians, notably Louisiana Governor W. W. Heard, who gave the out-of-state veterans and their friends a formal welcome to the reunion.⁸⁷ After his speech, the reunion adjourned for a few hours before Judge John H. Rogers from North Carolina gave the keynote address.

In the afternoon of the opening day, Judge Rogers, a Confederate veteran and congressman from Arkansas, gave the keynote address at the reunion. He explained that the veterans had gathered in New Orleans to honor their deceased comrades, show gratitude to the women of the Confederacy, and to “renew old friendships, forged in the white heat of common sufferings.” These friendships, he explained, were “hallowed and sanctified by the conscious conviction that in the hour of trial and peril we were true to the Constitution as it was framed and

⁸⁷ “Confederate Veterans Meet: Their Thirteenth Annual Reunion Attracts a Large Gathering to New Orleans,” *New York Times*, May 20, 1903, 2; “Confederate: Reunion Will Begin Tuesday at New Orleans,” *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), May 17, 1903, A2; “Confederate Veterans,” *The Hartford Courant*, May 21, 1903, 2.

handed down to us by Washington and his compatriots.” After listing these purposes of the reunion, Rogers proceeded to explain the process of secession and Confederacy’s cause. He distinguished between the ideas of secession and rebellion by noting that the “South made no war on the States remaining in the Union” and that secession “meant disunion so far as the seceding States were concerned, but it meant neither war nor rebellion.” He assured his fellow veterans, the “whole history of secession shows conclusively that in seceding the South had no intention of assailing their former confederates.” To support his argument, he used quotations from politicians, Supreme Court rulings, and examples of legislation passed by Congress. He emphasized the importance of the history lesson for future generations because their “children should know that the Confederate States, by the act of secession, made not war on the United States; that the war between the States was not rebellion.”⁸⁸ In the aftermath of the Civil War, the Lost Cause emerged as a counter-narrative to Union view of the war’s causes and outcomes. It romanticized the Old South and legitimated the cause for which thousands of southerners died.⁸⁹ In the keynote address, Rogers absolved the South of blame for the war and diverted it to the North, which represented one of the major tenets of the Lost Cause.

During his speech, Rogers tried to downplay slavery as the major cause of the war. Rogers emphasized that thousands “and thousands of soldiers from every State in the South, perhaps not less than eighty percent of them, entered the army willingly and deliberately, and served through the war, who never owned and never expected to own a slave.” While he admits that slavery had some influence on the southern states’ willingness to secede, he argued that slavery represented a “bane of our social order” and a “chronic cancer which gnawed at the vitals” of the South’s potential for future greatness. In the end, he praised God for the

⁸⁸ “The South Vindicated—Reunion Oration by Hon. J. H. Rogers,” *Confederate Veteran* 11 (June 1903): 255.

⁸⁹ Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 134.

destruction of slavery and for reunification under a single flag.⁹⁰ In the address, Rogers attempted to downplay slavery as a cause of the war, separate the South from its legacy of slavery, hailed the benefits of reunification, all of which epitomized the Lost Cause. Through these types of speeches at reunions and memorials, Confederate veterans and supporters kept the Lost Cause alive.

In New Orleans, the reunion inspired feelings of sectional pride and nostalgia for the Old South of seemingly everyone in the city. During the reunion, the editors of *The Daily States* took the opportunity to rant about life in the post-emancipation South by expressing similar themes as Rogers but with harsher criticism for northern politicians and the federal government. The editors argued that the northern states made war upon the South to punish them. “With this purpose in view,” they continued, “the emancipated slave was enfranchised, his former master disfranchised, and the reins of power were placed in the hands of the negro.” They argued that northerners supported these measures “because it was desired that the Southern whites should be subjected to the most abject form of humiliation that the most cruel mind could devise.”⁹¹ The spirit of the reunion overflowed beyond the boundaries of the reunion.

During the reunion, the delegates and their supporters worked on a series of committees to accomplish goals relevant to the veterans, including an attempt to write their own brand of history. From around the country, more than two thousand delegates attended the reunion to conduct the organization’s business. On the first day of the reunion, these delegates went to their committee meetings and attended to the “routine business” of the convention while the rest of the veterans and their entourages had free time to visit the city’s sights. General S. D. Lee served as

⁹⁰ Ibid., 257.

⁹¹ “The Black Specter,” *Daily States* (New Orleans, LA), May 19, 1903, 4 in United Confederate Veterans Reunion Scrapbooks, 1903-1914, vol. 1 U.C.V. Reunion: New Orleans, 1903, Louisiana & Lower Mississippi Valley Collections (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Libraries).

the chairman of the Historical Committee, which oversaw the U.C.V.'s attempts to "teach young men and women the true history of the Civil War and of the war itself" and "instill into the minds of the young in the South the truth of the conflict." Similarly, the Confederate Memorial Association, which consisted of women, met at the same time as the U.C.V. Led by President Kate Walker Behan, these women hosted the annual memorial service for the long-departed Jefferson Davis and spearheaded many of the memorial efforts for Confederate leaders and soldiers across the South.⁹²

On the final day of the convention, the veterans took care of numerous business items to help strengthen the organization's message and help it prosper in the future. First, they unanimously re-elected General John B. Gordon as Commander-in-Chief of the U.C.V. and similarly re-elected other department commanders. During the rest of the meeting, the veterans considered and resolved a series of motions. General Joseph Wheeler urged the delegates to provide help to elderly soldiers. General A. P. Stewart presented a report on the project to build a monument to southern women, which Gordon heartily supported. Focusing on his own mortality, Gordon explained, "Boys, I am willing to spend and be spent in your service," but "you boys must not die until you have built that monument to Southern women." He concluded, "Build it, white and pure, and let it tower to show what the men of the South think of the women." Similarly, Judge George L. Christian presented his report on the efforts to erect a monument to Jefferson Davis. In addition to these measures, the U.C.V. took steps to perpetuate their organization from beyond the grave. General I. C. Walker worked to help strengthen the official relationship between the veterans and the Sons of Confederate Veterans. They agreed to give sons full privilege of the floor at reunions and conventions, but they did not give them the right

⁹² "Confederate: Reunion Will Begin Tuesday at New Orleans," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), May 17, 1903, A2.

to vote. The sons could wear grey uniforms in veterans' parades, but they could not wear military insignia and possess military rank.⁹³ Although the reunion's delegates had official business, they spent a majority of their time socializing with old comrades.

During the day, the delegates participated in business meetings, but they had their evenings free for spectacular social events that helped celebrate the Old South, especially its white women, and promote the Lost Cause. During the reunion, veterans and their entourages attended balls every night. On Thursday, May 21, the veterans went to the new auditorium for the grand ball. When the event commenced, sixteen "grizzled veterans" danced a quadrille with sixteen young white women, known as heralds, adorned in Confederate symbols. They danced to famous southern tunes, such as "Dixie" and "The Bonnie Blue Flag." Upon conclusion of this portion of the program, the veterans paraded behind the Memphis Bugle Corps in a grand march. By 11 P.M., the crowd of ten thousand veterans and guests commenced the dancing, which included up to a thousand people on the dance floor at a given time and lasted deep into Friday morning.⁹⁴ At night, many veterans camped at the fairgrounds, which became a sentimental sight for many of the younger visitors to the reunion. Every night, the veterans "gathered there as around the camp fires of the sixties" and bonded with one another and with their children and supporters.⁹⁵

During the reunion, the veterans and visiting southerners expressed pride in the South and its people to such an extent that symbols of the Union and federal government earned scorn and condemnation. During the reunion, the veterans and other visitors spread rumors that General Joseph Wheeler appeared at the reunion hall in the uniform of Brigadier General of the United

⁹³ "Confederate: Reunion Will Begin Tuesday at New Orleans," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), May 17, 1903, A2.

⁹⁴ "Reunion of the Gray: Confederate Veterans in Session at New Orleans," *Washington Post*, May 22, 1903, 11.

⁹⁵ "Reunion Retrospect," *Confederate Veteran* 11 (June 1903): 243-244.

States Army. By showing up in a blue uniform, his reputation suffered and, according to veterans, most people treated General Wheeler as an enemy. When he rode in the carriage in the parade, he received no special attention or honor, which had been usual for him at previous parades. In fact, one Confederate veteran asked, “What do you think Lee and Jackson would say to your appearance at a Confederate reunion in that uniform?” The rumors spread that an embarrassed Wheeler spent most of the reunion locked in his room and left town as soon as the parade finished. When confronted, he explained that he wore his Spanish-American War uniform to show his old comrades that sectionalism had ended, but it clearly had not. Instead, the veterans resented the fact that Wheeler had worn the uniform of “the armies which the veterans of the South fought for four years.”⁹⁶ In 1903, the reunion had reinvigorated intense passion and regional pride.⁹⁷

In addition to the formal elements of the reunion, private entrepreneurs catered to veterans by offering entertainment options that catered to the militaristic spirit and sectional sentimentalism. In New Orleans’s West End, conductor Armand Veazey’s military band entered “into the spirit of the reunion with great vigor” and played “music that smacks of war at every concert” at a local theater. For the entire reunion, they chose a series of songs “dear to the heart of every southerner.”⁹⁸ Veazey, a notable musician in New Orleans, had traveled all the way to Chicago to assemble artists for his band. Although he belonged to Local 174 and did not seem to

⁹⁶ “Why Confederates Snubbed Wheeler,” *New York Times*, May 25, 1903, 5. In the *Confederate Veteran*, Wheeler denied any problems at the reunion. See “Discourtesy to Gen. Wheeler Denied,” *Confederate Veteran* 11 (July 1903): 299-300.

⁹⁷ Many historians have portrayed the Spanish-American War as a turning point in the reconciliation of the nation. By uniting under a single flag to fight a common enemy, the North and South reconciled their differences. Although the Spanish-American War may have eased tensions, some historians argue that passionate sectionalism remained. See Janney, *Remembering the Civil War* and Blight, *Race and Reunion*.

⁹⁸ “Amusements,” *Times-Democrat* (New Orleans, LA), May 19, 1903, 15 in United Confederate Veterans Reunion Scrapbooks, 1903-1914, vol. 1 U.C.V. Reunion: New Orleans, 1903, Louisiana & Lower Mississippi Valley Collections (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Libraries); “West End,” *Times-Democrat* (New Orleans, LA), May 19, 1903, 15 in United Confederate Veterans Reunion Scrapbooks, 1903-1914, vol. 1 U.C.V. Reunion: New Orleans, 1903, Louisiana & Lower Mississippi Valley Collections (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Libraries).

participate in the official work of the reunion, he still lent his military band to their cause.⁹⁹ At the Grand Opera House, singer Ada Hollingsworth-Watkins, a soprano from Louisiana who relocated to New York, presented her program “Three Centuries of American Ballads,” which consisted of songs from colonial, antebellum, and Gilded Age America and earned rave reviews across the country. According to New Orleans papers, “She possesses a splendid soprano... and sings the old ballads with particular charm.”¹⁰⁰ Throughout the week, veterans busied themselves with official business and social engagements, which all paled in comparison to the big parade.

In the sweltering late afternoon of Friday, May 22, the U.C.V. reunion concluded with a massive parade that awed people across the South. The parade, which started on Canal Street and moved south on St. Charles Ave, twice passed the Robert E. Lee Monument and lasted for four hours. In this parade, 10,000 men and women marched in a line that stretched more than four miles. In an editorial, *Daily Picayune* editors characterized the parade as “a remarkable spectacle presented to the world in the streets.”¹⁰¹ First, General J. B. Levert, who served as chief marshal, led the parade surrounded by his staff “beautifully mounted and presenting a brave appearance in gray and gold.” Behind them, the Memphis Bugle Corps led Company A of the U.C.V., which consisted of Louisiana veterans, and both the musicians and veterans earned “great applause” for their “splendid marching.” Then, a “beautifully decorated float” float made its way through the streets with sixteen seated female heralds representing the former Confederate states, and Missouri, Kentucky, and the Indian Territory. “The young ladies, all in white,” presented a “beautiful picture, surrounded by the gray decorations of their float.” They earned an applause

⁹⁹ “April Demands of Local Labor,” *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Apr. 7, 1903.

¹⁰⁰ “Concert of Antebellum Songs,” *Times-Democrat* (New Orleans, LA), May 19, 1903, 15 in United Confederate Veterans Reunion Scrapbooks, 1903-1914, vol. 1 U.C.V. Reunion: New Orleans, 1903, Louisiana & Lower Mississippi Valley Collections (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Libraries); “Three Centuries of American Ballads: In Costume,” *Traveling culture: Circuit Chautauqua in the Twentieth Century*.

¹⁰¹ “The Old South and the Young South,” *Lafayette Gazette* (Lafayette, LA), May 30, 1903, 2. They reprinted the editorial from the *Daily Picayune*.

that had no equal save for the old veterans. Next, leaders of the Confederacy made their way through the parade route in carriages. Generals A. P. Stewart and Joseph Wheeler rode alongside the widows of Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, Braxton Bragg, and other Confederate generals.¹⁰²

Finally, the veterans paraded through the streets followed by the Sons of Veterans and female members of other memorial and patriotic societies. They earned a deafening applause throughout the parade route. Spectators honored these veterans, who had earned “first place in the hearts of the Southern people.” According to Dudley M. Watson, the veterans “marched with a precision and vim that would have done credit to young men.”¹⁰³ As they marched, young women broke “into the lines to hand them flowers, to clasp them round the neck, to kiss their wrinkled faces.”¹⁰⁴

Numerous people described the parade as a remarkable and sentimental experience. A reporter from the *Daily Picayune* observed the parade and claimed, the “old soldiers, inspired by their great numbers, the fine weather, and the enthusiasm of the admiring spectators, marched with a precision and vim that would have done credit to young men.” He concluded his observations by characterizing the parade as “one of the most memorable” events that the city had ever staged.¹⁰⁵ A female observer recalled, “when the parade was almost over, I ran up to my room, which overlooked the street, and it seemed, as I stood there and looked over the vast throng of people, that the whole world was suspended beneath my window, and every person was cheering.”¹⁰⁶ To the massive audience, the parade certainly inspired awe, but it also inspired sectional sentiment, nostalgia, and political commentary.

¹⁰² “Parade Most Notable,” *The Caucasian* (Shreveport, LA), May 24, 1903, 1.

¹⁰³ Dudley M. Watson. “The Gray Parade,” *Confederate Veteran* 11 (July 1903): 299.

¹⁰⁴ “Most Successful of All Reunions,” *The American* (Nashville, TN), May 23, 1903, 1; Dudley M. Watson, *Confederate Veteran* 11 (July 1903): 299-300.

¹⁰⁵ Watson, “The Gray Parade,” 299.

¹⁰⁶ Bettina Ruth Bush, “Missouri Girl at the Reunion,” *Confederate Veteran* 11 (August 1903), 343.

In their descriptions of the parade, many southerners boasted their pride in the South and former Confederacy with militaristic spirit. During the parade, commented a reporter from Shreveport's *The Caucasian*, New Orleans "held close to her heart the incarnate spirit of the Confederacy, and for her it lived and breathed again." In the sectional gush, southerners emphasized a love for the flag of the Confederacy, the "white-starred cross of blue on the crimson field" that represented "the cause for which the heroes fought, and by whose blood it was purged and sanctified."¹⁰⁷ In addition to the emphasis on the flag, many observers portrayed the atmosphere around the parade as militaristic. To start the parade, "a bugle's shrill notes sounded 'forward march'" and the ranks moved forward. During the parade, "the martial airs of forty years ago born upon the breeze" as "men of war" marched through the streets. The music, uniforms, banners, and "other warlike accompaniments" inspired "old-wartime memories" among the veterans. The spectators expressed heartfelt satisfaction when they heard the "rebel yell," which one observer characterized as "that southern cadence of the fighting cry of the fighting Anglo-Saxon race."¹⁰⁸

In addition to pride in their former country, the parade's participants and spectators celebrated whiteness. Among the most overt symbols of whiteness, the sixteen white female heralds near the head of the march "dressed entirely in white" rode aboard a float. These women were "drawn from among the prettiest women in a land where all women are beautiful" and provided a stark contrast "with fresh vitality and youthful charm" to the masses of "withered yet staunch old men who had faced death in so many battles."¹⁰⁹ For the first time, the Confederate

¹⁰⁷ "Parade Most Notable," *The Caucasian* (Shreveport, LA), May 24, 1903, 1; "Veterans in Gray March," *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), May 23, 1903, 1.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ "Girl Heralds For Veterans: Novel Features Will Mark Confederate Reunion at New Orleans," *Atlanta Constitution*, Apr. 3, 1903, 5; Lucille Webb Banks, "Enthusiasm, Unity, Pathos, Marked Thirteenth Annual Confederate Reunion," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 24, 1903, E5.

reunion featured these white women in the role of heralds. They had an honorable position at the head of the parade, and it seems unlikely that they would have taken this position had the Committee on Music permitted black bands to play in the parade.

In the wake of the parade, white southerners reflected on the parade's political significance for the South and the nation. *Daily Picayune* editors defended the southerners' eternal right to "maintain their constitutional rights against outrageous aggression and invasion." They defended the constitutionality of secession and the honor the soldiers fighting for the Confederacy. They contradicted the notion that southerners had changed since the war. Instead, they explained, "The country is the same that it always was, and the people are the same, only the institutions are changed." They condemned the word New South because it portrayed the Old South as "formerly inhabited by a nonprogressive race of slaveholders, who were always unfriendly to the Union." They argued that the older generation had fought against a superior foe to defend their rights, and the younger generation, with the same principles and fortitude, had worked hard to restore the South to prosperity and wealth after its destruction. "There was something truly inspiring to see the old and grizzled men who had fought a hundred battles, marching behind the fresh-faced youths who composed the escort of honor to the Confederate Veterans yesterday," they explained. By walking together, these two generations invalidated the concept of the New South. The editors argued that the younger generation of southerners shared the same values of older generations. They continued, "The spectacle was a declaration before the whole world that the sons and the fathers were united in the same principles as well concerning the past as the future."¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ "The Old South and the Young South," *Lafayette Gazette*, May 30, 1903, 2. They reprinted the editorial from the *Daily Picayune*.

After the reunion concluded, veterans and other southerners characterized the event in New Orleans as one of the most memorable occasions in the history of the South. In *The Nashville American*, a reporter explained that the parade had concluded the “greatest reunion of Confederate soldiers held since the close of the civil war” and other papers repeated a similar sentiment.¹¹¹ By all accounts, New Orleans had met the daunting task and provided a memorable experience to everyone that attended. According to a *The Colfax Chronicle* reporter, New Orleans put its famous “famous hospitality” on display for the thousands of veterans that gathered there. He praised “the ability of the city of New Orleans to furnish amusement for vast numbers” of people and highlighted the efforts of the streetcar workers, police force, hotel and restaurant managers, department store clerks, and street vendors. “They all seem to have mastered the knack of getting along with a big crowd,” concluded the reporter.¹¹² In fact, some veterans started a movement to make New Orleans the permanent home of the reunion.¹¹³

For some southerners, the reunion achieved success precisely because it emphasized a regionally satisfying interpretation of the Civil War. By 1903, it seems that the history of the Civil War had become a primary concern among many southerners. In a column for the *Confederate Veteran*, Bettina Ruth Bush reminisced about the reunion. In it, she explained that the “most rousing and enthusiastic part of every speech” were the comments made about “the untrue histories of the Civil War that the young and rising generation now study.”¹¹⁴ According to many sources, the New Orleans reunion did much to calm their anxiety over being history’s villains. According to *The Caucasian* editors of Shreveport, Louisiana, this reunion “was the greatest and most successful in the record of the organization” and “fairly eclipsed the reunion

¹¹¹ “Most Successful of All Reunions,” *The American* (Nashville, TN), May 23, 1903, 1.

¹¹² “The Confederate Veterans,” *The Chronicle* (Colfax, LA), May 30, 1903, 1.

¹¹³ “Next U.C.V. Reunion,” *Daily Ardmoreite* (Ardmore, OK), May 31, 1903, 6.

¹¹⁴ Bettina Ruth Bush, “Missouri Girl at the Reunion,” *Confederate Veteran* 11 (Aug. 1903): 343.

demonstrations in other cities.” Not intending to insult previous reunions at other cities, the editors explained that this reunion disseminated “to the world historical facts which are of priceless value as a legacy of loyalty and fealty to the sons and the daughters” of the veterans. They praised the business work of the veterans and the social aspects of the reunion, but they emphasized the value of the reunion for vindicating “the stigma of Rebel and Rebellion which has been ascribed to them and with which they would be branded forever by the North.” Specifically, they highlighted the keynote address from Judge Rogers, who presented these facts with “forceful awakening.”¹¹⁵ More than fifty years after the conclusion of the war, northerners and southerners continued to fight over its causes and its meaning because these memories had implications for contemporary politics and the labor movement.

At the 1903 U.C.V. reunion, veterans, sons, daughters, and other southerners celebrated the Old South, the Lost Cause, and whiteness. To these ends, white southerners spread images of faithful slaves and emphasized the harmonious relationships of masters and slaves in the imagined and romanticized past. Despite these circumstances, black musicians in New Orleans threatened to put a stop to the entire reunion unless they had the right to play in it. New Orleans’s white musicians, furthermore, stood by their side and refused to prioritize sentimentalism for the veterans over their modern-day labor interests, which relied on cooperation with their black colleagues.

In the debates over the reunion music, black and white southerners revealed key insights into what it meant to participate in these Lost Cause spectacles. Both black and white southerners relied on the control of historical memory to realize their contemporary political and economic goals. Confederate veterans simultaneously refused black musicians the right to play and denied the political significance of their presence at their reunion, yet they characterized black music as

¹¹⁵ Editorial, *The Caucasian* (Shreveport, LA), May 28, 1903, 4.

a vestige of the Old South, where enslaved people willingly made music for their white masters. Black musicians, however, fought for professional recognition in the present, which threatened the stereotype of the naturally gifted, feckless black performer and, therefore, challenged a romantic vision of the Old South. Unlike their enslaved ancestors, this generation of black musicians had the power to choose when, where, and for whom to play. With this power, black performers would infiltrate Lost Cause celebrations and political spectacles across the region.

