

# AN OSTRACIZED RACE IN FERMENT

STORY OF THE CONFLICT OF NEGRO PARTIES AND NEGRO  
LEADERS OVER METHODS OF DEALING WITH  
THEIR OWN PROBLEM

BY RAY STANNARD BAKER

ILLUSTRATED WITH PORTRAITS



ONE of the things that has interested me most of all in studying Negro communities, especially in the North, has been to find them so torn by cliques and divided by such wide differences of opinion.

No other element of our population presents a similar condition; the Italians, the Jews, the Germans and especially the Chinese and Japanese are held together not only by a different language, but by ingrained and ancient national habits. They group themselves naturally. But the Negro is an American in language and customs; he knows no other traditions and he has no other conscious history; a large proportion, indeed, possess varying degrees of white American blood (restless blood!); and yet the Negro is not accepted as an American. Instead of losing himself gradually in the dominant race, as the Germans, Irish and Italians are doing, adding those traits or qualities with which Time fashions and modifies this human mosaic called the American nation, the Negro is set apart as a peculiar people.

With every Negro, then, an essential question is: "How shall I meet this attempt to put me off by myself?"

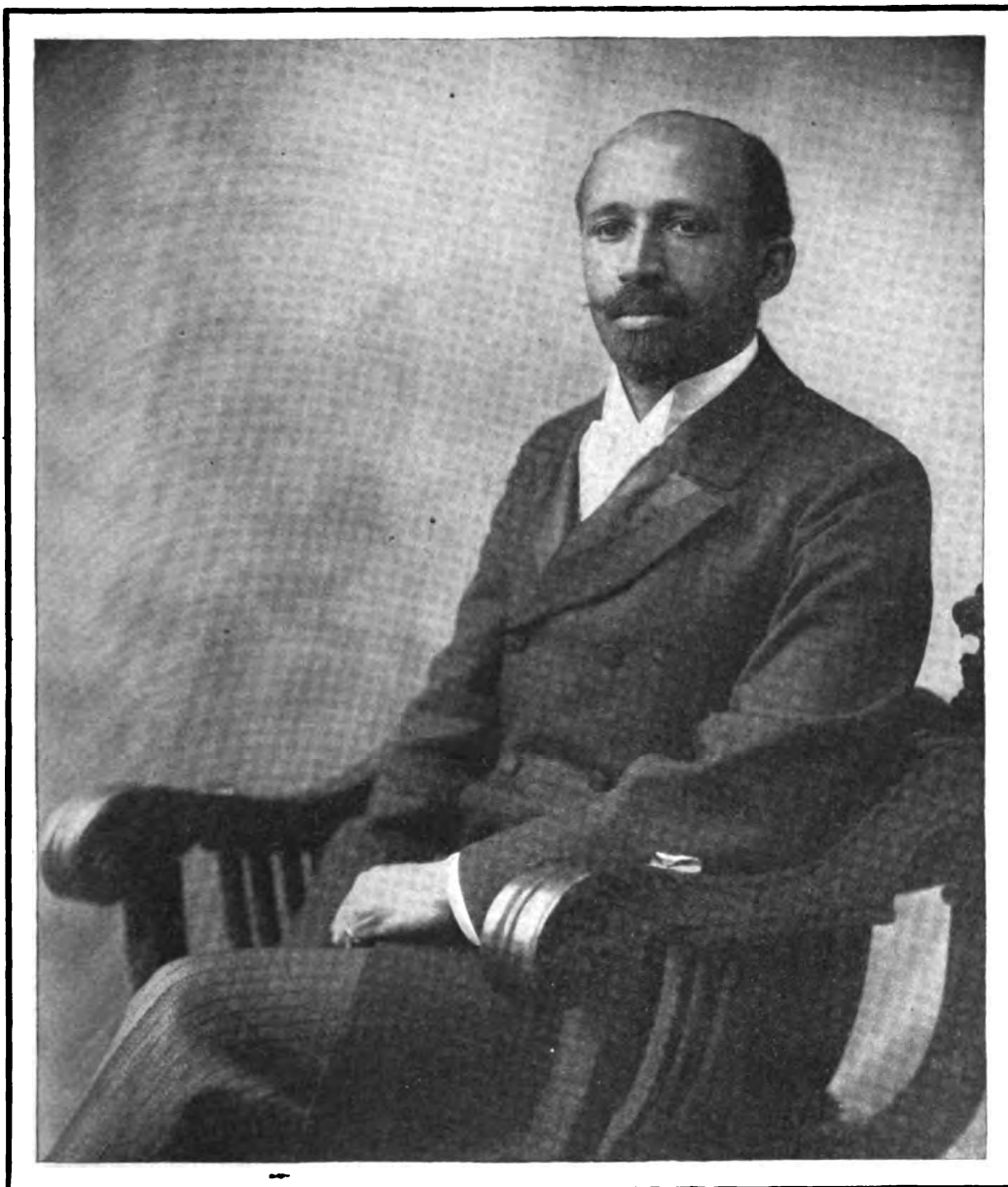
That question in one form or another—politically, industrially, socially—is being met daily, almost hourly, by every Negro in this country. It colors his very life.

"You don't know, and you can't know," a Negro said to me, "what it is to be a Problem, to understand that every one is watching you and studying you, to have your mind constantly on your own actions. It has made us think and talk about ourselves more than other people do. It has made us self-conscious and sensitive."

It is scarcely surprising, then, that upon such a vital question there should be wide differences of opinion among Negroes. As a matter of fact, there are almost innumerable points of view and suggested modes of conduct, but they all group themselves into two great parties which are growing more distinct in outline and purpose every day. Both parties exist in every part of the country, but it is in the North that the struggle between them is most evident. I have found a sharper feeling and a bitterer discussion of race relationships among the Negroes of the North than among those of the South. If you want to hear the race question discussed with fire and fervor, go to Boston!