CHAPTER 5

“FURIOUS MUSIC”: AFRICAN AMERICANS, POLITICAL SPECTACLES, AND STREET THEATER IN PARTISAN POLITICS

Joseph C. Wysor, a Democrat from Pulaski County, spent a considerable part of his career working to disfranchise black Virginians. Wysor’s regional rival, Republican A. P. Gillespie from Tazewell County, also supported the elimination of the black vote. In May 1900, Virginians narrowly approved a referendum calling for election reform, and Wysor and Gillespie both served on the committee challenged with devising the new laws. Among many proposals, Wysor suggested a plan utilizing the literacy test and poll tax to disfranchise voters. To register, voters would have to read a selection from the constitution, write their own names, and pay a \$1.50 poll tax. The committee debated and negotiated for years. By March 1904, the Democrats, including Wysor, found common ground on a plan including an understanding clause. The Republicans, led by Gillespie, objected to it because they believed Democrats would manipulate the understanding clause for fraudulent purposes. Despite these objections from Republicans, the committee finally approved a plan utilizing a combination of poll taxes, residency requirements, and literacy tests. As a result, Virginians passed the most regressive voting reform in the country.¹ The laws did not, however, completely deny African Americans access to the political sphere.

In the morning of August 22, 1904, Republicans staged a campaign rally for their candidates to represent Virginia’s Ninth District in Congress. They started their meeting at 11:30

¹ Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*, 204-206, 215, 218-223.

a.m. and, according to the local Republican press, attracted one of the “largest and most representative gatherings of the stalwart citizens of Tazewell” ever assembled in the county. For two hours, they listened to Republicans discuss the campaign’s major issues. The Republicans hired a black band from the nearby town of Pocahontas.² In Richmond’s *The Times-Dispatch*, a Democratic newspaper, a Tazewell correspondent commented that a “notable feature of the Republican speaking was the absence of the ladies and a large attendance of negroes.”³ With this statement, the Democrat hoped to link the Republicans with African Americans and position his own party as the preferred party of white women.

After the Republican meeting in Tazewell, the Democrats took control of the court house for their own campaign rally featuring Wysor and other Democrats. According to a reporter to Richmond’s *The Times Dispatch*, the Democrats “had possibly the largest crowd that ever attended a public speaking in Tazewell.” In the press, the Democrats contrasted their meeting with the Republican event by portraying their massive audience as consisting of “the leading ladies and gentlemen” of the county. Although the Republican meeting had concluded, however, the black musicians remained in attendance. During the Democrats’ meeting, they “acted in a most disrespectful manner” and rendered “the air with discords” to prevent people from hearing the speeches.⁴ At some point during Wysor’s speech, the black musicians had made their point and exited the courthouse. Wysor took the opportunity to jab at the African Americans. As Wysor greeted a crowd of white women entering the court house, he remarked, “As the negro band goes out, let the ladies come forward.” With these comments directed toward the black musicians, Wysor segregated the court house and political sphere. He hoped to divide the

² “Good Day for Republicans,” *The Tazewell Republican* (Tazewell, VA), Aug. 25, 1904, 1; “Editorial Paragraphs,” *The Tazewell Republican* (Tazewell, VA), Aug. 26, 1904, 1.

³ “A Field Day in Tazewell,” *The Times-Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), Aug. 28, 1904, 1.

⁴ Ibid.

political parties on the basis of race and gender. Republicans, however, did not let Democrats off the hook for these race-based tactics.

Republicans defended the participation of African Americans and criticized Democrats for constantly focusing on racial issues. In response to Wysor's comments directed toward the black musicians, Tazewell's Republicans launched attacks of their own on the Democratic candidate. In the pages of *Tazewell Republican*, editors pointed out that the Democrats, specifically Wysor, had employed the exact same band for his gathering in the town of Pocahontas. The Republican editors remarked that "but for their music," Wysor "would not have secured the small audience he did get." They detested the hypocrisy and characterized Wysor as a "cheap demagogue" who used "the negro for both offensive and defensive purposes" and would certainly "try to hold a 'nigger' between him and the fire" upon reaching the "Democratic hades." They criticized his statesmanship as "negrophobia" and characterized his racial tactics as "old, stale and played out."⁵ The Republicans had no problems with black participation at these political spectacles. They recognized musicians' power in attracting audiences, and they resented any comments that excluded them from the political sphere. According to the Republicans, Democrats also employed African Americans to play at campaign rallies and speaking engagements, but they condemned black participation when used against their party.

From 1877 to 1932, African Americans used street theater and a spectacular ritual with a long history known as rough music to support or humiliate candidates from both major political parties.⁶ In the post-Reconstruction South, African Americans influenced the public sphere on

⁵ "Editorial Paragraphs," *The Tazewell Republican* (Tazewell, VA), Aug. 26, 1904, 1.

⁶ Rough music has a long history dating back to the Middle Ages in Europe. Europeans used rough music, known in France as charivari and Italy as scampanate, to enforce community boundaries and norms, and harass violators. In its earliest forms, Europeans used the practice to welcome newlywed couples to married life. Outside of the newlywed's quarters, a crowd clanged pots and pans and blew horns to signal their approval of the marriage. Similarly, Europeans and Americans used clanging, rattling, discordant sounds to humiliate and intimidate violators of community standards. At the end of the seventeenth century, rough music became increasingly employed by

behalf of the Republican Party and Democratic Party by lending their talents to make political spectacle possible. Although white southerners hoped to make blacks invisible, African Americans claimed a visible, notable place in the public sphere by using music to draw crowds to official campaign events. With their talents, they could decide to an extent whether an event succeeded or failed. They generated enthusiasm and set the mood for speakers with their musical selections. They welcomed candidates and government officials to the community. With their presence, they could become part of a massive crowd, which observers often took as a sign of a healthy party. In addition to their presence at official campaign events, African Americans hit the streets to serenade preferred candidates and disrupt their opposition. With theatrical street performances, they could honor or humiliate candidates thereby enforcing community boundaries and norms. During World War I, they would use their talents to access partisan, patriotic events held on behalf of the war effort, but they would experience segregation at these events. By demonstrating their patriotism, albeit in segregated ways, they hoped to gain full inclusion into the citizenry. After World War I, African Americans continued to use spectacles for partisan purposes, especially in northern cities.

From the 1870s through the 1910s, African Americans tended to support the Republican Party because of its ties to the northern war effort and the Emancipation Proclamation. In support of the Republican Party, they often participated in official party functions, such as nominating

English people and colonial Americans as a form of spectacular street theater designed to draw public attention to social offenders, such as spousal abusers and adulterers. The mobs carefully designed the performances to highlight the offender's behavior. Amid the noise, for example, they might act out domestic squabbles to highlight spousal abuse. Similarly, they might mock a young bride's infertility or old man's impotence to criticize a marriage between partners of extremely different ages. For the most part, the community used these methods when it did not have any legal alternative, such as in cases of domestic violence. For more information, see: E. P. Thompson, "Rough Music Reconsidered," *Folklore* 103 (1992): 3-10; Violet Alford, "Rough Music or Charivari," *Folklore* 70 (Dec. 1959): 505-510; Mark McKnight, "Charivaris, Cowbellions, and Sheet Iron Bands: Nineteenth-Century Rough Music in New Orleans," *American Music* 23 (Winter 2005): 407-414.

conventions, and street spectacles, such as parades and rallies.⁷ They did more than bang on drums and toot on horns. They generated enthusiasm, made political statements, and enforced their community's political norms and boundaries. At political spectacles, they also reinforced the connections between the Republican Party, Civil War victory, and emancipation.

After the Civil War, Republicans in the South recognized how black talent could make or break the success of their campaigns, so they employed black musicians for their entertainment value and to win electoral success. During the 1870s, Mike Duffy, a postal worker and local Republican Party leader in Washington, D.C., testified to the usefulness of black musicians in attracting the votes of African Americans. According to one of Duffy's reminiscing colleagues, there "was a negro band here, and as Mike was something of a politician, and the colored voter was numerous in the Third ward, he thought it would be policy to hire that band for the parade."⁸ To acquire the band's services, he composed a letter requesting the songs "Hail to the Chief" and "See, the Conquering Hero Comes." To Duffy's delight, the band agreed to play the music during the parade.⁹ With regard to musicians and musical selections, candidates chose appropriately to suit their campaign. African Americans had various reasons to comply with politicians' request. In places where black voters remained powerful, they could mobilize votes on behalf of preferred candidates. In places with limited black voting, however, black musicians still gained access to wider audiences and received compensation for their talents. The inability of African Americans to vote, however, did not prevent black performers from making political statements.

⁷ For examples, see coverage of Virginia's Republican convention here: "Revolt Against Mahone," *New York Times*, May 18, 1888, 1.

⁸ "The Critic Abroad," *The Critic* (Washington, D.C.), Mar. 25, 1891, 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*

After 1876, white southerners started to roll back Republican policies leftover from Reconstruction, including black voting rights, but African Americans continued participating in Republican spectacles in an effort to keep the party alive in the region.¹⁰ In October 1880, the Republicans of Yorkville, South Carolina, gathered for a rally. When the black musicians commenced the music, the locals took it as a sign to make their way to the court house. After everyone had settled, Nelson Hammond, a black man, called the meeting to order. Among many speakers, Hammond expressed delight in the reinvigoration of the Republican Party and the civic activity of the black community. According to Democrats, the rally testified that the Republican Party in the county, “though sleeping for the past four years, is by no means dead.” Republicans had, instead, “lulled the Democracy into a sense of perfect security.”¹¹ In nearby Chester, South Carolina, African Americans participated in a variety of ways at the nominating convention for South Carolina’s Fourth Congressional District. They gave speeches and carried out official duties. The Republicans chose Absalom Blythe as their candidate, who condemned the Democrats for the methods they had used to take back control of the state in the 1876 election. When he concluded his speech, black musicians played music and the audience cheered.¹² In Knoxville, Tennessee, the Young Men’s Garfield and Arthur Club held a rally in support of the Republican Party. Black musicians helped kick off the meeting.¹³ To observers, a healthy rally

¹⁰ John F. Marszalek, *A Black Congressman in the Age of Jim Crow: South Carolina’s George Washington Murray* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006); Charles W. Calhoun, *Conceiving a New Republic: The Republican Party and the Southern Question, 1869-1900* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006); Harris M. Bailey, Jr., “The Only Game in Town: The South Carolina Republican Party in the Post-Reconstruction Era,” *Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association* (Columbia: University of South Carolina press, 1992); J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); Stanley Hirshson, *Farewell to the Bloody Shirt: Northern Republicans and the Southern Negro, 1877-1893* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962).

¹¹ “Political Meetings: Republican Meeting on Saturday,” *The Enquirer* (Yorkville, S. C.), Oct. 7, 1880, 2.

¹² “Radical Congressional Convention,” *The Enquirer* (Yorkville, S. C.), Oct. 7, 1880, 1.

¹³ “Speech by Hon. W. P. Gillenwaters,” *Daily Chronicle* (Knoxville, TN), Sept. 25, 1880, 4.

served as a sign of a healthy party. By organizing and helping make campaign rallies successful, African Americans made their contribution to electoral politics.

Based on the work of African Americans at political spectacles, the Republican Party continued to have a noticeable and energetic presence in southern politics despite the lack of electoral success. In 1889, Republicans in Anderson Court House, South Carolina, staged “the largest and most enthusiastic Republican or negro meeting” since “the days prior to 1876.” For Democrats, the sight of energetic Republicans “brought back forcibly to the minds” of citizens “the scenes and incidents that often occurred when the thieving carpet-baggers would come around on their campaign tours.” One observer characterized the event as “equal to a circus.” Henry Kennedy, a black man and chairman of Anderson County’s Republican Party, organized the rally and sent out a call for the county’s black citizens to attend. They answered the call and came from all over to participate. A black band led the crowd to the east front of the court house. In addition to the large crowd of African Americans, white locals turned out to hear the speeches and observe the spectacle.¹⁴ People participated in political spectacles for a variety of reasons. In Anderson Court House, African Americans went to hear a candidate that they believed would represent their interests and had done things for them in the past. Many white citizens of the town went to study the opposition. At this meeting, the Democratic press characterized it as a “great disappointment” that Russell himself did not speak because “they were anxious for him to define his politics.”¹⁵ After Redemption, African Americans took the initiative to organize campaign events for Republicans in an attempt to keep the party viable in the region.

In a region dominated by Democrats, African Americans could help draw large crowds of African Americans to political spectacles held on behalf of the Republican, which inspired

¹⁴ “Republican Rally,” *The Intelligencer* (Anderson Court House, S. C.), Nov. 14, 1889, 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

indignation from Democrats. In October 1892, a black band “discoursed what was evidently meant to be sweet music for the purposes of drawing a crowd” to an evening of oratory at the court house in Asheville, North Carolina. When they heard the music, the town’s Democrats, who were “accustomed to the routine of meetings of this kind,” filed into the courthouse and took their seats. White Republicans came to the court house, as well. Additionally, African Americans “poured in, filled up the benches on the right, swarmed in and filled up the jury box, straddled the railing, perched on the edge of the judge’s stand and then stood themselves up in the aisles and everywhere where they could find room.” They had high expectations for the event. “They knew what they were to hear—and they wanted a full view of this man who was to fire them with his words.” During the speech, Republican M. L. Mott spoke in favor of labor rights and in support of protections for black voting rights, which earned him hearty applause from the black audience. After Mott finished his speech, which the local Democratic press referred to as “profane, vulgar and inflammatory,” the African Americans erupted. They “mounted the benches, threw their hats into the air and howled and howled; prominent men of the colored race clambered over each other in their efforts to get near their champion and perchance shake his hand.” Meanwhile, the black musicians contributed to the enthusiasm as they “blared its enjoyment” with the “tinkling cymbal” and “sounding brass.”¹⁶ This event started with black musicians and ended with black Republicans showing their support for the party with outward jubilation.

When the Republican Party did succeed on the national or local level, black and white Republicans affirmed these decisions with public spectacles. In June 1880, black and white Memphians celebrated the nomination of James Garfield as the Republican’s candidate for President. At 9 p.m., the black and white Republicans gathered at the bluff on a grandstand

¹⁶ “Wild Republican Talk,” *Daily Citizen* (Asheville, N.C.), Oct. 17, 1892, 1.

decorated with flags and banners. For the most part, the crowd consisted of African Americans, including a black band, which “discoursed music” for the occasion. Although Republicans had already nominated Garfield at the Republican National Convention in Chicago, Memphis’s Republicans staged the meeting “for the purpose of ratifying” his nomination. During the ceremony, speakers took the stage to stump for Garfield, including William R. Moore who explained that the Republican Party united people from “originally across the sea” and other sections of the country and the world. He declared, “whether the blood which courses through our veins be Anglo-Saxon, Caucasian or African—we are all tonight, thanks to the genius of the great Republican party, Americans, freemen and fellow citizens.” Next, he condemned the Democratic Party for trying to split the nation during the Civil War but acknowledged, gratefully, that “old things have passed away.”¹⁷ At the spectacles of the Republican Party, the Civil War remained a central talking point precisely because their party had led the northern war effort. By participating, African Americans could help strengthen the party’s claims that they welcomed black voters.

After victories in national elections, black and white Republicans legitimized the result with spectacular democratic rituals on the local level. After Republican Benjamin Harrison’s victory over incumbent Democrat Grover Cleveland in the 1888 presidential election, the Republicans of Woodstock, Virginia, participated in a “grand illumination and street pageant” to celebrate. Despite heavier rain earlier in the day and the constant threat of bad weather, the Republicans formed a procession on the south end of the town. At the corner of Main Street and Court Street, they erected a “huge, cone-shaped pile of pine” for a bonfire, which “lighted up the heavens until a late hour.” The procession featured numerous local party leaders and musicians, including some black musicians. The 500 marchers carried torches and banners through the

¹⁷ “Radical Rally,” *Memphis Appeal*, Jun. 30, 1880, 1.

city's muddy streets and eventually congregated in court house square where bands provided some entertainment and speakers delivered orations to commemorate the victory. The spectacle helped generate a sense of pride "of so manly a spirit" and testified to the strength of the party in Virginia. A reporter indicated that the Republicans would gather again in a year for "a monster celebration" when Republicans won the state's gubernatorial race.¹⁸ African Americans took to the streets to celebrate victories for their preferred candidates, but they also used spectacular street demonstrations to legitimize defeats of undesirable politicians.

In addition to celebrating electoral victories, Americans used rough music to publicly intimidate Democratic candidates. In July 1902, senatorial and congressional candidates held a meeting in Hibernian Hall in Charleston, South Carolina. Before the meeting, Charleston residents spread rumors that a mob intended to "howl down" former governor John Gary Evans, a Democrat, but the "friends of all the candidates went diligently to work to prevent it." J. H. Thayer, who helped organize the meeting, removed "one young man" from the audience because he had singled this person out as the "leader of the mob."¹⁹ Americans continued to use mob tactics to embarrass candidates and prevent them from speaking. In Charleston, the reporter did not indicate whether the mob included African Americans, but African Americans did use these tactics for political purposes.

African Americans used rough music to mock defeated candidates, specifically the candidates they opposed. On November 9, 1887, "a large crowd of disorderly negro men, women and children, headed by a negro band, paraded some of the streets" of Alexandria, Virginia, "to celebrate the defeat of Judge Stuart." As they marched by his home, the marchers yelled and

¹⁸ "Woodstock Ablaze! The Republicans Celebrate—A Large Crowd in Town—Five Hundred People in Line," *Shenandoah Herald* (Woodstock, VA), Nov. 23, 1888, 3.

¹⁹ "The Campaign: At Charleston—Attempt to Howl Evans Down," *Kingstree County Record* (Kingstree, SC), Jul. 24, 1902, 2; "The Campaign: At Charleston—Attempt to Howl Evans Down," *The News and Herald* (Winnsboro, SC), Jul. 23, 1902, 2.

jeered at the defeated candidate. They set off firecrackers, as well. They continued to an empty lot by his home, where they buried his effigy. After this display, they went to the store owned by the victorious candidate, who addressed the crowd and thanked them for their work on his behalf. He expressed pride in the “victory they had won in the hot-bed” of the Democratic Party.²⁰ With these performances, African Americans legitimized the results of elections by demonstrating their popular approval.

Similarly, African Americans used rough music and street theater to ostracize members of their own race who violated community norms. On the same night in Alexandria, African Americans burned one of their black neighbors in effigy in an empty lot in the northeastern part of the city. Henry Johnson, a black well digger from Alexandria, voted the Democratic ticket, so the black crowd burned his likeness and paraded the charred effigy through the streets. The Democratic press condemned these events. They argued that white Republicans “must have felt humiliated after witnessing such proceedings” and argued that the crowd’s actions “showed what they would do if their party should ever get into power again.”²¹ The black community had no legal recourse for members of the community that voted against their collective wishes, but they did have the means to humiliate and condemn these violators. In response to these tactics, white Democrats characterized the black community as unfit for governance and politics. By acknowledging the black mob’s behavior and condemning it, however, white Democrats acknowledged its political significance and, therefore, the political power of the mob.

In addition to humiliating candidates and legitimizing results, black performers could honor Republican candidates, who acknowledged them as political actors and presented impromptu speeches to the crowd. In 1880, Alvin Hawkins ran for governor of Tennessee as a

²⁰ “Local News,” *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, Nov. 11, 1887, 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Republican. On the morning of Thursday, July 22, Knoxville residents congregated outside Hawkins's hotel room in the Hattie House Hotel. Outside the hotel, Tom Prince's black brass band serenaded the gubernatorial candidate. In response, Hawkins emerged and gave some brief remarks, which "were well received by quite a crowd."²² Hawkins had strong support from the black community. As the election drew near, prognosticators expected that "at least thirty thousand negroes" would vote for Hawkins, who would then win the election. After counting the ballots in November, Hawkins indeed prevailed.²³ In March 1886, a black band paid a visit to a hotel in Maryville, Tennessee, where they serenaded H. B. Lindsay, who emerged in January as the leading Republican candidate for Attorney General. According to an endorsement from *The Maryville Times*, Lindsay had earned a reputation as an "honest, upright and able young man" and "good lawyer." Upon hearing the music, he thanked them for their support with "a few hearty words and a basket of apples."²⁴ When African Americans wanted to show their appreciation to government officials, they often rendered their thanks in the form of serenades. When candidates and government officials recognized the presence of African Americans, they also legitimized their presence in the public sphere despite society's opinion that they did not belong there.

African Americans could connect the Republican Party with Union victory in the Civil War and, therefore, keep sectional spirit alive for partisan purposes by choosing to play specific, war-themed songs. In 1889, Republicans rallied outside their party headquarters in Richmond, Virginia. The rally featured Congressman Charles N. Brumm of Pennsylvania, and the audience consisted mostly of African Americans. During the event, a black band "discoursed side-show

²² "Another Serenade to Judge Hawkins," *Daily Chronicle* (Knoxville, TN), Jul. 24, 1880, 4.

²³ Editorial, *The Pulaski Citizen* (Pulaski, TN), Aug. 26, 1880, 2; "Again: Republicans Everywhere Victorious," *Daily Chronicle* (Knoxville, TN), Nov. 5, 1880, 1.

²⁴ *The Maryville Times* (Maryville, TN), Mar. 17, 1886, 5; "Lindsay for Attorney General," *The Maryville Times* (Maryville, TN), Jan. 27, 1886, 1; *The Maryville Times* (Maryville, TN), Apr. 7, 1886, 3.

music.” Brumm spoke for almost two hours on the subject of protective tariffs. After completing his speech, the black audience erupted into their “most enthusiastic cheer” of the night when the black musicians “tooted the tune dear to every negro.” They played “Marching Through Georgia,” which recalled General William Tecumseh Sherman’s destructive military campaign in Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina.²⁵ The song’s author, Henry Clay Work, worked for a music publisher during the Civil War. At the firm Root and Cady, he helped write more than 75 Union anthems. A month after Sherman completed his campaign, Work published a song in Sherman’s honor, and it became immensely popular in the North. It remained immensely popular after the war, as well. In 1890, General Sherman reviewed troops at a Grand Army of the Republic parade, and he heard the song hundreds of times as the soldiers passed. It would also become a staple at veterans’ reunions.²⁶ By playing the song for a northern Republican, African Americans could help strengthen the bonds between the party and the northern war effort, which resulted in victory and emancipation.

In addition to linking the Republican Party to Civil War victory, African Americans mocked the Confederacy’s defeat and legacy with public displays. In November 1905, black musicians from Company A of the Capital City Guards from Montgomery, Alabama, caused quite a stir. At the time, they were the only black soldiers in the Alabama National Guard. As they marched to their barracks, the black musicians leading the company played “Hang Jeff Davis on the Sour Apple Tree,” which condemned the Confederacy’s first and only president and mocked southern memory of the Civil War.²⁷ It would have challenged contemporary southern social and political order, as well. As the fifth stanza of the abolitionist anthem “John Brown’s Body,” the Jefferson Davis, especially in the context of the entire song, express a desire for

²⁵ “Congressman Brumm: Discussion of the Tariff Before a Negro Audience,” *Richmond Dispatch*, Oct. 19, 1889, 1.

²⁶ Edwin Tribble, “Marching Through Georgia,” *The Georgia Review*, 21 (Winter 1967): 423-429.

²⁷ “Played ‘Hang Jeff Davis,’” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Nov. 10, 1905, 1.

revenge against slaveholders. It was immensely popular during the Civil War, especially among soldiers who considered it a fine marching companion. The tune, which has its origins in the South, served the basis for many songs, including “John Brown’s Body” and Julia Ward Howe’s “Battle Hymn of the Republic.”²⁸ The reporters did not indicate that the black marchers sang the words to the song or only played the tune. If the marchers only played the tune, the reporters inferred that the black musicians wanted to hang Jefferson Davis from a sour apple tree. When questioned, the black musicians denied playing this particular tune. Despite these denials, white officers created a petition to encourage the Governor William D. Jelks, a Democrat, to muster the soldiers out of camp. Governor Jelks did, in fact, muster the soldiers out, but he claimed to know nothing of the incident and sent them out because they “could not be called upon in the emergencies for which troops are now used in Alabama, which are to suppress riots or to disperse a mob.”²⁹ Nonetheless, Jelks discharged them from service. If Jelks had acknowledged the political implications of the band’s musical selection, he would have recognized the political awareness and aptitude of the black musicians. By remaining silent, however, he hoped to keep the black band invisible. They refused to remain invisible and their actions earned recognition from newspapers, which legitimized their political activity.

Similarly, African Americans made political statements with their musical selections to embarrass Democrats by suggesting death or destruction. In 1892, black musicians gave Tennessee Governor John P. Buchanan a preview of his funeral. Buchanan, a Democrat, rose to power in Tennessee by supporting Populist platforms, such as the regulation of railroad rates and a tax exemption for farmers’ cooperatives. In 1890, he ran for governor and won. During his campaign, he argued against federal legislation, such as the Lodge Bill, to protect black voting

²⁸ John Stauffer, “The Song That Marches On,” *Civil War Times* 54 (Feb. 2015): 58-65.

²⁹ “Played ‘Hang Jeff Davis,’” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Nov. 10, 1905, 1.

rights in the South. In 1891, he took office and worked with Democrats and Republicans in the state legislature to ease the hardships of Tennessee's farmers and laborers. During the first year of his administration, the Tennessee legislature enacted laws recognizing Labor Day as a holiday, protecting Tennessee business from foreign competition, and establishing the state's Commission of Labor. In addition to these measures, Buchanan supported higher poll taxes. On October 17, 1892, Buchanan spoke to a biracial audience at the Farmers' Alliance Tobacco Warehouse in Clarksville, Tennessee. According to the *Memphis Appeal-Avalanche*, Buchanan encountered a "chilly" reception. In the morning, many of the spectators traveled from many nearby counties and from across the border in Kentucky to hear Buchanan speak. By 10 a.m., the crowd numbered about 500 people. The crowd consisted of a few Buchanan supporters, but most of the crowd came just "to see the fun." Before the speaking engagement, Buchanan and his supporters paraded through the town to the warehouse. The procession included 128 men on horses, a few people in carriages, and 180 members of the Farmers' Alliance, who walked the parade route on foot. Notably, Buchanan rode in a carriage pulled by four white hearse horses. The parade featured two musical groups: the Clarksville Military Band and a black band. During the parade, the black musicians played funeral dirges, such as "She Is Sleeping in the Valley," "The Dead March," "We Are Few and Far Between," and "Our Days are Numbered." After the event, Tennesseans debated the significance of the horses and the funeral songs. Whether intentional or not, the black musicians had made a political statement and humiliated Buchanan.³⁰

Tennesseans expressed similar opinions concerning the meaning of the funeral horses and the songs played by the black musicians. In *Memphis Appeal-Avalanche*, the reporter explained

³⁰ "Buchanan's Reception," *Daily Tobacco Leaf-Chronicle* (Clarksville, TN), Oct. 18, 1892, 1; "Blacks Guy Buchanan," *Memphis Appeal-Avalanche*, Oct. 18, 1892, 1.

that no one seemed to know if the band played the music “by chance or not.” Despite the uncertainty, they used the headline “Blacks Guy Buchanan,” which insinuated that the black musicians had purposefully represented the governor in effigy.³¹ In Clarksville’s *Semi-Weekly Tobacco Leaf-Chronicle*, a reporter argued that the scene of the hearses and the music had left an impression on the spectators. According to the reporter, the horses “suggested a funeral procession” with election day “as the day of internment.” The reporter added that the “burial will take place promptly [sic] on that day, and the oration will be delivered by the Democracy of the Old Volunteer State.” Finally, the reporter concluded that the “pall-bearers will be named late, and everybody will be invited.” When the black musicians played the funeral songs, observers seized upon the opportunity for political commentary. With regard to Governor John P. Buchanan’s procession in Clarksville, a local Republican penned a note to a reporter stating that he considered the music “whether by chance or intentionally” as quite “appropriate for the occasion” given that he expected imminent demise for the Populist-leaning Democrat.³² In the newspaper coverage of the event, reporters do not hesitate to give white Tennesseans a political voice. They seized upon the music and the horses and made numerous quips about Buchanan’s likely demise. The reporters, however, failed to acknowledge any political awareness on behalf of the black musicians. By refusing to give them credit for well-played political commentary, the newspaper reporters perpetuated the stereotype of the feckless black musician without a political conscious.

³¹ “Blacks Guy Buchanan,” *Memphis Appeal-Avalanche*, Oct. 18, 1892, 1; According to the Oxford English Dictionary, late-nineteenth-century English speakers in Great Britain and the United States used the word “guy” to refer to the action of representing someone in effigy. They derived the term from Guy Fawkes, who intended to blow up Parliament. On Guy Fawkes Day, Britons carried effigies of Guy Fawkes through the streets. Americans used the term to refer to the same type of activity.

³² “She Is Sleeping in the Valley,” *Daily Tobacco Leaf-Chronicle* (Clarksville, TN.), Oct. 17, 1892, 1.

Based on this stereotype, white Americans employed African Americans in an attempt to embarrass government officials, including the President of the United States. In 1887, President Grover Cleveland nominated a black man to serve as the city's Recorder of Deeds. To the surprise of local pundits, the Senate confirmed the appointment by a large majority. Unaware of these developments, a local milk man employed black musicians to stand outside the White House, and they played popular ragtime song "A New Coon in Town" four times. The song, composed by J. S. Putnam in 1883, became incredibly popular with audiences and told the story of a gambling, flirtatious black man, who came to town and made "the boys all cry." Despite unflattering lyrics, songs like "A New Coon in Town" became so popular with white Americans that they helped bring black music into the national mainstream. In fact, black musicians composed their own versions of "coon songs" to take advantage of ragtime's popularity.³³ The milk man, Frank Ward, may have employed the band to harass President Cleveland with stereotypical images of African Americans to deter him from employing a black man in government. As a working-class man, Ward likely considered ragtime or "coon songs" as particularly poignant given that working-class Americans used minstrel music to stigmatize African Americans, thus separating them on the basis of race.³⁴ Although Ward hired a black band for political purposes, he did not contradict his political views because of the seemingly flippant nature of black music and black musicians. As black musicians did with minstrel songs, these black musicians, however, may have taken the job and played the role to earn money, gain access to white audiences, and spread black styles into the national mainstream.

³³ Errol G. Hill and James V. Hatch, *A History of African American Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 141-142; "Minstrel Songs and Negro Melodies from the Sunny South: New Coon in Town," Johns Hopkins University, Levy Sheet Music Collection, Box 138, Item 008, <http://jhir.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/15300>; Also, see Lott, *Love & Theft*.

³⁴ Lott, *Love & Theft*.

On rare occasions, biracial spectacles staged on behalf of the Republican Party turned violent and deadly. In 1894, Republicans in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, gathered in town for a procession. The crowd consisted of 200 African Americans and “a few white men.” As they organized the parade, the white and black marchers debated whether the white or black marchers should lead the parade. The white Republicans refused to march behind African Americans and quit the parade. Led by a black brass band, the black marchers continued the parade until a law enforcement officer approached them. The black marchers carried weapons to fire into the air during the parade. At the officer approached, a black marcher “fired at him” with the “load of shot earing a hole in his coat” and hit a bystander, who died. The officer shot and wounded the black marcher and took him into custody. In the courtroom, the officer tried to kill the black gunman “but was prevented from doing so.”³⁵ Within the Republican Party, African Americans did not have an equal status. Republicans refused to cede positions of honor to African Americans and might consider large crowds as threatening.

In the South, African Americans could help attract audiences to Republican gatherings in preference to the Democratic meetings. On October 14, 1889, Democrats and Republicans in Staunton, Virginia held competing rallies. The Democrats hosted their event at the court house. The Republicans staged their rally at the skating rink. Both political parties employed musicians to generate enthusiasm. The Republicans employed both a black and a white band for the evening’s event. They “paraded the streets several times drawing out the crowd towards the skating rink.”³⁶ African Americans, however, did not always lend their support to the Republicans.

³⁵ “Race Trouble in Kentucky,” *Staunton Spectator* (Staunton, VA), Nov. 21, 1894, 4.

³⁶ “The Canvass: Political Meetings,” *Staunton Spectator* (Staunton, VA), Oct. 16, 1889, 3.

Although African Americans tended to support the Republican Party, African Americans had a presence at the campaign spectacles of both political parties, even in the same place at the same time. In October 1878, black and white South Carolinians prepared massive demonstrations for the upcoming midterm elections. On Saturday, October 12, Democrats and Republicans held competing rallies in Sumter, South Carolina. At 3 a.m., Democrats fired cannon to signal the start of the day's festivities. At 5 a.m., more artillery fired and "kept it up all day till after the meeting." African Americans set up a stage at Emanuel Church for speakers. In the center of town, more than 3,000 black and white Democrats congregated in the city and "two splendid bands furnished music for the occasion." Simultaneously, Sumter's Republicans had their own meeting. According to observers, the Republican meeting consisted entirely of African Americans, who "marched through the town." Although a "collision" seemed imminent, General Johnson Hagood "rode slowly to the spot with six hundred mounted Democrats." With this "show of force and the personal exertions of a few determined citizens," a potential riot fizzled out.³⁷ In these local political spectacles, Democrats and Republicans exhibited a high level of militaristic spirit and emotions ran high. African Americans could participate at the events of either party, but they could face harassment for their continued support of the Republican Party in South Carolina. When the party's competed, furthermore, the threat of violence persisted.

On the same day, Republicans and Democrats gathered near Chester, South Carolina. The Chester Democratic Club held a rally featuring numerous speakers who bickered with one another. Major Julius Mills condemned a fellow candidate, J. A. Bradley, Jr., for his alliance with the Republican Party. On the same night, Bradley had spoken at a Republican Party rally in the nearby town of Lewis' Turnout, which consisted of a small audience thus demonstrating "the little interest taken by negroes in politics." At the Chester meeting, Bradley, Jr. spoke again and

³⁷ "Excitement at Sumter," *Yorkville Enquirer* (Yorkville, SC), Oct. 17, 1878, 2.

defended his alliance. He could not “stand the denunciation” and left the event “amid great Democratic cheering.” Although it was a midterm election year, the event “partook somewhat of the spirit of the campaign of ’76 in its fervor and enthusiasm,” including the Democratic Colored Band, which “furnished music for the occasion.”³⁸ In South Carolina, African Americans participated in the spectacles staged on behalf of both political parties. As Republicans, they faced harassment and intimidation. As Democrats, however, they reportedly contributed to a festive atmosphere.

In the post-Reconstruction South, African Americans performed similar duties for Democrats as they did for Republicans, such as generating enthusiasm and setting the tone of campaign events. For white Democrats, however, the presence of black musicians had a significantly different meaning for both the black and white southerners. Democrats employed black musicians while condemning black voters, suggesting that the black musician did not threaten white politics. As performers, African Americans generated sectional spirit for the Democratic Party and revived postbellum stereotypes of antebellum black musicians, who happily played music for benevolent masters. In some cases, white Democrats expressed delight at the sight of black musicians playing southern songs, especially “Dixie.” Democrats used the presence of African Americans at their events to portray themselves as the best friend of the black southerner. In other cases, Democrats condemned the sight of black spectators, even at their own events, because they wanted to restrict economic opportunities to white performers. Based on these critiques, it seems likely that black performers benefited economically from political spectacles.

³⁸ “Correspondence of the Yorkville Enquirer: Letter from Chester,” *Yorkville Enquirer* (Yorkville, SC), Oct. 17, 1878, 2.

African Americans had a notable presence at the campaign rallies staged on behalf of Democrats. In 1884, the Democrats of Chester, South Carolina, welcomed key party leaders with “the booming of artillery and warmest demonstrations of enthusiasm.” The residents of Chester closed their shops and went to the rally, which featured a grand procession and numerous orations. The Sandy River Band and two black bands “dispensed music on the thrilling occasion” as Democrats marched through the town in red shirts. Throughout the South, white Democrats formed paramilitary organizations, such as the Ku Klux Klan. Similarly, many white Democrats adorned red shirts as the uniform of their particular organization. Known as the Red Shirts, these terrorists intimidated non-Democratic voters, especially black voters. In South Carolina, Red Shirts helped Wade Hampton III, who had served as a Confederate cavalry officer, win his gubernatorial and senatorial campaigns.³⁹ On a “beautifully decorated stage,” the speakers engaged a massive, enthusiastic audience with oratory that sizzled with all “the patriotic fire of which their souls were capable.”⁴⁰ With these newspaper reports, editors portrayed party rallies as unprecedentedly enthusiastic. They wanted non-attendees to wish they had been there, and they provided an account of the events to help fellow partisans relive the events and feel involved in the spectacle. At the heart of these spectacles, African Americans often participated, thus claiming a remarkable, visible space for themselves in the public sphere despite the Democrats’ attempt to eliminate them.

African Americans helped set the tone for Democratic events, but they could not always overcome a speaker’s deficiencies. In July 1902, a former governor of South Carolina, Democrat John Gary Evans, spoke at a campaign meeting in Walterboro, South Carolina. Before he spoke,

³⁹ George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 132; Nicholas Lemann, *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007), 74-80.

⁴⁰ “Letter from Chester,” *Yorkville Enquirer* (Yorkville, SC), Oct. 9, 1884, 2.

a black band struck up the famous tune “There Will Be a Hot Time in the Old Town.” “It was wondered if this tune was prophetic,” commented a reporter, who lamented, “but it was not.” According to the reporter, “Mr. Evans’ voice was hoarse from his effort at Charleston.”⁴¹ By choosing certain music, black musicians could alter the atmosphere of a campaign event. They could raise expectations and generate energy for the upcoming presentations, but the candidates did not always equal these expectations.

During the 1880s, black and white Democrats, like Republicans, continued to view street spectacles as vitally important to the party’s health and to ratify political decisions. In 1888, Democrats in Shelbyville, Kentucky, organized a flag-raising ceremony in support of President Grover Cleveland, who ran for re-election against Republican challenger Benjamin Harrison. In the early stages of the 1888 campaign season, the town’s Democrats “wanted to be the first to float a Cleveland and Thurman flag from a hickory pole.” On July 9, the Democrats realized their goal and town residents “witnessed the culmination of this patriotic desire” amid flashes of lightning, crashes of thunder, and heavy rain. The weather kept many people at home, who otherwise would have participated in the “jollification.” Despite “drenching rain,” the flag-raising ceremony attracted a crowd of “hundreds from the surrounding country.” The event organizers erected a “stout, shapely” 108-foot white pole. Amid the festivities, a black band “paraded the streets in uniform” and played “furious music” to the crowd of almost 2,000 people. After some speeches, the Democrats raised the thirty-foot-long flag at 2 p.m. while “the band played a selection of patriotic airs.” After raising the flag, a salesman “with lungs like bellows” attempted to interrupt the next set of speakers. He took advantage of the large crowd to market his wares with a “voice uncommonly loud and harsh.” “It was no use for an orator to dispute the

⁴¹ “The Campaign: At Walterboro,” *Kingstree County Record* (Kingstree, SC), Jul. 24, 1902, 2; “The Campaign: At Walterboro,” *The News and Herald* (Winnsboro, SC), Jul. 23, 1902, 2.

field with him—that fellow was screeching and thundering loud enough to frighten the most aggressive kind of opposition,” explained a reporter. After a short conference of the events’ organizers, they agreed that the black musicians “should play and drown the fellow out,” which they did “until the man with the wares was forced to abandon his task.” A reporter characterized these campaign spectacles as “not important of itself” but nonetheless explained that most people viewed this type of event “as an attractive campaign adjunct.” The flag-raising ceremony helped generate enthusiasm, which testified to the strength of the party. At the event, a speaker made sure to comment that the Republicans, despite their best efforts, could not “get up a counter demonstration.” At the event, Judge W. H. Anderson encouraged his party “to be up and doing” and help make sure that Kentucky votes Democrat in the upcoming election.⁴² By staging these events, the people legitimized the Democratic National Convention’s nomination. At this particular event, African Americans participated in an American tradition and helped erect the Democrats’ pole, which served as a sign of the party’s prowess in the area.⁴³

On behalf of Republicans, black musicians helped render Democrats inaudible, but black musicians similarly used this tactic to harass Republicans. In August 1882, for example, Republicans and Readjusters in Richmond gathered for a night of oratory. When candidate S. Brown Allen took the stage, “the colored band struck up and he had to desist.”⁴⁴ As they had done in Tazewell, the black musicians made it impossible for the audience to hear the speaker.

Democrats employed black musicians for campaign purposes yet harshly attacked African Americans in their speeches at the same events. In the 1906 gubernatorial race in Georgia, Democrat Clark Howell, who served as editor of *Atlanta Constitution* alongside Henry

⁴² “Shelby Democrats,” *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), Jul. 10, 1888, 1.

⁴³ For more information on pole-raising ceremonies, see McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 27-33. According to McGerr, these ceremonies declined by the turn of the century in the North.

⁴⁴ “Speech of S. Brown Allen,” *Staunton Spectator* (Staunton, VA), Aug. 29, 1882, 3.

Grady, campaigned against Democrat Michael Hoke Smith, who had edited *Atlanta Journal* and had Populist leanings.⁴⁵ On Monday, April 16, Howell rallied voters in Swainsboro Georgia, and the local managers employed a black band from Savannah for the occasion. When he arrived at the train depot, hundreds of supporters gathered to greet him, and the brass band added “some lively music” to the “already overflowing enthusiasm.”⁴⁶ Eventually, Howell made his way to the court house, which swelled with people. In addition to the packed building, hundreds of people gathered outside to hear him speak. For two hours, Howell spoke to “the largest crowd of people who ever assembled at a political gathering.” In Swainsboro, he spoke mostly on the disfranchisement question.⁴⁷ The local press did not reprint his speech but explained that he showed “conclusively that the propositions to put the franchise question on an educational basis would mean the disfranchisement of thousands of good white citizens all over Georgia.”⁴⁸ Despite his harsh position toward black voting rights, his campaign managers deemed it appropriate to acquire black music for his campaign rallies.

Upon learning of the presence of a black band at Howell’s address in Swainsboro, Smith’s former employer, *Atlanta Journal*, condemned Howell for not employing white musicians for the campaign event. The editors of *Atlanta Journal* criticized the event organizers for choosing a black band, which they identified as Middleton’s Cornet Band, for the occasion when “it is known that there is a white band in Savannah trying hard to get a foothold and is looking for just such engagements as this to help them get along.” In the criticism of Howell, the editors recognized the economic importance of these engagements. They admitted that the black

⁴⁵ J. Chal Vinson, “Hoke Smith and the ‘Battle of the Standards’ in Georgia, 1895-1896,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, v. 26 (Sept. 1952), 201-219; Dewey W. Grantham, Jr., “Hoke Smith: Progressive Governor of Georgia, 1907-1909,” *Journal of Southern History*, 15 (Nov. 1949), 423-440.

⁴⁶ “Great Crowd Hears Howell at Swainsboro,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Apr. 17, 1906, 1.

⁴⁷ “Howell in Emanuel,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Apr. 29, 1906, A5.

⁴⁸ “Great Crowd Hears Howell at Swainsboro,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Apr. 17, 1906, 1-2; Hon. Clark Howell in Swainsboro,” *The Forest-Blade* (Swainsboro, GA), Apr. 19, 1906, 1.

band “attracted a good deal of attention” for the rally. Then, they praised Smith for hiring the white musicians from Savannah for his rally in Statesboro.⁴⁹ From the perspective of white editors, the employment of a black band did not seemingly have any political meaning, but it did entail economic opportunity, and they believed that white musicians should get the first shot at these opportunities.

In response to this attack, a Howell supporter defended the use of black musicians and criticized *Atlanta Journal* for creating racial tension. In a letter to *The Americus Times-Recorder* reprinted in Howell’s *Atlanta Constitution*, a writer condemned Smith’s *Atlanta Journal* for reaching the “very limit of disgusting demagoguery” in its report of the Swainsboro rally. In the letter, the author criticized the editors of *Atlanta Journal* for their attempt “to drag the color line into the affairs as if it were a heinous crime for white citizens to listen to the music of a negro band.” He argued that *Atlanta Journal* editors “gladly seized upon the opportunity to engender race hatred.” He characterized their “recent exudation of claptrap” as just an opportunity for them to “make a little cheap thunder” for another Democratic candidate, Hoke Smith.⁵⁰ In an era of disfranchisement and segregation, white Democrats tended to reserve their condemnation for black voters, whereas black performers escaped unscathed, but even black performers could not infiltrate every space.

Among the few documented critiques of black performers at white events, the residents of Winston, North Carolina, expressed the most disgust at the presence of black musicians at formal and informal political spectacles. These constituents condemned their government and their candidates for employing black musicians as a waste of party and state funds. In 1893, a

⁴⁹ “Negro Band Plays ‘Hail to the Chief’ for Clark Howell,” *Atlanta Journal*, Apr. 16, 1906, 1.

⁵⁰ “Another Mare’s Nest,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Apr. 29, 1906, A5: According to *Atlanta Constitution*, someone penned this letter to *Americus Times-Recorder*, but I could not find any evidence of the original letter in the newspaper.

black band entertained the guests at the inauguration of Governor Elias Carr, a Democrat, in North Carolina. At the inaugural ball held in Raleigh, organizers arranged to pay \$150 for music. According to a constituent, the “gallant young men” and the “fair young ladies” accompanying them reacted with surprise “when it was discovered that the music was furnished by a negro band.” He wondered “how it was so essential” to the dancing that the state had to “appropriate money to pay the fiddlers.” The author, known only as R. Penstock, suggested instead that the funds should have gone to help soldiers and orphans. He asked readers and the editors to think about “how many little orphans” could have been “made comfortable and happy had that ball money been tendered the Orphan Asylum.”⁵¹ A year later, North Carolinians still lamented the expenditure. A. M. Self, who had served in the state congress, wrote a letter to the same paper, in which he explained that if the legislature of his youth “had been as liberal with the people’s money as the last legislature was and had given to the public schools instead of giving to a negro band to play at the inauguration of Gov. Carr, I might have been able to have written my name.”⁵² Two years later, another author made a similar argument. In response to a column suggesting that politicians should not pay speakers for their appearances, George E. Hunt of North Carolina wrote a letter in which he referenced past abuses of public funds and suggested that paying speakers represented a wiser and more honest use of funds than using the money “to buy votes and bribe judges.” He also referenced the inaugural ball, in which the state legislature appropriated “\$500 of the people’s money to have a big dance and hire a negro band from Richmond, Va., to make music for them to dance by.”⁵³ At times, southerners resented the employment of African Americans for entertainment purposes at political events, especially

⁵¹ R. Penstock, “The Inaugural Ball,” *The Progressive Farmer* (Winston, NC), Jan. 25, 1893, 3.

⁵² “Letter from Chatham: Mr. Self, a Member of the Last House, Hits Some Blows at His Political Enemies,” *The Progressive Farmer* (Winston, NC), Jun. 6, 1893, 8.

⁵³ “Put at Light Work: A Reply to the Vienna Correspondent of the Western Sentinel,” *The Progressive Farmer* (Winston, NC), May 16, 1894, 4.

when white entertainers could have been procured. Rather than framing their objections in political terms, they portrayed the problem of employing black musicians in economic terms. They wanted to restrict black economic opportunity.

On some occasions, the presence of black musicians made such a strong and obvious political statement that Democrats rejected them. On July 31, 1907, Governor James K. Vardaman staged a rally in Jackson, Mississippi, and he needed music for the procession. He hoped to win a seat in the United States Senate, and the evening's parade and subsequent rally provided him one last chance to convince voters to send him to Washington, D. C. Congressman John Sharpe Williams, who opposed him, staged a rally on the same night, and he had already contracted all of the local musicians for his event. To acquire musical talent, Vardaman's campaign sent for musicians from Vicksburg. "By mistake," explained a reporter commenting from the perspective of the Vardaman campaign, "the people at the Vicksburg end sent a crowd of tooters as black as the ace of spades." While dining at the Mississippi State House, Vardaman looked out the window and saw 22 "darky musicians lined up in front of the Governor's mansion tuning up their instruments in preparation for the Vardaman parade." Upon seeing the black musicians, Vardaman exclaimed, "A nigger band!" and almost "fell from his dinner chair in a faint." Immediately, he sent an aide to inform the brass band that they must return to Vicksburg "by the first train."⁵⁴ After sending away the musicians, Vardaman carried out his final rally. Like Williams's campaign event, the Vardaman's rally consisted of street parades and

⁵⁴ "A Negro Band in Vardaman Parade," *The Times Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), Aug. 2, 1907, 3; "The Williams-Vardaman Contest," *New York Tribune*, Aug. 1, 1907, 1.

fireworks.⁵⁵ Despite his popularity in Mississippi, Vardaman did not win in the 1907 senatorial election, but he did become a U. S. Senator in 1911 and served one term.⁵⁶

Given Vardaman's reputation, he undoubtedly felt humiliated at the prospect of marching behind black musicians, so it seems plausible that organizers in Vicksburg sent him a black band on purpose to embarrass him; or, the black musicians embraced the opportunity for economic or political reasons. During Vardaman's political career, he developed a reputation for his use of racial tactics, which alienated many moderates, especially in the northern states. Nonetheless, he was massively popular with white Mississippians. He condoned mob law and claimed to lack respect for white people who refused to lynch insubordinate African Americans. He supported lynching and condemned President Theodore Roosevelt for hosting Booker T. Washington at the White House.⁵⁷ He even earned the nickname "White Chief" because of his "espousal of white superiority theories."⁵⁸ He may have been the only person whose racial theories prevented him from employing black musicians for campaign purposes. He seems to have considered the possibility that someone had intentionally sent him black musicians in an effort to humiliate him. According to reporter, Vardaman remained angry about the mix-up and "undecided whether a joke has been played on him or whether he is a victim of a famine in white musicians in Mississippi." He asked one of his aides to investigate in order "to ascertain whether a joke was played on him."⁵⁹ In rare circumstances, white politicians had espoused such hateful racial rhetoric that they could not conceive of permitting African Americans to participate in their

⁵⁵ "The Mississippi Senatorship," *The Hartford Courant*, Aug. 5, 1907, 8.

⁵⁶ "Death Takes Vardaman of Mississippi," *Chicago Defender*, Jul. 5, 1930, 3; "Vardaman in Senate," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, Aug. 12, 1911, 4.

⁵⁷ Eugene E. White, "Mississippi's Great White Chief: The Speaking of James K. Vardaman in the Mississippi Gubernatorial Campaign of 1903," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 32 (Dec. 1946): 442-447.

⁵⁸ "Death Takes Vardaman of Mississippi," *Chicago Defender*, Jul. 5, 1930, 3; "Vardaman in Senate," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, Aug. 12, 1911, 4.

⁵⁹ "Both Candidates Claiming Victory in Mississippi," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Aug. 1, 1907, 1.

campaign events. By sending them away, Vardaman hoped to keep African Americans out of the public sphere, but he nonetheless had to acknowledge their presence to do as much.

For the most part, black performers could access spaces otherwise off limits to African Americans, but like Vardaman some southerners insisted on segregation and applied their rules to black performers. According to a reporter for *The Washington Post*, the white residents of Rock Creek in Mitchell County, North Carolina, boasted that African Americans cannot live among them. On one occasion, according to the reporter, “a negro band was taken there from Asheville during a political campaign, but the bandsmen had to flee for their lives.”⁶⁰ In general, white southerners reserved this type of harassment for black voters whose political power threatened Democratic control over the region. The black performer typically could infiltrate the Democratic Party by manipulating white stereotypes of black performers and southern nostalgia for the Old South.

At events held on behalf of the Democratic Party, black performers took on stereotypical roles reminiscent of the Old South, thus connecting the party with an idealized image of the master-slave relationship. In 1895, the residents of Fort Worth, Texas, prepared for the municipal elections by hosting a massive event featuring the many candidates for Alderman of three Fort Worth wards. The campaign committee developed a program for the campaign, which featured “oratory and music and other adjuncts that follow Democratic enthusiasm.” At this program, spectators could also expect to enjoy “a negro band with banjos playing and singing old plantation songs.” Overall, the campaign committee expressed optimism because the city does not “lack of good speakers.” The newspaper helped generate enthusiasm for the mass meeting at the city hall. A reporter explained that “there is great enthusiasm among Democrats and hundreds have signified their willingness to attend.” The campaign committee advertised the

⁶⁰ “All Negroes Barred Out,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 6, 1899, 9.

meeting in the streets and anticipated a heavy crowd. The program featured a ball, as well.⁶¹ By choosing to employ African Americans and requesting plantation songs for the occasion, Democrats tapped into postbellum nostalgia for the Old South, where masters enjoyed the plantation songs rendered by enslaved African Americans. To achieve electoral success, Democrats played on southerners' nostalgia for the Old South, and African Americans helped make these connections.

With their musical selections, African Americans could link the Democratic Party to southern nationalism. In March 1892, Senator David B. Hill, a Democrat from New York, toured Georgia by train as he campaigned for nomination as his party's presidential candidate. On March 17, he arrived in Savannah to a spectacular reception. The Hill Club of Savannah marched by the hotel in columns of fours. In front of them, a black band played "Dixie" for the northern Democrat. When they had assembled at the hotel's veranda, the black band struck up "Hail to the Chief."⁶² Despite having northern origins, Hill condemned "carpet-bagging vultures" who swooped "down on Southern capitalists." He praised the reunification of the country and claimed that the American form of government "represents an imperishable union of indestructible states." With his comments, Hill reached out to southern Democrats. With the music, the black band, most likely at the behest of the Hill Club of Savannah, connected southern nationalism with the Democratic Party. After leaving Savannah, he traveled to Augusta to continue his tour before heading back to Washington, D. C. On his way to the national capital, he stopped in Columbia, South Carolina, where a "colored band played a lively air" at the train station. In Columbia, he expressed his gratefulness that the state had been freed "from the control of carpet-

⁶¹ "Third Ward Complications," *The Gazette* (Fort Worth, TX), Mar. 23, 1895, 6.

⁶² "Our Federal Union," *Daily Globe* (St. Paul, MN), Mar. 18, 1892, 1.

baggers.”⁶³ Although Hill’s tour of the South seemingly helped reconcile the nation and connect Democrats across regional lines, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* editors chose the headline “Marching from Georgia” to remind readers of northern victory in the war.⁶⁴ For northerners and southerners, the Civil War and its legacy played out in spectacular fashion at campaign rallies and in newspapers, and African Americans had a role in this conversation with their choice in music by helping keep sectional spirit, and therefore partisanship, alive.

Employed by white Democrats, black musicians often played southern tunes, which generated sectional spirit for the Democratic Party. On August 30, 1909, thousands of Louisville residents “lined the downtown streets” to witness the Jeffersonian barbecue parade, which reporters characterized as “the greatest political spectacle in years.” The parade featured twelve bands, drum corps, and thousands of people on foot and horseback. The marchers carried American flags, banners, and torches of red or green. “As the parade weaved its course through the downtown streets,” observed a reporter, “the Democratic hosts were greeted with practically unceasing cheering” by enthusiastic crowds of spectators. In the parade, a black band led the marching clubs representing the tenth ward, which consisted “entirely of white voters.” According to a reporter, the black band “put greater spirit into the crowds as it passed” than any other. Behind them, the marchers of the eleventh and twelfth wards made their way through the city streets alongside “great numbers of attractive floats” and “pretty girls and women.” As the marchers paraded through the streets, event organizers launched fireworks, which “lit up the tall buildings in reds and greens and yellows.” Throughout the event, there “was no stoppage of music and the glare of vari-colored lights was continuous.” The musicians played “Dixie” and “My Old Kentucky Home,” which the crowds greeted with “wild and lusty cheering.” When the

⁶³ “Marching from Georgia,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Mar. 20, 1892, 6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

festivities ended, it took the local railroads hours to empty the city streets of all the participants. Reflecting on the event, a reporter argued that it “was evident that patriotism and the old-fashioned Democratic spirit” prevailed in Louisville.⁶⁵ Many people considered these types of spectacles as central to the democratic process and party success. By participating in these events, partisans generated enthusiasm and formed bonds with one another. African Americans and white women, who often opposed one another in the twentieth-century South, could simultaneously participate in these spectacles, especially if the black musicians helped white southerners reminiscence about the Old South.

When African Americans attended Democratic events, Democrats used their presence as evidence that they were the friend of the race. On October 19, 1892, Vice Presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson, a southern Democrat, spoke to an audience of more than 5,000 white and black spectators in Decatur, Alabama. “Never before in the history of this section has there assembled so many Democrats as were here today,” commented a reporter. The crowd consisted of people from across the Eight District, and they gave Stevenson a “royal welcome.” To entertain the crowds, musicians came to Decatur from nearby towns and cities, such as Huntsville and Cullman. The musicians “made the welkin ring with music” and the speakers “enthused the Democrats throughout the district.” A reporter to *Memphis Appeal-Avalanche* credited the enthusiastic audience for proving that “the district is safe for Democracy” and infusing “new life and hope into the party.” The committee that organized the event characterized the massive gathering as a “splendid success” because Stevenson “made the strongest speech” of all his time in Alabama and his associate “captivated every one with his logic.” Stevenson opposed the Federal Elections Bill proposed by Henry Cabot Lodge in 1890 to protect black southerners’ voting rights. Later that month, Stevenson argued that it “would threaten the liberties of the

⁶⁵ “Shoulder to Shoulder Democratic Hosts March,” *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), Sept. 1. 1909, 1.

entire people” and “would incite in many communities race troubles.” He called it “un-American” and argued that it would “destroy popular representation and the purity of local self government.”⁶⁶ Among the spectators, a “great many colored people” came to the gathering to “pay their respects to the General H. A. Skaggs,” who had served as a county executive and as “a faithful worker to make a success of the meeting.”⁶⁷ Like Stevenson, Skaggs had a local reputation as a loyal Democrat.⁶⁸ Although it seems unlikely that African Americans would attend an event staged on behalf of these two men, African Americans did have a notable presence. As they did in 1892 with regard to General Skaggs, Democrats wanted to disseminate accounts of African Americans at their events to solidify their image as the true friends to black southerners.

African Americans often greeted politicians and celebrities, including former Confederate generals, at train depots, which meant that they were among the first members of the public sphere to have contact with politicians. In August 1882, General William B. Bate, who had served in the Confederate Army, toured Tennessee as the Bourbon Democrats’ gubernatorial candidate. In Carter’s Creek, Tennessee, Bate and more than three thousand supporters participated in a barbecue and rally. Spectators came to town on trains “from both directions.” When Bate arrived at the train depot, a black band from Columbia, Tennessee, furnished music to welcome him.⁶⁹ Although it may not always be clear why black musicians chose to play for certain candidates, they at least used these opportunities to showcase their talents, which led to economic opportunity.

⁶⁶ “Mr. Stevenson’s Letter,” *New York Times*, Oct. 31, 1892, 1; Jean H. Baker, *The Stevensons: A Biography of an American Family* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997), 148-150.

⁶⁷ “Adoration for Adlai,” *Memphis Appeal-Avalanche*, Oct. 20, 1892, 1.

⁶⁸ Editorial, *The Hamilton Times* (Hamilton, AL), Nov. 24, 1892, 2.

⁶⁹ “The State Canvass,” *The Pulaski Citizen*, Aug. 24, 1882, 2.

When African Americans serenaded Democrats, they earned scorn from competing Democrats. In 1880 in Georgia, Thomas M. Norwood challenged incumbent Governor Alfred Colquitt for the Democratic nomination in the race for the governor. On the evening of August 29, a black band under the direction of a “weazly looking young man” with a “squeaky voice” arrived in front of the Kimball House on Pryor Street in downtown Atlanta. There, the band “played a tune or two” to attract a crowd. Soon, it became clear to spectators that the “object of the music was a serenade for Norwood.” As the crowd grew restless waiting for their candidate to appear, a public official permitted the band and crowd to enter the building. When they arrived in the reception room, Norwood “fully realized that he was the object of the musical infliction and appeared upon the steps.” At this time, evangelist and prohibitionist Samuel Small introduced Norwood as the next governor of the state of Georgia, which elicited from the crowd a wild applause. In *Atlanta Constitution*, editor Henry Grady supported Colquitt against Norwood. With regard to Norwood’s speech, Grady claimed that Norwood “made the same old charges against Governor Colquitt in the same old way, and with the same old absence of proof.” He then blamed Norwood for a “cheap bid for the colored vote,” who blamed Colquitt “for not preaching to the convicts as well as the other negroes.”⁷⁰ As two candidates competed for the Democratic nomination, it appears that a white musical director employed black musicians to generate support for the candidate most likely to protect black voting rights. As the Democratic Party returned to dominance in the South, African Americans often switched their alliances to the candidate most likely to protect them. As the challenger, Norwood would likely need black votes to overturn the Democratic establishment. With street theater, African Americans could lend their support to one candidate over another.

⁷⁰ “The Norwood Serenade,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 31, 1880, 1; Lewis Nicholas Wynne, *The Continuity of Cotton: Planter Politics in Georgia, 1865-1892* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986), 121-123.

In many cases, black participation in Democratic meetings angered Republicans, who expressed entitlement to black support based on their work for emancipation. In 1888, Democrats had a torchlight procession in Neosho, Missouri. During the parade, a black band and a large number of African Americans joined the Democrats, which “enraged the Republican leaders.” The local Republicans were “determined to carry out their well known tactics of bulldozing the negroes.” After the procession, white Republicans attacked Joe Ferguson, who had participated in the Democratic event. The attackers demanded Ferguson to explain himself. In response, Ferguson explained that “this was a free country and he had a right to do as he pleased.” After he explained that he intended to vote for the Democrats, Republican leader Walter Ames seriously injured Ferguson with a hatchet. Upon learning of the attack, the town’s Democrats became “very indignant” and had Ames arrested for his attack on a black man. Across the town, Democratic attorneys volunteered their services in the prosecution of Ames.⁷¹ Republicans expressed respect for black voting rights and political activity but only when it suited them.

Although African Americans ate and drank at campaign events staged by the Democratic Party, they often participated in segregated ways. On October 18, 1892, the Young Men’s Democratic Club of Brookhaven, Mississippi, staged the “largest barbecue ever given in the South.” They hosted more than 7,000 people, including African Americans. The barbecue consisted of a mile-long procession of Democrats on foot and horseback. The event included banners, brass bands, and “booming of cannon.” Democratic candidates presented speeches to the massive audiences. At the event, a Populist speaker presented a speech, as well, but “he looked as lonesome as he would be in Congress.” Instead, the audience consisted mostly of Democrats, who “cheered the Democratic speakers to the echo.” In addition to the speeches, a

⁷¹ “Republican Bulldozing Tactics,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 19, 1888, 2.

“fat man’s race was a humorous feature of the occasion” and provided a temporary distraction from the politics. For the meal, the Democrats slaughtered and barbecued seven cows, fifteen sheep, and forty goats. They also ordered 600 pounds of bread from New Orleans to help feed the massive crowd. The white spectators ate first. African Americans participated in the event, but they did not eat with the white Democrats. Instead, the event organizers distributed “several hundred pounds of meat” left over “among the negroes.”⁷² Despite attacks on black voting rights, Democrats made paternalistic gestures toward African Americans to gain their support, such as providing food.

During World War I, African Americans frequently participated in patriotic rallies, albeit in segregated ways. Patriotic rallies, of course, still entailed partisan elements, and African Americans laid claim to membership in the nation and political parties with their participation at these events. Despite the dire circumstances of world war, however, African Americans could only lend patriotic support if it accommodated segregation and white mainstream cultural norms. They could march and perform in parades and fundraisers, but they could not always attend these events as spectators because of segregation laws.

During World War I, President Woodrow Wilson reviewed hundreds of American soldiers, including black soldiers and black musicians, parading through Baltimore’s streets. On April 6, 1918, Wilson arrived in Baltimore as part of a Liberty Loan drive. Before a crowd of 15,000 people, the “negroes marched well and their band was classed as the best of several in the parade.”⁷³ During the performance, the six-foot-five-inch tall drum major of the 368th Infantry band, Sergeant Landin, who had skin “almost as black as the ace of spades” cake-walked “with a grin that forced thoughts of pickaninnies and watermelons into the heads of those who saw

⁷² “Brookhaven’s Great Barbecue,” *Memphis Appeal-Avalanche*, Oct. 19, 1892, 1.

⁷³ “Wilson Stirs Baltimore,” *New York Times*, Apr. 7, 1918, 1.

him.”⁷⁴ With this performance, Sergeant Landin became regionally famous and Americans, especially white Americans, clamored to have his band participate in their fundraisers. As demonstrated by the character Landin adopted for the parade, the purpose of the spectacles might have changed but the means by which African Americans earned recognition and fame remained the same. They continued to manipulate stereotypes to make an impact on the public sphere.

Later that month, the white residents of Baltimore organized two fundraising campaigns. On April 18, Colonel W. Bladen Lowndes organized a fundraiser for the War Savings Stamp Campaign at the Garden Theater. The event featured speeches from Maryland’s former governor, Phillips Lee Goldsborough, and Albert G. Towers, who served as chairman of the Public Service Commission. It also featured the black musicians of the 368th Infantry Band and Sergeant Landin. These musicians provided “excellent playing of classical, patriotic and ragtime music,” and the “deportment of the drum major” put the audience “in a fine humor.”⁷⁵ To attend, residents simply had to purchase one or more Thrift Stamps to help the war effort.

African Americans had a particularly high interest in attending the event because they wanted to see these black musicians, which was “one of the many that is to cheer the colored boys on while they try to get the Kaiser.” When they showed up at the Garden Theater, they could not enter. When they could not enter the fundraiser, “some of the colored people made utterances that would be regarded as seditious.” They assumed that they could not enter the fundraiser because of the Garden Theater’s segregation policy, and the fundraiser’s organizers confirmed these suspicions. After the debacle, the Maryland Council of Defense arranged for a separate fundraiser for Baltimore’s black residents, who refused the offer. In response to the situation, a spokesperson for the fundraiser explained, “I am sorry that any of our colored people

⁷⁴ “Drum Major on Way: Ragtime Baton-Twirlers of 368th Infantry Awaited At Meade,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Feb. 10, 1919, 12.

⁷⁵ “Colored People Barred from Patriotic Rally,” *Afro-American* (Baltimore, MD), Apr. 19, 1918, 1.

went to the theater and thereby were insulted by being refused.” He did not apologize for refusing them. He did admit, however, that “in these perilous times such treatment to the race has a tendency to dampen the patriotic ardor of the colored people.” He explained, furthermore, that the war effort required “those who would aid in every way to crush Germany should see that petty race prejudices in this country are forgotten” in an attempt to win the war.⁷⁶ African Americans could demonstrate their loyalty to the country, but in segregated ways. On stage, the musicians became separate from the rest of the crowd. They played a role familiar to white Americans: the performer and entertainer. African Americans could not, however, mingle with white society on the dance floor and in the audience, even to the benefit of the war effort.

The black bands of colored regiments often participated at these types of fundraisers on behalf of the war effort. On April 28, 1918 in Baltimore, the 251st Field Artillery Band, including bandmaster and graduate of the New York Institute of Art Dorsey Rhodes, “sailed through a most difficult program” and “surpassed every expectation of the crowd.” After the performance, the “crowd clamored for more before the serious work of selling stamps got under way.”⁷⁷ As this event occurred at the Garden Theater in Baltimore, as well, African Americans once again could not attend and mingle with white society, but they could entertain whites.

When African Americans received military honors, they still encountered racial stereotypes. In July 1918, the black soldiers in the 517th Engineer Reserve Corps stationed in Atlanta received their national and battalion banners. They gathered at the camp’s parade grounds for the ceremony, which featured a series of speeches and prayers wishing them well. After the speeches, an officer presented the black soldiers with “no less than a thousand big slices of real Georgia watermelon.” The black soldiers picked up their slices “of the reddest

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ “W. S. S. Rally Nets \$5,000,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Apr. 29, 1918, 12.

watermelon” and returned to their place in line. For some time thereafter, it “was simply the old situation of ‘the Georgia nigger and the watermelon.’” He observed that “there was smacking of lips and rolling of eyes, and above all, a cessation of conversation that lasted with the supply of watermelon.” After eating, a black band from Augusta “burst into several popular airs.” With this reporting, the newspaper reporter suggested that black men ceased serving their role as soldiers when eating watermelon. When confronted with watermelon, black men simply became “niggers,” who “thoroughly enjoyed themselves.”⁷⁸ With the design of the spectacle, white officers could reinforce negative stereotypes of African Americans.

During the war, Americans, including black southerners, used spectacular demonstrations to register citizens for military service. In September 1918, amid “the strains of martial music played by military and civilian bands,” thirty thousand Atlanta residents registered for military service. In order to attract all men of military age and fitness, officers organized a massive parade, which started at the state capitol on Washington Street and weaved through many of the city’s principal streets, including Mitchell Street and Peachtree Street near the opera house. At the very end of the procession, a black band from Camp Gordon marched, as well. After the parade, the musicians broke off from the main body and set up at each registration site to attract potential enlistees. The military designated some of the registration sites as “colored only,” and it seems likely that black musicians probably manned these particular sites.⁷⁹ Like their white neighbors, black Atlantans contributed to the war effort with their participation at spectacles. Although biracial, the military segregated the spectacle and the registration drive by putting the black musicians at the back of the parade. Given the prevalence of segregation, disfranchisement, and lynching, black civil rights leaders debated as to whether or not black men should or would

⁷⁸ “600 Negroes at Camp Get Colors and Big Slice of Watermelon,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Jul. 5, 1918, 8.

⁷⁹ “To Martial Music Atlanta Manhood Registers Today,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 12, 1918, 1.

enlist in the armed forces. Although some black leaders believed that the war provided black men the chance to demonstrate their patriotism and masculinity in an attempt to claim political rights, many black leaders, specifically A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Own of *The Messenger*, argued that black men would not and should not enlist as a form of protest.⁸⁰ Given the uncertainty as to whether or not African Americans would join the military, military leaders hoped to use spectacular means to generate enthusiasm for the war and gain volunteers from the black community, but they tailored their methods to accommodate segregation and discrimination.

After the war, African Americans received a hero's welcome in black-dominated northern cities, including Harlem, but they did not always earn recognition for their military service. On February 17, 1919, Lieutenant James Reese, known to many by the nickname "Jim Europe," led his band and the black soldiers of the 15th New York National Guard Regiment, also known as the 369th Infantry or "Harlem's Hellfighters," on a parade through Harlem. His band had "'jazzed' all over France and Belgium to cheer up wounded and unwounded soldiers" during the war. For the performance, Lieutenant Reese procured new instruments because their old instruments revealed "signs of strenuous use" after more than 100,000 miles of travel in the war. In the report, the newspaper reporter focused on the musician's effort "entertaining soldiers" despite the fact that the majority of the regiment participated in the actual fighting and even earned France's highest military honor, the Croix de Guerre. While the military service went unnoticed in newspaper reports, black soldiers generally faced harassment from white officers, who claimed that black soldiers had menaced white women. The black band, however,

⁸⁰ Adriane Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Cornelius L. Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 87-88.

received no criticism for its contributions to the war effort. They traveled all over the country as part of victory celebrations.⁸¹

The leader of the band, James Reese, traveled from his boyhood home in Mobile, Alabama, to Harlem, where he achieved fame and eventually joined the military. He arrived in Harlem in 1910 “with a strong pair of lungs” for playing the trombone and “some ideas about syncopation that other musicians refused to accept.” When the United States entered the war, New York organized the 15th National Guard Regiment. Then, Colonel William Hayward asked Reese to lead the regiment’s band. During the war, they became “so popular among the soldiers that they were kept traveling all the time.” They also played for French President Henri Poincaré and American General John J. Pershing. Upon returning to the United States, Reese and his band played all over the country in victory celebrations, which earned them even more fame and economic opportunity. On May 9, 1919, Reese and his band played at Mechanic’s Hall in Boston. When he told a drummer to pick up the pace, the drummer confronted Reese and slashed his throat, which killed the famous bandleader.⁸² During the war, the fighting men of the 15th National Guard Regiment achieved quite a bit of success, but their band received the most notice and applause upon its return home.

When African Americans returned to the United States, they participated alongside white soldiers in celebratory parades. In March 1919, Nashville residents organized a parade to welcome back the city’s black and white soldiers. In the planning process, the organizers did not immediately plan to honor the black soldiers until a committee of black civic leaders protested. After consulting with the committee, the organizers arranged for 400 to 500 black soldiers to

⁸¹ “City’s Negro Fighters Parade 5th Av. Today,” *New York Times*, Feb. 17, 1919, 1; Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles*, 90; “Harlem Hellfighters,” *MAAP: Mapping the African American Past*, accessed Oct. 20, 2015, <http://maap.columbia.edu/place/43>

⁸² “Jim Europe Killed in Boston Quarrel,” *New York Times*, May 10, 1919, 1.

march in the parade and for a 45-piece black band to provide music, as well. In addition to the parade, the event's organizers wanted to provide the soldiers with a meal. They provided the "same food and same amount per capita" for the black soldiers, but they fed them at the city's black chapters of the Young Men's Christian Association.⁸³ At celebration spectacles, African Americans earned recognition of their martial contributions to the war, but organizers designed the spectacles to remind them of their inferior status.

After the war, African Americans continued to participate in partisan spectacles on behalf of both political parties, but often in segregated events. As Democrats started to attract more black votes in the 1920s and 1930s, Republicans worked hard to keep black votes. In 1923, a black Republican, Henry Lincoln Johnson, spoke to a Baltimore audience of 800 to 900 people, which served "as a test of Republican negro solidarity." In addition to the speech by Johnson, two white civic leaders came to speak to the black audience after giving addresses at a meeting and torchlight parade of white Republicans.⁸⁴ Within the Republican Party, black and white people went to separate events.

In local and state elections held in northern and border states, African Americans contributed to campaigns. In 1922, Youngstown, Missouri, mayor George Lawrence Oles credited a young evangelist and musicians for his campaign success. He explained, "I hired American, Italian, and negro bands. I gave 'em horns and red fire. It took people by storm. Nothing like that had been tried since the old 'cutthroat' campaign days." Although Oles suggests that spectacle had diminished, it seems to have remained prevalent in all regions of the country in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1928, for example, Democratic gubernatorial candidate J.

⁸³ "Arrangements for Reception Now Completed," *Nashville Tennessean and the Nashville American*, Mar. 26, 1919, 13.

⁸⁴ "George Negro Speaks in City for Broening," *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), May 5, 1923, 12.

Alfred Taylor spoke to a crowd at Mt. Hope, West Virginia, where a black band furnished music as part of an “entertaining program.”⁸⁵

African Americans participated frequently in campaign events held on behalf of Democratic presidential candidate Al Smith, especially in northern and border states. During the 1928 election, Smith stopped in Topeka, Kansas. “A noisy throng surrounded the rear of his train at the Topeka terminal,” observed a reporter, who added that “the music of several bands” contributed to a festive atmosphere. Among them, a black band struck up the vaudeville tune “The Sidewalks of New York” to welcome the New Yorker to the prairie.⁸⁶ Al Smith used the song as his campaign song throughout the campaign.⁸⁷ A month later, a black band along with a crowd of “enthusiastic Democrats” welcomed Smith back to Albany after sixteen days on the campaign trail.⁸⁸ In 1932, Lieutenant-Governor E. H. Winter, a Republican from Missouri, ran for governor. On September 16, he officially kicked off his campaign with a rally and parade in Warrenton. In the evening, Warrenton’s Republicans “turned out en masse to celebrate the formal opening of his drive for votes in the November election.” They carried banners and torches through the town’s streets led by musicians, including a black band who led them. As the black band led the parade, another local band from Central Wesleyan College played at the courthouse lawn, where Winter gave his speech to an enthusiastic audience.⁸⁹ As they had done before World War I, African Americans were among the first members of the public sphere to greet candidates to the community. They also helped set the tone for the event with their enthusiastic playing.

⁸⁵ “Taylor Will Speak at Mt. Hope Rally,” *Charleston Gazette* (Charleston, SC), Aug. 26, 1928, 1.

⁸⁶ “Smith Greeted by Cheers at Topeka,” *Galveston Daily News* (Galveston, TX), Sept. 20, 1928, 1.

⁸⁷ “Final G. O. P rally Held in Baltimore,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), Nov. 5, 1929, 22.

⁸⁸ “Smith Ends 16 Days of Campaigning,” *The Bradford Era* (Bradford, PA), Oct. 3, 1928, 1.

⁸⁹ “Winter Campaign Opens at Home,” *Monitor-Index and Democrat* (Moberly, MO), Sept. 16, 1932, 2.

African Americans took initiative and used spectacles to intimidate unfavorable candidates by putting them in humiliating circumstances. In 1928, Senator James Watson of Indiana traveled to Chicago to address a black audience at a local armory. The event's organizers arranged for him to speak between two "colored spellbinders." After the first speaker, Watson stood up to speak but did not say a word. Then, the program continued. According to black civic leaders, the audience detested Watson because of his ties to the Ku Klux Klan. According to one observer, "Well, he better not talk here if he knows the time, the place, and the girl. We'll burn him up. He's K. K. K." When confronted, Watson explained that he had a bad throat and could not speak.⁹⁰ If he had admitted to succumbing to black threats, he would have acknowledged that their program and the presence of black speakers had indeed intimidated him.

During the late 1920s and early 1930s, African Americans had a visible and audible presence at political events for both Hoover and Roosevelt. At President Herbert Hoover's inaugural parade in 1929, for example, a black civic leader led the delegation from Mississippi. On March 3, S. D. Redmond, who served as the chairman of the Mississippi Republican State Executive Committee and only black person to lead a state executive committee, dined with fellow Republicans at the Mayflower Hotel. On March 4, he led Mississippi's Republicans in the inaugural parade. As of 1929, African Americans still tended to support Republicans, whether or not they reflected these allegiances at political spectacles. By 1932, however, they would become central features of spectacles staged on behalf of Franklin D. Roosevelt. In an event in Indianapolis, for example, black bands and black marchers paraded through the streets in advance of the Democratic candidate and his wife.⁹¹ African Americans had not yet completely left the Republican Party, especially in the South. In July 1932, Republicans staged a rally in

⁹⁰ "Watson Sits Silent Through Colored Rally," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct. 15, 1928, 9.

⁹¹ "Gov. Roosevelt Invades Indiana," *Billings Gazette*, Oct. 21, 1932, 2.

Little Rock, Arkansas to celebrate Hoover's candidacy for a second term. The Republicans, however, recognized that African Americans had become disillusioned with the Republican Party, so they urged African Americans to attend and made special appeals to the black community by focusing on how Reconstruction had helped black businesses.⁹²

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, African Americans considered black musicians as a vital piece of the political process, and they expected African Americans to participate in campaign spectacles. In 1912, the editors of *The Chicago Defender* remarked, "All the candidates seemed to have ignored the colored bands this season as well as our colored musicians." The editors lamented that the candidates, however, continued to use black churches for rallies. In response, the editors argued that "the people should rise as one and demand that if the colored bands are not good enough to use for political use, then their houses of worship should not be." In conclusion, he called upon black women to safeguard the sanctity of the church and for the black community to "demand of the man who would want your vote to give you work."⁹³ With these comments, the black editors of *The Chicago Defender* connected economic opportunity with political power. They expected economic opportunity and, in return, would deliver black votes to the candidates that played along. They also condemned white candidates for exploiting black churches to win black votes without paying for black talent.

African Americans expected a place in the public sphere. They participated in campaign rallies, inauguration ceremonies, and impromptu gatherings on behalf of both major political parties. By participating, they generated enthusiasm, drove voters to the polls, and helped Republicans and Democrats spread a sectional interpretation of the Civil War. They even made unlikely alliances with Democrats and Confederates for the sake of economic opportunity and

⁹² "Hold GOP Political Rally in Ark.; Negro Support Urged," *Atlanta Daily World*, Jul. 27, 1932, 1.

⁹³ "Candidates Ignore Colored Bands," *Chicago Defender*, Apr. 6, 1912, 4.

advantageous political alliances. When denied access to politics, they had various methods to make themselves visible participants in politics, such as street theater and rough music. They used these means to harass politicians and demand recognition of their political aptitude.

CHAPTER 6

“TO DO OUR BIT FOR GOOD GOVERNMENT”: W. C. HANDY, E. H. CRUMP, AND THE 1909 MEMPHIS MAYORAL ELECTION

In 1909, three white politicians—Edward H. Crump, John J. Williams, and Walter W. Talbert—vied to become the next mayor of Memphis. Each of the candidates utilized traditional campaign tactics, such as speeches, rallies, advertisements, and posters, to win the office. In a familiar move played by southern office-seekers, these mayoral candidates also employed black musicians to campaign on their behalf. African American musician and bandleader William Christopher Handy explained “in Memphis as in Clarksdale it was known to politicians that the best notes made the most votes, and there came a time when we were called upon to do our bit for good government.” The Crump campaign hired Handy’s band because, as Handy explained, “Beale Street was expected to cast a lot of votes, and it was squarely up to us to get them.”¹ To take control of Memphis, Crump needed black support. Given the opportunity to play for the campaign, Handy used his music to influence Memphis politics and to help a white politician gain power, but he also seized the opportunity to gain power for himself and his race.

During the 1909 mayoral campaign, black musicians participated in the electoral process by informally campaigning on behalf of all the major candidates. They attracted African Americans to registration sites in Beale Street taverns. In the streets, they generated enthusiasm for their respective candidates by competing with other bands to attract the largest audiences. By playing on behalf of white candidates, black musicians exercised political influence and seized

¹ Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 98.

economic opportunity for themselves. In 1909, Crump and Handy took advantage of the racial dynamics and political culture of Memphis to launch their famous careers.

After the Civil War, Memphis became the site of racial discord and race-based violence as freed people moved into the city previously dominated by Irish and German immigrants. By 1860, Memphis had grown to a city of more than 20,000 people mostly due to an influx of immigrants. In fact, immigrants represented thirty percent of the city's population. At the time, Memphis had a black population of more than 3,000 people, including 200 free blacks. In April 1862, the Union Army captured the city and occupied it. By the end of the war, the influx of soldiers, government officials, missionaries, and freed people substantially increased the city's population despite a decline in the white population of the city. By 1865, Memphis had a black population of 11,000.² In 1866, the Memphis police, most of whom were Irish immigrants, collided with black soldiers in the city streets. From May 1 to May 3, white rioters destroyed black property and businesses, raped black women, and killed 46 African Americans without punishment from the federal government despite a congressional investigation.³ Although the Memphis riot seemed like an ominous start to freedom for the black community, the city quickly became a site of black entrepreneurship and political activism.

Upon arrival in Memphis, many African Americans started their own businesses, especially on and near Beale Avenue, later known as Beale Street. At the corner of Beale Avenue and Gayoso Street, Robert R. Church, Sr. established the city's first black-owned saloon. His wife, Louisa, owned a hair salon. During the 1866 riot, Church became a target because of his success and suffered a grievous gunshot wound to the head, which left him occasionally

²² Kathleen C. Berkeley, *"Like a Plague of Locusts": From an Antebellum Town to a New South City, Memphis, Tennessee, 1850-1880* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991), 4-5, 119-120.

³ Gritter, *River of Hope*, 1-3, 16-17; Stephen V. Ash, *A Massacre in Memphis: The Race Riot That Shook the Nation One Year After the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013).

incapacitated and often suicidal for the rest of his life. Despite the injury, Church became a business and political leader in the city. He invested in Beale Avenue, where he owned several saloons, a hotel, and a restaurant. On the same street, he leased property to many black business owners. Through these efforts, Beale Avenue became a bustling black business center and Church became the first black southern millionaire. Outside of Beale Avenue, Church owned hundreds of residences and hundreds of acres of land.⁴

Church launched a political and philanthropic career, as well. He campaigned on behalf of Republican presidential candidates and supported Republican candidates for local offices. In 1882, he unsuccessfully ran for city council. In addition to his contributions to electoral politics, he used his money to benefit the black community by spending money on parks, auditoriums, schools, and other black institutions. Specifically, he built Church's Park and Auditorium, which seated 2,000 people and attracted black political leaders and famous artists, such as Frederick Douglas, Duke Ellington, and the Fisk Jubilee Singers. As a leading member of the black community in Memphis, Church had connections with black civic leaders across the country, notably W. E. B. DuBois.⁵

In addition to the work of Church and black business owners, black Memphians organized on the grassroots level by establishing their own churches, and these churches became the foundations for community organizations, such as schools and mutual-aid societies.⁶ Mostly through the efforts of black churches, black Memphians established numerous schools in the city without financial help from the Freedmen's Bureau. In Memphis, the black community insisted on hiring and promoting black teachers in their own schools, which made them significantly different than schools sponsored by the Freedmen's Bureau and white northern missionaries.

⁴ Gritter, *River of Hope*, 1-3, 16-20, 26-29.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Berkeley, "*Like a Plague of Locusts*", 119-125.

Although the schools suffered from financial problems and white apathy and retaliation, Memphis's black community maintained the schools. In 1867, black Memphians created the Education Association of Memphis to facilitate the creation and maintenance of schools. For the benefit of the entire black community in Memphis, they insisted on providing tuition-free education. In Memphis, African Americans established churches and schools, and these institutions became central to their political activism.⁷

In the first decade after emancipation, black Memphians organized politically and lent their support to the Republican Party. After the war, black Memphians gained citizenship and voting rights by virtue of the Republican-controlled state legislature, which protected black voting rights and office holding. African Americans established political clubs and fraternal organizations. Through these institutions, they reached out to white neighbors to form powerful coalitions. At every level of government, African Americans had power in the city. They supported political outsiders, specifically northern-born Republicans, in their bids to fill a power vacuum in Memphis politics left by the war and Reconstruction. In addition to their support of white candidates, they held office, served on grand juries, and worked for the city's police force.⁸

After Tennessee Democrats regained control of the state in 1870, African Americans became disillusioned with the Republican Party and looked for alternatives. As schools in Memphis deteriorated, black Memphians came to resent the paternalism of northern Republicans, who did not produce any lasting change in black life yet continued to expect black support. After the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1875, Memphians debated whether to integrate the city's schools. Many white Memphians refused to pay taxes to support integrated schools, which further disillusioned the city's black residents with the Republican Party. They

⁷ Berkeley, *Like a Plague of Locusts*, 159-171.

⁸ Gritter, *River of Hope*, 1-3, 17-18.

blamed the party for failing to pass any meaningful land or economic reform, which would have enabled the black community to more adequately fund their own public schools on par with the white schools. In the same year, white principal J. H. Barnum and black schoolteacher S. H. Thompson, who had feuded with one another for years, each went to the school board and demanded their counterpart's removal. In the conflict, Memphis's antebellum elites, who had formed numerous urban reform organizations and supported the Democratic Party's bid for redemption, sided with the black schoolteacher Thompson. Unlike the southern-born white supporters of Thompson, northern-born white Memphians supported the white principal Barnum. Rather than loyally following the party of emancipation, African Americans would now negotiate their own political allegiances to secure tangible gains. Democrats took advantage of black dissatisfaction with the Republican Party and reached out to the black community in an attempt to reassert their party's dominance in local affairs. They wanted to portray themselves as friends of black southerners, so they donated money to black schools and churches. Nathan Bedford Forrest, who had served in the Confederate military and founded the Ku Klux Klan, donated funds to help rebuild a black church in the city. Within the black community, prosperous landholders tended to side with the city's Democrats. In contrast, black laborers continued to support the Republican Party.⁹

In the mid-to-late 1870s, the shifting loyalties of African Americans affected the outcome of municipal elections. In 1875, African Americans and Democrats opposed the Republican-controlled school board. They cooperated to elect a black principal to manage the city's black schools. On July 4, 1875, black mutual-aid societies held their annual celebration of the nation's independence. At the event, notable ex-Confederates, including Forrest, spoke to the crowd of thousands of black Memphians. Later that year, more than half of the city's black voters cast

⁹ Berkeley, "*Like a Plague of Locusts*", 180-181, 186-187, 236-241.

their ballots for Democrat John Phillipin for mayor, who beat the Republican John Loague by a massive majority. For a decade, African Americans would affect the outcome of Memphis's municipal elections in their hands because of their willingness to vote for Democrats, but the alliance proved short-lived when Democrats led the crusade to reform voting practices in Tennessee and the South.¹⁰

In 1889, Tennessee lawmakers responded to Republican Benjamin Harrison's recent victory in the presidential election by implementing strict registration requirements, poll taxes, and secret ballots to disenfranchise African Americans and poor white people.¹¹ During the presidential campaign, both Harrison and his incumbent opponent, Democrat Grover Cleveland, raised an immense amount of money. The Republicans spent a considerable sum in an educational campaign to praise the virtues of protective tariffs. They also used the money to bribe voters. Across the country, Americans saw images of party workers marching voters to the polls. In response to these tactics, many critics characterized the recent election as the most corrupt in history and condemned the Republicans and the Democrats for lacking respect for the electoral process. After the election, Americans embarked on numerous reforms to overhaul the election system. To eliminate bribery, for example, thirty-eight states adopted the secret ballot.¹² Upon taking office, Harrison hoped to work with Congress to break the Democrat's dominance in the South by protecting black voting rights, which earned him scorn from southern politicians and newspapers.

In 1888, Democrats convincingly won in the Tennessee statehouse; their victory paved the way for voting restrictions. After years of healthy party competition, Democrats hoped to use their considerable advantage to eliminate Republican opposition from former Unionists in East

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*, 50-59.

¹² Ibid., 48-49.

Tennessee and African Americans in the cities. In April 1889, the state legislature passed a law enacting the secret ballot. Notably, the law only applied to four counties, Shelby, Davidson, Knox, and Hamilton, in order to restrict its application to the black populations in Memphis, Nashville, Knoxville, and Chattanooga. In addition to the secret ballot, the Tennessee legislature passed new registration requirements to eliminate repeat voters and an influx of black voters from Mississippi and Arkansas on election day. When the state legislature passed these laws, the editors of the *Memphis Appeal* rejoiced in the demise of black voting and the Republican Party in the state.¹³ In 1890, Tennessee legislators finally passed the poll tax provided for in the state's 1870 state constitution.¹⁴

The voting restrictions had an immediate effect on Tennessee's politics. Memphis newspapers reported that political spectacle seemed to have disappeared. In the 1890 midterm elections, *Memphis Avalanche* reporters indicated that "everything was quiet as the grave" at the city's polling stations. They reported that the election had occurred with "no excitement, no loud talk, few ward workers, few spectators" and that it "was not like an election at all." Specifically, they emphasized the absence of black voters, thus demonstrating the success of the voting restrictions.¹⁵ Likewise, *Memphis Appeal* reporters praised the new measures for restricting the ballot to "intelligent, taxpaying, school supporting classes" and providing a solution to the "race problem" because the measures eliminated "the ignorant Negro."¹⁶ Although Memphis's Democratic newspapers seemed satisfied with the effects of voting requirements, political machines in the city continued to rely on African Americans for support. If black voters and

¹³ "Editorial," *Memphis Appeal*, Apr. 3, 1889, 4; Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*, 53-56.

¹⁴ Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*, 57-59.

¹⁵ "The Unterrified," *Memphis Avalanche*, Aug. 8, 1890, 1; Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*, 58-59.

¹⁶ "Editorial," *Memphis Appeal*, Aug. 9, 1890, 4; Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*, 58-59.

spectacle indeed disappeared, these features of Memphis electoral politics did not stay away for long.

Despite voting restrictions, many black Memphians continued to vote and wield power albeit in different ways. According to George W. Lee, a black civic leader, African Americans played an “important part in the primaries and general elections of both Democratic and Republican parties.” During the nineteenth century, according to Lee, African Americans “were in the ascendency at the city hall of Memphis, where they were identified with every department of the government.” After the Republican Party lost control of the city, however, “the estrangement of the two races in politics” increased until every black officeholder had “been dropped from positions of trust.” From this point forward, “white ward bosses” controlled “large numbers of Negro votes” and patronage appointments.¹⁷ Although the circumstances changed, African Americans continued to vote in large numbers. In the first decade of the twentieth century, they numbered about 52,000 and made up about half of the city’s population, which made them a powerful demographic in municipal politics. Political bosses won the often-decisive support of black voters in Memphis with paternalistic gestures of appreciation, such as parks and improvements in services. They helped black voters pass literacy tests and paid their poll taxes in exchange for support. Black women, who most definitely did not have the right to vote, held suffrage meetings and encouraged black men to pay their poll taxes and vote.¹⁸

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, black Memphians had a powerful voice in local, regional, and national politics. In 1889, Ida Wells Barnett, from Holly Springs, Mississippi, became a co-owner and editor of the black newspaper *Free Speech and Headlight*.

¹⁷ George W. Lee, *Beale Street: Where the Blues Began* (College Park: McGrath Publishing Company, 1969), 240-243.

¹⁸ Gritter, *River of Hope*, 21-22, 35; David Robertson, *W. C Handy: The Life and Times of the Man Who Made the Blues* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 111.

Based in Memphis, she worked alongside Reverend Taylor Nightingale of Beale Street Baptist Church. From this position, she published articles about racial injustice in the city and the country. In response to the lynching of three black men in 1889, Barnett undertook an investigation of lynching, which resulted in the publication of her book *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law In All Its Phases*. In the book, she argued that there “is little difference between the Antebellum South and the New South.” Due to the lack of racial progress, she concluded, “a growing disregard of human life” had spread throughout the country. Then, she called upon African Americans to leave the South unless lynching and segregation ended. She characterized black labor as “the backbone of the South” and that the region would suffer without it.¹⁹ She became a leading advocate of federal anti-lynching laws.

In addition to Wells, African Americans had a voice in Memphis politics through the church and voluntary organizations. In response to a derogatory 1903 editorial in *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* on the biological inferiority of African Americans, Reverend John H. Grant and Reverend T. J. Searcy met with the editors, who agreed to publish their written response to the racist editorial. In their response, the ministers boasted black achievements since emancipation and called for greater friendship between the races.²⁰ In 1908, black bank clerk Bert Roddy hosted a picnic for the black community in Memphis. Roddy and his peers anticipated white violence if they tried to use any of the city’s existing parks for their gathering, so they petitioned park commission chairman Robert Galloway for the privilege. After Galloway denied the request, the chairman implied to Roddy that African Americans should have their own public spaces in the city. Roddy organized the Colored Citizens Association for the purposes of acquiring a park for black use. Through this organization, furthermore, Roddy mobilized black

¹⁹ Barnett, *Southern Horrors*.

²⁰ Gritter, *River of Hope*, 22-23.

voters. He referred to black voters as “a sleeping political power” in the city. He wanted his organization to vote as a bloc for the candidates that had the most to offer the black community. Specifically, he wanted officeholders that would deliver on a promise of a new park for black Memphians. His organization would eventually become a key contributor to the Crump machine.²¹

In 1894, Edward Hull Crump arrived in Memphis to pursue economic opportunities, but he quickly became enmeshed in Memphis politics. Born in Holly Springs, Mississippi, Crump came from a wealthy family. His father owned a cotton plantation and had served as an officer in the Confederate army. In 1878, however, Crump’s father died of yellow fever, and his mother had a difficult time keeping the family solvent. Although Crump initially had a difficult time finding work in Memphis, he quickly ascended the social and political ladder. In 1896, he became a bookkeeper for the Woods Carriage Company, which soon merged with a saddle company. In 1900, Crump became the secretary and treasurer of the newly formed Woods-Chickasaw Manufacturing Company. He eventually purchased and owned the company. In 1902, Crump married Bessie Byrd McLean, the daughter of a wealthy Memphis businessman. By 1904, Crump had become the director of the Memphis Business Men’s Club. He won election with the help of Frank D. Rice, who would become Crump’s perennial campaign manager. Together, they would eventually take control of Memphis and, to a large extent, the state of Tennessee. In 1906, Crump became a member of the Board of Public Works Supervisors and locally famous among middle-class Memphians as a reformer, which irritated Memphis’s traditional elite. After a year, he resigned and announced his candidacy for a spot on the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners. Upon claiming the office, he busted saloons and gambling houses, which earned him solid support from Memphis’s middle class. He became a leading

²¹ G. Wayne Dowdy, *A Brief History of Memphis* (Charleston: The History Press, 2011), 76-77.

advocate of commission government in an attempt to more efficiently reform the city. In 1909, he decided to run for mayor.²²

On August 9, 1909, Memphis opened voter registration for municipal elections in November, and the registration followed strict rules and had oversight from the candidates, judges, and other public officials. On the opening day, the editors of *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* anticipated that these registration books would be the “most accurate and representative ever compiled.” The first registration period lasted ten days, and the candidates subjected the registration books to intense scrutiny.²³ During registration, Democrat John J. Williams sent “a personal representative” to most of the city’s precincts. These representatives copied each name from the registration books into a personal book. Each night, Williams’s supporters cross-referenced each voter’s address with their actual residence. Crump and Democrat Walter W. Talbert expressed satisfaction in the fairness of the registration process.²⁴

In an attempt to limit registration, the election commission did not help voters locate their local registration sites. The locations of the registration books changed, and the hours in which registration sites opened varied. Except for the courthouse, the registrars chose different registration sites than in the past, so voters had “to study the city map to locate the registration books of their ward.” To help the voters, the registrars had instructions to prominently display banners to indicate a business as a registration site. On the first day of the registration period, however, many registrars failed to display the banners. *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* editors indicated, “It is the only guide that voters have, and there is a great deal of confusion growing

²² G. Wayne Dowdy, *Mayor Crump Don't Like It: Machine Politics in Memphis* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006), ix-xii, 3-5; Dowdy, *A Brief History of Memphis*, 74-75.

²³ “Registration Opens Today: Strict Check Will Be Kept,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Aug. 9, 1909, 4.

²⁴ “Registration Books Opened: Many Changes Are Made,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Aug. 10 1909, 5.

out of the fact that the usual places of registration in many instances have been changed.”²⁵ Despite the confusion, registration proceeded and Memphians registered in unprecedented numbers.

For the most part, *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* editors praised the registration sites selected by the election commission. From their perspective, the commissioners “exercised more than the usual prudence in selecting these places.” Specifically, the editors rejoiced in the fact that the commissioners avoided saloons “as nearly as possible,” yet they lamented that saloons had “not entirely been avoided.”²⁶ Although Memphis hoped that election would eliminate the power of tavern keepers and African Americans, inner-city saloons nevertheless played a major role in the registration, especially for the black community.

During the registration period, black musicians helped register black voters in the city’s saloons along Beale Avenue. Although Crump and his chief opponent, John Joseph Williams, had not yet entered the race, they had wealthy supporters willing to register voters, especially black voters in the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh wards. In Memphis, a mayoral candidate needed an estimated 6,000 votes to win a majority, so the 2,000 black voters living on or around Beale Avenue played a significant role in deciding the election. Crump and his supporters knew he could win plenty of votes in Memphis’s white neighborhoods, but they predicted that these votes would not be enough to win the election. Although Crump did not make any personal attempts to reach black voters in this particular campaign, his supporters certainly did.²⁷ The other candidates had supporters willing to do the same. According to Handy, “three leading Negro bands were sent out by the managers of each candidate to whoop it up and bring home the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Roberson, *W. C. Handy*, 118.

bacon.”²⁸ Jim Mulcahy, an Irish political boss in Memphis who supported Crump, employed Handy and his band to play in the black taverns on Beale Avenue, such as Hammitt Ashford’s saloon on the corner of Fourth Street, which civic leader George W. Lee called “the most ancient and superb of all the saloons.” Handy’s band played music to attract African Americans into the taverns. There, the Crump’s representatives purchased a few rounds of drink and paid the balance on any outstanding poll taxes for these voters. Then, they gave the newly registered voters their poll tax receipts and ballots marked for the candidate.²⁹ In this way, Handy influenced the 1909 mayoral election and gained notoriety for himself.

Born in 1873 in Florence, Alabama, Handy became an accomplished musician despite the wishes of his conservative parents, who made him return his first guitar and forbade him from playing popular music.³⁰ In 1892, he left work at a factory in Birmingham, Alabama, joined a quartet, and went to Chicago. There, he had hoped to find work for his band because the city hosted the World’s Fair, but economic depression made work difficult to find, so they quickly disbanded. Although the rest of the band returned to Alabama, Handy continued to travel and work throughout the Midwest. In 1896, he joined his first successful orchestra, the Mahara’s Colored Minstrels managed and promoted by white Chicagoans. Although they performed belittling songs in blackface, Mahara’s Minstrels and other black musicians stood to benefit economically from massive white audiences. By playing for white audiences, blackface minstrels integrated their music into the national mainstream and gained recognition of their professional talents. In 1897, Handy returned to Alabama and taught music at the Agricultural and

²⁸ Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 98-99.

²⁹ Lee, *Beale Street*, 133-135; Robertson, *W. C Handy*, 118-119; Margaret McKee and Fred Chisenhall, *Beale Black & Blue: Life and Music on Black America’s Main Street* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 17-18.

³⁰ Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 7-10.

Mechanical College in Huntsville, where he started to work as a composer.³¹ When Handy arrived in Memphis in 1905, he had a humble start. He organized his own band, but they did not immediately dazzle Memphis, where residents continued to give preference to the orchestras of Charlie Bynum and R. K. Eckford.³²

For the 1909 campaign, Crump's opponents hired Handy's more-accomplished rivals, Bynum's Superb Orchestra and the Eckford and Higgins Imperial Orchestra, to attract black voters into taverns.³³ Handy explained, "Bynum's with their flashy cornetist, Frank McDonald, hoped to win Beale Street for one candidate."³⁴ Bynum, from Huntsville, Alabama, organized his band out of Midway Café on the corner of Beale Avenue and Fourth Street and achieved quite a bit of success in Memphis. In fact, he first played the blues music in Memphis, but he never composed the songs nor sold them commercially. Bynum worked alongside Jim Turner, who had traveled with Handy in Mahara's Minstrels and later joined Handy's band in Memphis.³⁵ Meanwhile, Eckford's band "tried to blow another man into office with the help of Teddy Adams, the speed demon clarinetist."³⁶ Like Bynum's band, Eckford's band had established itself as a major act on Beale Avenue.³⁷ These three bands played for the three major candidates, Crump, Walter W. Talbert, and John J. Williams, over the course of the registration period.

During registration, Memphians turned out in immense numbers and broke records, thus signaling the start to a competitive campaign. In the early days of registration, the candidates made every effort "to bring out the full registered vote of the city."³⁸ *Memphis Commercial-*

³¹ Lee, *Beale Street*, 130-132; Robertson, *W. C. Handy*, 52-65.

³² Robertson, *W. C. Handy*, 114-115;

³³ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

³⁴ Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 98-99.

³⁵ Lee, *Beale Street*, 97, 127-128; Bob L. Eagle and Eric S. Leblanc, *Blues: A Regional Exploration* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 142.

³⁶ Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 98-99.

³⁷ Robertson, *W. C. Handy*, 115.

³⁸ "Registration Books Opened: Many Changes Are Made." *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Aug. 10, 1909, 5.

Appeal editors pleaded with citizens to register to vote because “a superior set of officers must be elected” to make the transition to commission-style government on January 1, 1910. They encouraged “good men” to register “to take an active part in public affairs” and “Cast a vote when good citizenship and good government demand it.” They wanted to counter the effects of machine politics by encouraging all eligible Memphians to register.³⁹ By the time registration ended on August 19, more than 11,000 Memphians had registered, which represented a substantial increase over the 1907 election. *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* editors had not anticipated such heavy registration given the unseasonably hot weather. Nonetheless, people turned out because of “keen interest” in the campaign.⁴⁰ Memphians would have another opportunity to register when the books opened for a few days in October.

When registration ended, only Democrat Walter W. Talbert had officially announced his intention to run for the mayor’s office, but newspapers predicted that Crump, Williams, and a socialist candidate would soon enter the fray. Talbert announced his candidacy months before anyone else and quickly distributed copies of his platform to Memphis voters. He aggressively pursued victory.⁴¹ He drew his support from the suburbs, so his campaign threatened to take away votes from Crump and send Williams into office.⁴² Throughout the campaign, Talbert frequently attacked his opponents, Crump and Williams. In fact, he earned a reputation for his negativity. According to *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Talbert “developed a decided talent for letter writing, and almost every week indulges in caustic criticism of one or the other of his opponents through the pages of the daily papers.”⁴³ For the most part, Talbert portrayed himself as an outsider. In a speech at Memphis’s Peabody Hotel, Talbert jostled his audience. He

³⁹ “Register,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Aug. 11, 1909, 6.

⁴⁰ “11,000 Voters in the City,” *Memphis CA*, Aug. 20, 1909, 4.

⁴¹ “Mayor’s Race Open Question,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Aug. 8, 1909, 9.

⁴² William D. Miller, *Mr. Crump of Memphis* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 71-74.

⁴³ “Registration Opens Tuesday,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Oct. 10, 1909, 10.

explained that the “people of Memphis ought to wake up to several matters” because they “have simply gone to sleep over several of our opportunities.” In the speech, Talbert, who drilled as a member of the Chickasaw Guards, specifically argued for the construction of an armory to supply the local militia. The building would provide space for massive meetings and conventions, as well. He insisted that the armory would make Memphis a premier destination for business conventions and political delegations, so the building would pay for itself.⁴⁴ By making this appeal, Talbert hoped to win support of Memphis’s business class, who seemed likely to play a major role in this election because Memphis had expanded its borders and recently annexed some of the surrounding suburbs.⁴⁵

On August 22, 1909, Crump announced his intention to run with the purpose of bringing commission-style government and efficient reform to the people of Memphis. He became popular with Memphis’s white suburban Progressives. He advocated for efficient “business government.” Crump preferred commission government because he believed, like most Progressives, that it would help eliminate corruption and waste. The commission would have executive and legislative powers. In many ways, it would operate like a company board of directors with the mayor in charge of the city’s several departments. Crump appealed to Progressives because of his reputation for reform. Among Crump’s many reforms, he argued for the public ownership of utilities and tougher law enforcement, especially with regard to the city’s saloons. As a member of the Board of Police and Fire Commissioners, he had ordered city police to shut down gambling halls and saloons at midnight. By taking a stand against gambling and

⁴⁴ “Build Armory for Memphis: Walter W. Talbert’s Plan,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Aug. 1, 1909, 8.

⁴⁵ Dowdy, *A Brief History of Memphis*, 63-73.

drinking, he earned support from Progressives and humiliated Mayor James H. Malone, who had enjoyed support from the saloon and gambling interests.⁴⁶

Crump ran his campaign in an efficient style that mirrored his politics. He once again appointed Rice to manage the campaign. During the campaign, Rice placed the newspaper advertisements.⁴⁷ Crump and Rice hired more than a dozen campaign speakers to do most of the public appearances. Among them, Charles M. Bryan, a lawyer and poet, became one of Crump's leading advocates, and he made most of the campaign's public appearances. Crump adopted a different approach to reach voters. He preferred "a method of campaigning successful in the past."⁴⁸ While Bryan and two other young men, William J. Bacon and Leo Goodman, did most of the orations, Crump focused on personal connections.⁴⁹ He visited the various wards to make a "personal and hand to hand canvass," which he used to great success to "upset the old order of things a few years ago."⁵⁰ He had gained a reputation in Memphis for his kindness and honesty. In a *The News Scimitar* profile of Crump, cartoonist E. A. Bushnell indicated that "Mr. Crump has the stamp of good fellowship all over him." He characterized him as "having a very peculiar and extraordinary personality" and described him as "very approachable, cordial, considerate and obliging."⁵¹ Although Crump had assembled a crack team of political campaigners, he had an uphill battle to win the election.

On August 27, John Joseph Williams, a Democrat, joined the race and provided Crump a seasoned adversary, and many Memphis political insiders predicted that Williams would win the office. In 1894, Williams made his first bid to win the mayor's office by reinvigorating a once-

⁴⁶ Dowdy, *A Brief History of Memphis*, 62-63.

⁴⁷ Dowdy, *Mayor Crump Don't Like It*, 5.

⁴⁸ "Mayorality Race Candidates Off: Campaign Will Open Today," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Aug. 30, 1909, 5.

⁴⁹ Miller, *Mr. Crump of Memphis*, 72-73.

⁵⁰ "Mayorality Race Candidates Off: Campaign Will Open Today," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Aug. 30, 1909, 5.

⁵¹ E. A. Bushnell, "Intimate Impressions of Mayorality Candidates: No. 3—E. H. Crump," *The News Scimitar* (Memphis, TN), Sept. 27, 1909, 1; Miller, *Mr. Crump of Memphis*, 72-73.

powerful coalition of working-class Irish and African Americans, which had been replaced in 1879 by an all-white ruling elite. During the 1894 campaign, Williams earned endorsements from Memphis's labor unions, but he lost the election to incumbent W. Lucas Clapp because of the massive support Clapp received from Memphis's white suburbanites. In 1898, however, Williams prevailed in the mayoral race after building up his biracial coalition. By this time, he had gained the support of Memphis's criminal interests, as well, notably George Honan and Mike Shanley. Honan controlled gambling in Memphis. Shanley had murdered a rival gang leader. In 1904, Honan and Shanley became involved in a gunfight with the sheriff's department, which resulted in the death of two deputies, one of whom was a black man. Honan faced trial in the deaths, but he avoided conviction because his defense attorney successfully portrayed the black deputy as disrespectful toward white people. Although none of Williams' political allies served a prison sentence, the city's white suburbanites became increasingly concerned about the power wielded by Memphis's gamblers and gangs. In response, Williams reached out to white suburbanites and seemingly alienated his criminal supporters. During his administration, Memphis annexed the suburbs, and suburban residents enjoyed lower tax rates than city dwellers. Williams commissioned the construction of two new parks, and he had many of the city's roads paved. He promised tougher enforcement of gambling and drinking laws in the city. In 1905, mayoral candidate James H. Malone, an Independent, lured the support of Memphis's criminal class, who harassed voters and obstructed voting on election day. Malone prevailed and took office.⁵² Although Williams lost, he did not disappear and became the favorite to retake the office in the 1909 campaign.

In September and early October, the race picked up the pace as the three candidates, especially Talbert, educated voters in the city's newspapers with open letters, platform

⁵² Dowdy, *A Brief History of Memphis*, 61-72; Miller, *Mr. Crump of Memphis*, 50-51, 53-54.

declarations, and critical advertisements. In the newspapers, Talbert penned a series of open letters to his opponents. In one open letter, Talbert called out Crump's past record as a city official. He condemned Crump for "cold feet" with regard to the public ownership of an electric plant. He also referenced two ballot-stuffers who served jail time for election fraud on Crump's behalf. Talbert admitted that Crump earned praise for raiding gambling dens, but he condemned Crump failing to keep up the fight. He noted that Crump counted on the support of "the most noted keepers of gambling places in the city." He argued that Crump, who still served on the Board of Police and Fire Commissioners, threatened "city employees into the belief that their jobs depend upon the support that they give to you in your race for mayor."⁵³ In a later letter, Talbert characterized Crump as an "unseasoned, erratic young person" with "a record for public service that is in effect null and void."⁵⁴ Like Talbert, the other candidates used the newspapers to articulate their ideas and criticize their opponents.

The candidates used the newspapers to disseminate their platforms. Williams, for example, issued his platform in *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*. He intended to improve the city's infrastructure and services and took special notice of the needs of the poor. When he announced his candidacy, he promised to "urge the establishment in a gradual way a system of public baths for the poor of both races."⁵⁵ He also focused on the city's sanitation system, which he characterized as "the all important consideration in any city."⁵⁶ He also intended to extend the "street system as rapidly as may be permitted" and improve the remaining streets. He wanted to improve the city's viaducts, as well. With regard to his overall position, he stated that he

⁵³ Walter W. Talbert, "Talbert Asks Some Questions: Takes Up Crump's Record," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Sept. 12, 1909, 4.

⁵⁴ Walter W. Talbert, "Talbert on Crump's Record," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Oct. 6, 1909, 2.

⁵⁵ J. J. Williams, "To the Citizens of Memphis," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Aug. 29, 1909, 4.

⁵⁶ "J. J. Williams Issues Platform," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Aug. 29, 1909, 5.

intended to manage the city government in a “high state of efficiency.”⁵⁷ The three major candidates all focused on similar reforms and emphasized efficiency in their policy declarations.

In addition to the educational campaign waged in the city’s newspapers, Williams and Talbert employed spectacular methods to energize voters. On August 30, both Williams and Talbert held campaign events for the public. Williams hosted an event in the Postal Telegraph Company building, which served as his campaign headquarters. They congregated at 8 p.m. “with the purpose in view of mapping out future action to promote his interests.” To the same ends, Talbert’s campaign staged an event in the Royal Building.⁵⁸ Throughout the campaign, these two candidates held nightly meetings at their campaign headquarters attended by ward clubs.⁵⁹ Of the candidates, Talbert gained the most notoriety for his stump speeches. In October, *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* credited Talbert with “making a lively campaign” with “several surprises in store for his opponents.”⁶⁰

On September 26, Crump officially commenced his campaign. Unlike Talbert and Williams, Crump waited until late September to open a campaign headquarters because he preferred “short, sharp campaigns.”⁶¹ On September 26, he opened his campaign headquarters in the Security Bank building on Madison Avenue in close proximity to his opponents’ headquarters.⁶² In a letter to *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, he announced that he intended to run for mayor because of his “profound interest in the success of the commission form of government” taking hold in Memphis as of January 1, 1910. From his previous experience in Memphis government, he understood the “wasteful, cumbersome, inefficient and unbusinesslike

⁵⁷ J. J. Williams, “To the Citizens of Memphis,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Aug. 29, 1909, 4.

⁵⁸ “Mayorality Race Candidates Off: Campaign Will Open Today,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Aug. 30, 1909, 5.

⁵⁹ “City Campaign Grows Warmer: Candidates for Mayor Busy,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Sept. 19, 1909, 5.

⁶⁰ “Registration Opens Tuesday,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Oct. 10, 1909, 10.

⁶¹ “City Campaign Grows Warmer: Candidates for Mayor Busy,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Sept. 19, 1909, 5.

⁶² “Fair Election is Demanded,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Sept. 26, 1909, 8.

manner in which the large affairs of this city have been administered.” He concluded that the current system “made anything like prompt and systematic business methods impossible.” He emphasized his intention to “obtain the most for the people for the least money” and “to run this city as thoroughly in all of its departments as I would any large business corporation.”⁶³ Like the other candidates, Crump expressed the need for efficiency in government, but he had the business background to back up his promises.

During the last three weeks of the campaign, the candidates became increasingly visible with nightly public appearances to reach out to male voters and female supporters. In late October, the three candidates staged public rallies and reached out to women in their advertisements. During the Progressive Era, women became increasingly entangled in party machinery, especially because of the era’s emphasis on reform. They used their domesticity to influence politics by taking up matters such as child labor policy and prohibition. The political parties hoped to attract women to their ranks for numerous reasons. In the rough world of electoral politics, candidates reached out to women because their support would serve as a sign of candidates’ virtue. They also hoped that women would persuade their husbands or fellow politicians to pass reforms. In Memphis, women took an interest in the mayoral campaign and participated in rallies. Notably, Crump and Williams hoped to improve the city’s sanitation, which had been of major interest to female reformers in American cities.⁶⁴ On October 21, Talbert hosted a rally on Madison Avenue open to men and women.⁶⁵ On October 29, Crump’s campaign team hosted a rally on Madison Avenue for the clubs representing the recently annexed suburbs of Lenox and Mt. Arlington. Although Crump did not speak on his own behalf,

⁶³ “E. H. Crump, “Crump for a Commission,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Sept. 26, 1909, 8.

⁶⁴ Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery*, 1-9, 70, 72, 145.

⁶⁵ Advertisement, *The News Scimitar* (Memphis, TN), Oct. 21, 1909, 6.

his team of orators, including Bryan and Goodman, did speak. They extended an invite to the women of these suburbs, as well.⁶⁶

Throughout the campaign, the candidates charged their opponents with nefarious practices and relying on black voters to win the election, and these charges picked up in the last few weeks of the race. Talbert levied the most critical charges on the other candidates for their pursuance of black votes. He praised the enactment of the secret ballot because it “meant almost the elimination of the negro from politics.” He encouraged the voters of Memphis, “Go back to the reconstruction days! Think of what our people of the South suffered to rid our country of the domination of the negro!”⁶⁷ Crump boldly criticized Williams and African Americans when he placed an advertisement in *The News Scimitar* featuring a fist brandishing a whip. The wielder of the whip had a tag around his wrist with the words: “‘Nigger’ Divekeepers for Williams.” At the violent end of the whip, numerous black figures marched together into a polling booth. In the advertisement, he charged that because “the white voters of Memphis are overwhelmingly in favor of E. H. Crump, Joe Williams has resorted to the scheme of thrusting himself into office by the negro dive vote.” He condemned Williams for registering “great hordes of the most degraded negroes in the First precinct of the Fifth ward.”⁶⁸ Williams, who received the most criticism for pursuing black voters, made his own charges against the candidates, especially against Crump. He claimed that Crump “never submitted his races to the Democratic primaries, for the very obvious reason that he could not then buy up, corral and drive in the negro votes, yet endeavor, at the same time, to divert the public’s eye by maliciously charging such nefarious campaign methods to his opponents.”⁶⁹ In the educational campaign waged in the newspapers, the

⁶⁶ Advertisement, *The News Scimitar* (Memphis, TN), Oct. 29, 1909, 4.

⁶⁷ Advertisement, *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* Oct. 17, 1909.

⁶⁸ Advertisement, *The News Scimitar* (Memphis, TN), Oct. 30, 1909, 8.

⁶⁹ Advertisement, *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* Oct. 31, 1909.

candidates blamed African Americans for fraudulent voting and condemned each other for pursuing black votes. In the spectacular campaigns, however, the candidates appealed to emotion and enthusiasm. To generate enthusiasm, the candidates turned to black musicians.

Despite the eagerness of the candidates to eliminate African Americans from politics, all three of them employed black musicians for their campaigns—a tactic prevalent throughout the South. In Memphis, black musicians set up on the city streets to play music to mobilize black voters. The same musicians that worked during the registration drive now set up in taverns and the city streets to help energize the electorate for their respective candidates. Specifically, they worked to cultivate name recognition and personality for the candidates.

Handy embraced his role as a musician for the Crump campaign and tried to find a melody to capture Crump's policies. He tried out various melodies and songs, some of which "might have expressed the mood and temper of Mr. Crump's platform" but "would certainly not have pulled any votes for him." Handy recognized, "Hot-cha music was the stuff we needed, and it had to be mellow."⁷⁰ After trial and error, Handy discovered the right tune. Handy's creation, a blues song named *Mr. Crump*, featured notable characteristics of black music in regards to form and melody. The blues derived from previous African forms of music common to the antebellum South, such as the field holler and call-and-response. In the field holler, a solo singer expressed himself through strong rhythm, melody, and delivery.⁷¹ The song implemented a three-chord basic structure, which according to Handy, "was that already used by Negro roustabouts, honky-tonk piano players, wanders and others of their underprivileged class." In addition to the chord structure, Handy wanted to use notes in the melody that suggested "the typical slurs of the Negro

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ David Evans, "Blues: Chronological Overview," in *African American Music: An Introduction* ed. by Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, Chapter 7 (New York: Routledge, 2006), 82.

voice” such as flat thirds and seventh notes.⁷² Black musicians integrated these African elements into the European-style folk ballads, which utilized a three-line form with alternating rhymed couplets.⁷³ In black culture, musicians employed all of these tactics to “express his personal feelings in a sort of musical soliloquy.”⁷⁴ Handy created the melody and the rhythms by listening to other black musicians throughout his travels in the American South, but he developed the lyrics to the song after listening to the comments of black citizens of Memphis.

Handy had written the tune to *Mr. Crump* and played it successfully to enthusiastic audiences before he wrote the lyrics. Many African Americans resented Crump’s reform platform, which “was about as palatable to Beale Street voters as castor oil.” While playing the song, Handy “heard various comments from the crowds” and from the members of his band who expressed “their own feelings about reform.” According to Handy, “most of these comments had been sung, impromptu, to my music.” African Americans used Handy’s music to express their own views on Crump’s campaign. Handy captured these comments and put them into his own lyrics for the song:

Mr. Crump won’t ‘low no easy riders here
Mr. Crump won’t ‘low no easy riders here
We don’t care what Mr. Crump don’t ‘low
We gon’ to bar’l-house anyhow—
Mr. Crump can go and catch hisself some air!

Despite the unflattering lyrics, Handy did not think the song did any harm to the Crump campaign. If anything, it helped voters remember Crump’s name.⁷⁵ Handy had a humorous disposition and, like many African Americans in Memphis, doubted Crump could or would

⁷² Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 99.

⁷³ Evans, “Blues,” 82.

⁷⁴ Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 99.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

eliminate taverns within the city and reform Memphis's nightlife.⁷⁶ Handy, having finished the song complete with lyrics, set out on the city of Memphis to showcase his talents to eager and attentive white audiences.

Handy's band played the new composition on the streets of downtown Memphis to energize black and white voters for Crump. "Thoroughly rehearsed and intoxicated by the new melody," Handy explained, "my musicians arrived at Main and Madison riding in a band wagon and got set to play the blues to the general public for the first time in America." After the band had set up its equipment, he "flashed the sign and the boys gave. Feet commenced to pat. A moment later there was dancing on the sidewalks below. Hands went into the air, bodies swayed like the reeds on the banks of the Congo." The people on the streets begged for more while in "the office buildings about, the white folks pricked up their ears. Stenographers danced with their bosses. Everybody shouted for more." Handy explained, the band "heard them on all sides demanding that we play the song again. One bystander came directly in front of us and insisted on knowing the name of the tune." Guitarist George Higgins told the inquiring person, "That's *Mr. Crump*," and continued playing the song for the enthusiastic audience.⁷⁷ Out on the streets of Memphis, Handy generated energy among potential voters and encouraged them to vote for Crump.

The band performed the song in theaters and concert halls across Memphis throughout campaign season. "From that day our band was swamped with calls," recalled Handy. His band divided "into three groups, each carrying violin, clarinet, cornet, trombone, guitar, and bass." The band sent out a call across the South for musicians to bolster the size and prevalence of the group. According to Handy, all "of the parks and dance halls employed us. When the demand

⁷⁶ Roberson, *W. C. Handy*, 124-125.

⁷⁷ Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 100.

reached its height, we were using sixty-seven musicians.”⁷⁸ On these occasions, Handy played the song for mostly white audiences to the benefit of his own career, which benefitted Crump’s mayoral campaign, as well.

By November, the candidates had completed an exhausting three-week run of public appearances. The three leading candidates had presented “hundreds of speeches” and had held meetings “in every ward of the city and in the new annexed territory.” The public appearances gave voters an opportunity to “hear the merits of their favorite candidate excited and the demerits of such candidate’s opponents held up to the light.” According to *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, the “enthusiasm of many of the voters” had been “aroused to such a pitch as to indicate that an election was close at hand.”⁷⁹ In the final days, the candidates made their last appeals in the newspapers but especially in the city streets.

On November 2, Talbert staged his final campaign rally before election day, and the other candidates’ supporters gathered for their own events. In the highly contentious Nineteenth Ward, Talbert hosted a meeting at the Jefferson Theater on the corner of Decatur Street and Lane Street attended by a “large crowd.” As usual, Talbert spoke on his own behalf.⁸⁰ Simultaneously, Crump supporters gathered in the Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh Wards, and Williams forces held rallies at Gaston Park in the coveted Thirteenth Ward.

On November 3, Crump and Williams staged their final rallies and events to energize voters for the upcoming battle. During the afternoon, William Wallace Saxby, Jr., director of Memphis’s Christian Brothers High School Band, the Memphis Philharmonic Orchestra Association, and the Memphis Municipal Park Band, led one of these elite groups in a parade of

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 100-101

⁷⁹ “Final Rallies Held Tonight,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 3, 1909, 4.

⁸⁰ “Votes Will Decide Today,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 4, 1909, 4.

the city streets in support of Williams.⁸¹ From 7 to 8 p.m., one of Saxby's band performed a concert at Court Square in the city's center. Afterward, Williams staged his final rally at the same location, where he spoke to "one of the largest crowds of the campaign." In his speech, he emphasized his record as mayor and a public official. On Williams's behalf, Shelby County Sheriff Frank L. Monteverde spoke to the massive audience.⁸² Meanwhile, Crump held a mass open-air meeting at Gaston Park in the "much-fought-over" Thirteenth Ward. Once again, Crump did not speak at his own event. Instead, he counted on "a dozen or more" of his campaign's best speakers to energize an audience of 700 to 1,000 people.⁸³ At these events, the candidates and their supporters launched "rockets and red fire" and the "two rival campaigns will be closed in a burst of oratory and fireworks in the good, old-fashioned style." After concluding the rallies, the candidates finally had the opportunity "to take a few hours' rest before the work of election day begins on Thursday morning."⁸⁴ After months of campaigning, the candidates made a final push on election day.

On a November 4, Memphians enjoyed a beautiful autumn day and went to the polls to cast their ballots and participate in the election day spectacle. For the most part, they cast their ballots without causing trouble or disturbing the peace. To guarantee order and fairness, Memphis police positioned themselves at each of the city's election sites, and Chief of Police W. C. Davis toured every precinct by automobile.⁸⁵ In the morning, however, Mayor Malone changed the assignments for the police officers, which led to some confusion that worried election officials. Based on these developments and the anticipation of heavy voting, *The News*

⁸¹ Patrick Bolton, "'The Oldest High School Band in America': The Christian Brothers Band of Memphis, 1872-1947," (master's thesis, The University of Memphis, 2011), 115-116.

⁸² "Votes Will Decide Today," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 4, 1909, 4.

⁸³ "Final Rallies Held Tonight," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 3, 1909, 4; "Votes Will Decide Today," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 4, 1909, 4.

⁸⁴ "Final Rallies Held Tonight," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 3, 1909, 4.

⁸⁵ "Davis Visits Wards: Chief of Police Finds Officers Non-Partisan," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 5, 1909, 5.

Scimitar editors predicted that “today’s election gives every promise of being as hot as anyone could desire.”⁸⁶ Memphians did not disappoint these predictions.

In the morning, Memphians went to the polls, but they also paraded and drove through the city streets to demonstrate their allegiance to their candidates. First, Crump and his supporters paraded. The procession featured the same Saxby’s band that played at Williams’s final rally held the previous evening. In twelve carriages and fifteen automobiles, Crump’s supporters followed him and the band on the parade route “all carrying huge Crump banners.” In addition to these parades, Williams and Talbert supporters appeared on the streets, “but they did not attempt a parade” and “went at once to the different polling places.” Instead, Williams’s supporters gathered for “a lively scene in and around” their headquarters. Here, his lieutenants assembled to collect final instructions and campaign literature, which they distributed at the polling precincts. The Williams supporters demonstrated the “same spirit of confidence in final victory” as at the other headquarters. Williams did not show up at his headquarters to greet his supporters. Instead, he waited in his office all day for the election results.⁸⁷ The election day spectacle had a hot start, but it would only grow livelier throughout the day.

At 11:30 a.m, Crump assaulted a black voter in the first precinct of the Fifth Ward because he suspected election fraud. According to *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, the “mix-up in the Fifth was a sensational one.” Robert Houston, a black man, entered the polling station at 425 Beale Avenue. When he exited the building, he left with an official, unmarked ballot “for the purpose of marking it for an ignorant voter.” Crump noticed the illegal behavior and confronted Houston. Will Parsons, who owned a nearby saloon, spoke up on behalf of Houston. At some point, Crump “handed the negro a right swing to the point of the jaw.” Two Memphis police

⁸⁶ “Warns Against Raids on Ballot Boxes; Fight Breaks Out in Fifth,” *The News Scimitar* (Memphis, TN), Nov. 4, 1909, 1.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

officers arrested Houston and Parsons for election fraud. Later, a local judge issued a warrant charging Crump with assault and battery.⁸⁸

Despite Crump's open hostility toward black voters, he tallied significant votes from black voters on Beale Avenue. Although Handy's admitted, "I am sure he would he would have been easily elected without me," his song, *Mr. Crump*, may have helped Crump gain votes from Beale Avenue's black voters.⁸⁹ In general, Memphians predicted that Williams would carry the downtown wards and Crump would win in the suburbs. Although Williams won the Fifth Ward and the black vote generally, Crump won 94 voters at the Beale Avenue precinct where he assaulted Houston. Notably, Crump carried the only other precinct located on Beale Avenue. In the Seventh Ward, voters cast ballots at the indoor swimming pool on the corner of Beale Avenue and Orleans St. At this precinct, Crump gained 252 votes, but Williams gained only 135 votes.⁹⁰ With these small victories, Crump cut into Williams's base and threatened to win the election. To win, Crump would have to succeed in the hotly contested Thirteenth Ward.

In the Thirteenth Ward, Memphians buzzed around the polling precincts with the greatest activity. Throughout the campaign, the candidates battled over this ward's 1,800 registered voters. Located near the railroad shops and the city's manufacturing district, this ward consisted mostly of railroad workers and union laborers. At Robinson's Drug Store on the corner of McLemore Street and Rayburn Street, more than 100 campaign workers assembled to make their last impressions on undecided voters. When voters entered the polling booths, these workers cried out and the entire area "sounded like a circus." The campaign workers used "rough tactics" at this polling precinct throughout the day, "but every person seemed to be in a holiday mood

⁸⁸ "Crump Charged with Assault: Disturbance in Fifth Ward," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 5, 1909, 5; "Voting Places Selected," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 3, 1909, 8; Gritter, *River of Hope*, 33-34.

⁸⁹ Handy, *Father of the Blues*, xiv.

⁹⁰ "E. H. Crump Chosen Mayor of Memphis," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 5, 1909, 1; "Surprises in Some Wards," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 5, 1909, 2; Gritter, *River of Hope*, 34.

and no trouble occurred.” At each of the three precincts of the Thirteenth Ward, Crump triumphed, especially at Robinson’s Drug Store where he collected 354 votes, his largest total of any polling place.⁹¹

Amid the election day fervor, twelve jurors collectively made their way to the polling place near the courthouse. *The News Scimitar* explained, “If you see a crowd of twelve men march two by two to a polling place today, don’t think it is a detachment of militia or a political marching club.” At the time of the election, Bonny Burchett faced murder charges in the death of Mercedes Donovan. During murder trials, jury members could not separate themselves from the other jurors nor have any outside contact. To vote, they had to march together to the polling places to cast their ballots under the supervision of sheriff’s deputies, which they did in the afternoon.⁹²

Across the city, election officials called on citizens to visit and remain at the precincts in an attempt to deter illegal behavior. In the late afternoon, John H. Crain issued a statement to Memphis voters warning them about illegal behavior. As the secretary of the Shelby County Election Commission, he had been made aware of attempts to raid ballot boxes. Crain declared that the “presence of law-abiding citizens in force will prevent” illegal behavior. He requested “all good citizens who want to see a fair election and honest count” to return to their polling places at 5 p.m. and remain there until the polls closed at 7 p.m.⁹³ Despite all of the rules designed to prevent voter fraud, Memphis officials considered large crowds at the polls as a safeguard of the democratic process.

⁹¹ “Voting Places Selected,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 3, 1909, 8; “E. H. Crump Chosen Mayor of Memphis,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 5, 1909, 1; “Davis Visits Wards,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 5, 1909, page.

⁹² “Must Go To the Polls in a Body,” *The News Scimitar* (Memphis, TN), Nov. 4, 1909, 1.

⁹³ “Warns Against Raids on Ballot Boxes; Fight Breaks Out in Fifth,” *The News Scimitar*, Nov. 4, 1909, 1.

After the polls closed, Memphians earnestly speculated about the outcome of the contest and gathered with one another to await official results. Outside of *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*'s offices, a crowd of five to eight thousand people awaited live updates of "the first and most accurate" election returns in the city. The crowd started building before the polls closed, many thousands crowded the streets by 8 p.m. There, they watched the returns flashed up on the screen as soon as editors got word from the courthouse. It seems that the crowd consisted mostly of men, but women had plenty of interest in the outcome. In addition to the massive crowd outside of the building, newspaper employees fielded thousands of inquiries via telephone from curious Memphians. After the polls closed, three telephone lines at the *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* remained in constant use from 7 p.m. until midnight. During the night, the newspaper's three telephone operators answered more than 10,000 calls. With regard to the phone calls, an editor remarked, "One of the most surprising features was that more than half of the calls were from women." Then, the editor suggested that women called the newspaper offices because "the men folks" went to view the results on the bulletin board.⁹⁴ In these segregated ways, Memphians participated in the events of election night with one another.

In the largest and closest vote in Memphis history, Crump prevailed by a mere 79 votes out of more than 12,000 cast. *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* first announced the results to the thousands of spectators outside of its offices. Crump's supporters applauded and cheered the results together in Court Square.⁹⁵ On Crump's victory, *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* editors expressed cautious optimism regarding Crump's abilities and the city's impending experiment with commission-style government. They claimed that Crump had a "great responsibility" to satisfy the people's demands for a "divorcement of politics from the machinery of city

⁹⁴ "E. H. Crump Chosen Mayor of Memphis," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 5, 1909, 2.

⁹⁵ "E. H. Crump Chosen Mayor of Memphis," *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 5, 1909, 2.

government.” They explained that the commission government depended greatly “upon the character of work the commissioners themselves do.” In conclusion, they hoped that “this election marks the passing from an era of politics to business in our city government.”⁹⁶ *The News Scimitar* joyously received the news of Crump’s election. In the wake of his victory, the editors declared, “Mr. Crump seems to have excellent material in him.” They characterized his victory as a sign that the people want a “more compact and more responsible form of government and prefer a man fully in sympathy with the experiment.” They expected Crump to “give the city a clean businesslike administration and reduce waste to a minimum.”⁹⁷ Memphians had high expectations and hopes for Crump, but the voter turnout gave them reasons to have even higher hopes in the future of the city.

During an era of disfranchisement, Memphians expressed satisfaction at the high voter-turnouts because it testified to their city’s civic awareness and growth. According to *The News Scimitar*, “citizens in general were much gratified at the big vote rolled up, which would have been some hundreds larger had not poll tax books given out.” With regard to the voter turnout, the editors remarked, “It is gratifying because it shows people are aroused to an interest in city affairs.” They expressed satisfaction in the fact that the “big bulk of this registered vote is white” with fewer than “2,000 negroes being on the books.” *The News Scimitar* explained, without too much harsh judgment, that African Americans “voted heavier than they have for many years” and “dictated the result in some precincts” because of their presence. Unlike the response Maconites had to black voters in their city in 1898, Memphis editors did not call for any election reform nor condemn any candidates for pursuing black voters.

⁹⁶ “The Election,” *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, Nov. 5, 1909, 6.

⁹⁷ “The Memphis Election,” *The News Scimitar*, Nov. 5, 1909, 4.

Immediately after Crump took office, black Memphians wrote to him and requested the creation of a park for the black community. By April 1910, Robert Galloway, who served on the parks commission, reasoned that the “better classes” of African Americans in the city should have “some place of amusement” of their own to “go and spend a day.”⁹⁸ At this time, the parks commission had not yet selected a site and would not make a decision for several years, so African Americans kept up the activism. The Colored Citizens of Memphis requested the rights to a piece of land they called Douglass Park. They considered this location ideal because of its proximity to the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, which the black community had used “for at least thirty years in going to this locality with our picnics.” In the meantime, they asked the mayor for continued rights to use this land for church picnics.⁹⁹ In 1913, the city bought the land known as Douglass Park “for the exclusive use of negro citizens.” In 1914, J. H. Cannon wrote to Crump requesting a space for him and his family to visit “after our toils” for the purposes of “rest or recreation” In advance, he thanked Crump “for anything you award us.” Crump assured J. H. Cannon that they had purchased the park and had asked the parks commission to “begin at the earliest possible date” to put the “park in first-class condition.”¹⁰⁰ In addition to the park negotiations, Crump would have contact with members of the black community.

During his tenure, Crump had constant dialogue with black Memphians; they sent him requests for new services and other concessions, which he greeted with respect and

⁹⁸ Newspaper Clipping, *E. H. Crump Collection*, Box 20, Folder 9 L-City Business 1910; To determine a relative date of this clipping, I cross-referenced it against a letter from A. C. Lake dated Apr. 27, 1910. In this letter, Lake opposes the joining of the federal grounds with Confederate Park via a bridge over Court Avenue. She argues that African Americans “will flood over into Confederate Park.” A. C. Lake, *A. C. Lake to E. H. Crump, Apr. 27, 1910*. Letter. Box 20, Folder 9 L- City Business 1910. E. H. Crump Collection. Memphis and Shelby County Room. Memphis Public Library and Information Center, Memphis, TN.

⁹⁹ Colored Citizens of the City of Memphis. *Letter to E. H. Crump, undated*. Letter. Box 7 Folder 4 C-Personal 1912. E. H. Crump Collection. Memphis and Shelby County Room. Memphis Public Library and Information Center, Memphis, TN.

¹⁰⁰ J. H. Cannon. *J. H. Cannon to E. H. Crump, Apr. 18, 1914*. Letter. *E. H. Crump Collection* Box 6, Folder 2 C-City Business 1914; E. H. Crump, *E. H. Crump to J. H. Cannon, Apr. 20, 1914*. Letter. Box 6, Folder 2 City Business 1914. E. H. Crump Collection. Memphis and Shelby County Room. Memphis Public Library and Information Center, Memphis, TN.

consideration. By the time Crump took office, Robert Church, Jr. had taken over for his father as a major player in Memphis politics, and he continued his father's work on behalf of the black community. During Crump's reign, Church, Jr. made visits to Crump's office to parlay.¹⁰¹ In addition to Church, Jr.'s work, black Memphians continued to organize into fraternal organizations and voluntary societies, such as the Colored Men's Civil League. These organizations appealed to Crump for assistance and favors.¹⁰² In July 1910, for example, African Americans reached out to him on behalf of "the many negro boys and girls of this great city who are wards of the state" to establish a home for the city's neglected and delinquent children. They offered to supply the land for the building but only needed the city's help with the construction.¹⁰³ To this request, Crump promised his "most careful consideration."¹⁰⁴ By 1912, he had started working with local doctors and dentists to provide care for the black schoolchildren of the city and to employ a black physician at the hospital.¹⁰⁵ In 1912, T. O. Fuller of the Howe Institute asked Crump to exempt his institution from licensing because its funds "got to the development of the school and not for individual profit." The institution trained black children "to make them good citizens" by instructing them in cooking, sewing, carpentry,

¹⁰¹ Robert R. Church, Jr. *Robert R. Church, Jr. to E. H. Crump, Nov. 24, 1914*. Letter. Box 7, Folder 6 C-Personal 1914. E. H. Crump Collection. Memphis and Shelby County Room. Memphis Public Library and Information Center, Memphis, TN.

¹⁰² Gritter, *River of Hope*, 35-36.

¹⁰³ Julia A. Hooks, *Julia A. Hooks to E. H. Crump, July 24, 1910*. Letter. Box 15, Folder 1 H-City Business. E. H. Crump Collection. Memphis and Shelby County Room. Memphis Public Library and Information Center, Memphis, TN.

¹⁰⁴ E. H. Crump, *E. H. Crump to Julia A. Hooks, July 27, 1910*. Letter. Box 15, Folder 1 H-City Business 1910. E. H. Crump Collection. Memphis and Shelby County Room. Memphis Public Library and Information Center, Memphis, TN.

¹⁰⁵ L. W. Dutro, *L. W. Dutro to E. H. Crump, Jan. 10, 1912*. Letter. Box 9, Folder 6 City Departments 1912. E. H. Crump Collection. Memphis and Shelby County Room. Memphis Public Library and Information Center, Memphis, TN; William Duecker, *William Duecker to E. H. Crump, Jan. 6, 1912*, Box. 9, Folder 6 City Departments 1912 E. H. Crump Collection. Memphis and Shelby County Room. Memphis Public Library and Information Center, Memphis, TN.

and printing.¹⁰⁶ In 1914, he wrote to the Southern Baptist Convention with regard to the site of a theological seminary for training black ministers. He argued that “Memphis is the logical location for the proposed institution” because of its large “honest, hard-working” black community, who “would doubtless give enthusiastic support to a school of this kind.”¹⁰⁷ In the same year, Crump banned the showing of Thomas Dixon’s *The Leopard Spots* because he received complaints from the black community about its portrayal of black people.¹⁰⁸ By taking an interest in the needs of the black community, Crump strengthened his political machine. He understood their importance in Memphis politics, and he received black support throughout his career. His campaign manager, Rice, worked to register black voters. In the next election, these voters helped Crump defeat Williams by 7,000 votes. With black and white support, Crump’s machine lasted deep into the twentieth century.¹⁰⁹

Crump dominated Memphis politics from 1909 until 1948, and he remained an important political figure until his death in 1954.¹¹⁰ During his tenure as mayor, he pursued a variety of reform programs; for example, he advocated a city-owned electric company to keep low rates for businesses, government, and citizens. His government regulated child labor, enacted measures to improve sanitary conditions in the city, created a Board of Charity to provide for the city’s poor, and instituted a Board of Censors to review movies and plays for potentially harmful conduct. In 1916, Crump lost his position as mayor because he failed to uphold Tennessee’s prohibition law, but he continued to rule Memphis from behind the scenes. From 1916 until 1924, he served as

¹⁰⁶ T. O. Fuller, *T. O. Fuller to E. H. Crump, May 1, 1912*. Letter. Box 11, Folder 19 F-City Business 1912. E. H. Crump Collection. Memphis and Shelby County Room. Memphis Public Library and Information Center, Memphis, TN.

¹⁰⁷ E. H. Crump, *E. H. Crump to the Committee on Location, Jun. 9, 1914*. Letter. Box 6 Folder 2 C-City Business 1914. E. H. Crump Collection. Memphis and Shelby County Room. Memphis Public Library and Information Center, Memphis, TN.

¹⁰⁸ Gritter, *River of Hope*, 35-36. She discusses the relationship between Crump and Memphis’s black community and points out the “two-way relationship” existing between them.

¹⁰⁹ Miller, *Mr. Crump of Memphis*, 102-103.

¹¹⁰ Dowdy, *Mayor Crump Don’t Like It*, 108-111.

Shelby County Trustee. In 1930, he won election to the United States House of Representatives where he served until 1935. Until 1948, his political machine dominated Memphis and Tennessee politics. By 1948, African Americans changed their tactics. Black voters became more independent at the encouragement of their civic leaders. Unable to mobilize black voters, Crump's machine alienated them in favor of more predictable and loyal voters. From 1909 until 1948, however, the Crump machine had put its weight behind successful candidates for city, county, state, and national offices. Over the course of his career, he controlled Memphis and forever altered the nature of the Democratic Party in the South, specifically in Tennessee and the Mississippi Delta.¹¹¹

With the song *Mr. Crump*, Handy not only helped its namesake win the election, but he became a famous musician and eventually a music publisher. He and his band had become the leading black band in Memphis in the early twentieth century, and they played all of the most important gigs in the city.¹¹² They played a concert at the Alaskan Roof Garden, which Handy characterized as the "leading uptown dance spot of white Memphis" thus providing "white society an opportunity to hear our wonderful xylophonist and drummer Jasper Taylor."¹¹³ The popularity of the song encouraged Handy to publish it. In 1910, Handy met with Crump. He showed the mayor the lyrics, which he had written on brown wrapping paper. Handy asked Crump for permission to name the song after him. Crump agreed.¹¹⁴ Eventually, Handy changed the name and lyrics, in addition to making a few changes to the structure and melody, before trying to sell it. The new song, *Memphis Blues*, became a major hit but not to the immediate benefit of its composer. Handy lost the copyright privileges to *Memphis Blues*, but undeterred, he

¹¹¹ For an explanation and description of Crump's rise to power and his control of Memphis and Tennessee for fifty years, please see Dowdy, *Mayor Crump Don't Like It*.

¹¹² Roberson, *W. C. Handy*, 126.

¹¹³ Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 101.

¹¹⁴ Miller, *Mr. Crump of Memphis*, 101-102.

composed numerous popular songs over the course of his career, such as *St. Louis Blues*, *Yellow Dog Blues*, and *Beale Street Blues*. He started his own music company, which published black musicians.¹¹⁵ By playing for the Crump campaign, Handy had launched his career as a famous blues musician.

Crump and Handy went on to fame, but their legacies remained forever linked. Many years later, people generously gave Handy credit for persuading “Memphis that Crump was a man in a thousand.” According to *New York Times* columnist Lewis Nichols, Handy’s band gained fame and “attracted attention” because “it paid its candidate compliments in a rhythm that was at the same time strange and haunting.” After casting the ballots, Nichols explained, “the electorate signified its hopeful desires. When the returns came in, Crump was the new Mayor—and the blues had arrived.”¹¹⁶ According to another author, “politics started the ‘blues.’” In that year Mr. Handy wrote a campaign song for Edward H. Crump that helped the ‘Boss’ to become Mayor of Memphis.”¹¹⁷

The 1909 Memphis mayoral election serves as one of many examples of African Americans actively participating in campaign events on behalf of white southern candidates during Jim Crow, yet this particular example features prominent and renowned political and musical figures at the beginning of their careers. Handy, a black musician, and Crump, a southern Democrat, have a highly unlikely and perhaps perplexing relationship considering the racial politics of the early twentieth South. Although Crump and his opponents condemned black voting and Reconstruction, their political machines employed black musicians to rally black voters on their behalf. The black musicians seized the opportunity for their own purposes. Handy

¹¹⁵ Joel Dreyfuss, “The Man Who Made the Blues,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 16, 1973, B1; “W. C. Handy, Composer, Is Dead; Author of ‘St. Louis Blues’; 84,” *New York Times*, Mar. 29, 1958, 17; Handy, *Father of the Blues*.

¹¹⁶ Lewis Nichols. “The End of the Sky Blue Decade: W. C. Handy, Historian of Memphis, Beale Street and St. Louis, Now Tills Greener Fields,” *New York Times*, Nov. 11, 1934, X3.

¹¹⁷ “W. C. Handy, Composer, Is Dead; Author of ‘St. Louis Blues,’ 84,” *New York Times* Mar. 29, 1958, 17.

and his band worked on behalf of the Crump campaign because it provided them economic opportunity, access to white audiences, and political influence. Across the South, white politicians and black musicians cooperated and collided with one another in spectacular campaign events.

EPILOGUE

“I DIDN’T REALLY KNOW HOW TO SHOW MY OPPOSITION”

In late July 2015, Ku Klux Klan and National Socialist Movement Party members marched to the statehouse in Columbia, South Carolina, to advocate on behalf of the Confederate flag and protest its removal in the aftermath of the mass murder at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Local sousaphonist Matt Buck, a white man, joined the marchers with the intent of humiliating them. Along the parade route, Buck played Richard Wagner’s *Ride of the Valkyries* and another tune with a bass line similar to “The Elephant March” from Disney’s *The Jungle Book*. Buck, who knew the latter tune from a scene in television show *Family Guy*, explained, “I didn’t really know how to show my opposition, so that was my way of doing it.” He added, “My goal was to embarrass them, and I think I did a little bit.” After Buck’s serenade, YouTube user Diana Martin uploaded a video of the encounter to the internet, which went viral. Across the globe, newspaper reporters and internet bloggers picked up on the story of how Buck resisted the white supremacists marching through South Carolina’s capital. When asked about his methods, Buck responded, “I wanted to embarrass the KKK, rather than curse, harass, or become violent like some other protesters.”¹

From 1877 to 1932, African Americans used similar means to articulate their views on politicians and reformers, causes and platforms. They expressed themselves with performance at

¹ Paul Bowers, “Sousaphonist Serenades Confederate Flag Supporter in Columbia,” *Charleston City Paper*, Jul. 20, 2015, <http://www.charlestoncitypaper.com/FeedbackFile/archives/2015/07/20/sousaphonist-serenades-confederate-flag-supporters-in-columbia>; Imogen Calderwood, “Hilarious Moment Tuba Player Ridicules KKK Supporters with ‘Family Guy-Style’ Serenade at a Confederate Rally in South Carolina,” *Daily Mail* (UK), Jul. 21, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3169567/Hilarious-moment-tuba-player-ridicules-KKK-supporters-Family-Guy-style-serenade-Confederate-rally-South-Carolina.html>.

all types of political and cultural spectacles. Like Buck, they used performance because they lacked other options. In an era of disfranchisement, segregation, lynching, and limited economic opportunity, African Americans adopted subtle yet nonetheless public and successful forms of resistance. With these performances, they pursued upward mobility and political influence.

After Reconstruction ended, white southerners embarked on a mission to make African Americans invisible in the political sphere. They used intimidation and legislation to cut off black and poor white voters' access to the ballot box. Across the South, disfranchisement had an immediate impact on voter turnout. In 1888, Tennessee voters turned out at a rate of 78 percent. In 1890, less than half of eligible Tennesseans cast votes. Disfranchisement moved at different paces in different states. It also had its most devastating effects on the black vote. In North Carolina, eighty-seven percent of black North Carolinians cast ballots in the 1896 election. In the early twentieth century, less than half of North Carolina's eligible black voters went to the polls and the turnout rate plummeted.²

The lack of voting rights, however, did not necessarily entail the complete loss of political power. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women could not vote, but they nonetheless agitated on behalf of political parties and reform movements. They attended rallies and orations, marched in parades, gathered for bonfires and flag-raising ceremonies. They persuaded men to vote on their behalf. Through these forms of participation, they counted themselves as members of the public sphere.³ In spite of disfranchisement, African Americans similarly made themselves a visible member of the public sphere without inciting trouble.

In twenty-first century South Carolina, Matt Buck did not experience any meaningful backlash for his performance. He explained, "A few people had a few things to say, but nobody

² Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*, 58-59, 170-172; Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics*, 194, table 7.5.

³ Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery*.

really confronted me or anything.”⁴ Would Buck have encountered any trouble if he was black? Given the experiences of black southerners in the Jim Crow South, it seems unlikely. In public, African Americans performed some dangerous behavior, but they rarely suffered any backlash for confronting white women or humiliating white politicians, which would seem exactly like the kind of behavior that would have resulted in lynching. They successfully adorned the character of the feckless black performer, however, which satisfied white desires for minstrel performances. By assuming these roles, black southerners escaped trouble yet voiced political views.

With the performance in South Carolina, Buck demonstrates that the behavior analyzed in this dissertation does not have chronological or geographical boundaries. It existed before Reconstruction ended in 1877. It continued after the election of President D. Roosevelt in 1932. It was not solely used by black southerners, either.

This dissertation focused on the American South from 1877 to 1932 because this time and place seemed the least likely time and place to find public black political behavior. Despite disfranchisement, the threat of lynching, and a movement to eliminate spectacle from the political process, black southerners joined white southerners in city streets, concert halls, and other venues for the purpose of exercising political power.

⁴ Joel Landau, “South Carolina Man Mocks Ku Klux Klan Rally Supporters with Serenade from Sousaphone,” *Daily News* (New York), July 21, 2015, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/watch-s-man-mocks-klk-members-sousaphone-article-1.2299317>.

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Globe and Mail (Toronto, ON)

Greenville Advocate (Greenville, SC)

The Hamilton Times (Hamilton, AL)

Kingstree County Record (Kingstree, SC)

Lafayette Gazette (Lafayette, LA)

Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles, CA)

Macon News (Macon, GA)

Macon Telegraph (Macon, GA)

Memphis Appeal-Avalanche (Memphis, TN)

Memphis Avalanche (Memphis, TN)

Memphis Appeal (Memphis, TN)

Memphis Commercial-Appeal (Memphis, TN)

Mexico Missouri Message (Mexico, MO)

Mexico Weekly Ledger (Mexico, MO)

Mobile Register (Mobile, AL)

Monitor-Index and Democrat (Moberly, MO)

Nashville Tennessean (Nashville, TN)

New Journal and Guide (Norfolk, VA)

New York Times (New York, NY)

New York Tribune (New York, NY)

Petersburgh Index Appeal (Petersburg, VA)

Richmond Dispatch (Richmond, VA)
Richmond Planet (Richmond, VA)
Sandusky Star (Sandusky, OH)
Savannah Tribune (Savannah, GA)
Shenandoah Herald (Woodstock, VA)
Staunton Spectator (Staunton, VA)
St. Louis Post Dispatch (St. Louis, MO)
St. Paul Globe (St. Paul, MN)
Sunday States (New Orleans, LA)
The American (Nashville, TN)
The Bradford Era (Bradford, PA)
The Caucasian (Shreveport, LA)
The Christian Recorder (Philadelphia, PA)
The Critic (Washington, DC)
The Daily Dispatch (Richmond, VA)
The Enquirer (Yorkville, SC)
The Forest-Blade (Swainsboro, GA)
The Freeman (Indianapolis, IN)
The Gazette (Fort Worth, TX)
The Helena Independent (Helena, MT)
*The Independent: Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies,
History, Literature, and the Arts*
The Intelligencer (Anderson Court House, SC)

The Landmark (Statesville, NC)
The Maryville Times (Maryville, TN)
The Morning Oregonian (Portland, OR)
The News and Herald (Winnsboro, SC)
The News Scimitar (Memphis, TN)
The Pittsburgh Courier (Pittsburgh, PA)
The Progressive Farmer (Winston, NC)
The Pulaski Citizen (Pulaski, TN)
The Sun (Baltimore, MD)
The Tazewell Republican (Tazewell, VA)
The Tennessean (Nashville, TN)
The Times-Dispatch (Richmond, VA)
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