For two hundred and fifty years the Negro had no thought, no leadership, no parties; then suddenly he was set free, and became, so far as law could make him, an integral and indistinguishable part of the American people. But it was only in a few places in the North and among comparatively few individuals that he ever approximately reached the position of a free citizen, that he ever really enjoyed the rights granted to him under the law. In the South he was never free politically, socially and industrially, in the sense that the white man is free, and is not so to-day.

But in Boston, and in other Northern cities in lesser degree, a group of Negroes reached essentially equal citizenship. A few families trace their lineage back to the very beginnings of civilization in this country, the ancestors of some were never slaves, others were freemen long before the war, a few had revolutionary war records of which their descendants are intensely and justly proud. Some of the families have far more white blood than black; though the census



DR. W. E. B. DU BOIS OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY  
AUTHOR OF "THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK"

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*"What shall the Negro do about discrimination ?' his answer was the exact reverse of Washington's : it was the voice of Massachusetts :*

*"Do not submit ! agitate, object, fight.'"*

shows that only about forty per cent. of the Negroes of Boston are Mulattoes, the real proportion is undoubtedly very much higher.

In abolition times these Negroes were much regarded. Many of them attained and kept a certain real position among the whites; they were even accorded unusual opportunities and favors. They found such

a place as an educated Negro might find to-day (or at least as he found a few years ago) in Germany. In some instances they became wealthy. At a time when the North was passionately concerned in the abolition of slavery the color of his skin sometimes gave the Negro special advantages, even honors.

For years after the war this condition

continued; then a stream of immigration of Southern Negroes began to appear, at first a mere rivulet, but latterly increasing in volume, until to-day all of our Northern cities have swarming colored colonies. Owing to the increase of the Negro population and for other causes which I have already mentioned, sentiment in the North toward the Negro has been undergoing a swift change.

*How Color  
Lines are  
Drawn*

Now the tragedy of the Negro is the color of his skin: he is easily recognizable. The human tendency is to class people together by outward appearances. When the line began to be drawn it was drawn not alone against the unworthy Negro, but against the Negro. It was not so much drawn by the highly intelligent white man as by the white man. And the white man alone has not drawn it, but the Negroes themselves are drawing it—and more and more every day. So we draw the line in this country against the Chinese, the Japanese, and in some measure against the Jews (and they help to draw it). So we speak with disparagement of “dagoes” and

“square heads.” Right or wrong, these lines, in our present state of civilization, are drawn. They are here; they must be noted and dealt with.

What was the result? The Northern Negro who has been enjoying the free life of Boston and Philadelphia has protested

passionately against the drawing of a color line: he wishes to be looked upon, and not at all unnaturally, for he possesses human ambitions and desires, solely for his worth as a man, not as a Negro.

In Philadelphia I heard of the old Philadelphia Negroes, in Indianapolis of the old Indianapolis families, in Boston a sharp distinction was drawn between the “Boston Negro” and the recent Southern importation. Even in Chicago, where there is nothing old, I found the same spirit.

In short, it is the protest against separation, against being deprived of the advantages and opportunities of a

free life. In the South the most intelligent and best educated Negroes are, generally speaking, the leaders of their race, but in Northern cities some of the ablest Negroes will have nothing to do with the masses of their own people or with racial movements;



WILLIAM MONROE TROTTER  
EDITOR OF THE BOSTON GUARDIAN

*“Mr. Trotter is a Mulatto who was graduated with high honors from Harvard. . . . His wife, who is active with him in his work, has so little Negro blood that she would ordinarily pass for white. . . . His father was a lieutenant in Col. Hallowell’s Massachusetts regiment.”*

they hold themselves aloof, asserting that there is no color line, and if there is, there should not be. Their associations and their business are largely with white people and they cling passionately to the fuller life.

"When I am sick," one of them said to me, "I don't go to a Negro doctor, but to a doctor. Color has nothing to do with it."

In the South the same general setting apart of Negroes as Negroes is going on, of course, on an immeasurably wider scale. By disfranchisement they are being separated politically, the Jim Crow laws set them apart socially and physically, the hostility of white labor in some callings pushes them aside in the industrial activities. But the South presents no such striking contrasts as the North, because no Southern Negroes were ever really accorded a high degree of citizenship.

### *Two Great Negro Parties*

Now, the Negroes of the country are meeting the growing discrimination against them in two ways, out of which have grown the two great parties to which I have referred. One party has sprung, naturally, from the thought of the Northern Negro and is a product of the freedom which the Northern Negro has enjoyed; although, of course, it finds many followers in the South.

The other is the natural product of the far different conditions in the South, where the Negro cannot speak his mind, where he has never realized any large degree of free citizenship. Both are led by able men, and both are backed by newspapers and magazines. It has come, indeed, to the point where most Negroes of any intelligence at all have taken their place on one side or the other.

The second-named party, which may best, perhaps, be considered first, is made up of the great mass of the colored people both South and North; its undisputed leader is Booker T. Washington.

### *The Rise of Booker T. Washington*

Nothing has been more remarkable in the recent history of the Negro than Washington's rise to influence as a leader, and the spread of his ideals of education and progress. It is noteworthy that he was born in the South, a slave, that he knew intimately the common struggling life of his people and the attitude of the white race toward them.

He worked his way to education in Southern schools and was graduated at Hampton—a story which he tells best himself in his book, "Up From Slavery." He was and is Southern in feeling and point of view. When he began to think how he could best help his people the same question came to him that comes to every Negro:

"What shall we do about this discrimination and separation?"

And his was the type of character which answered, "Make the best of it; overcome it with self-development."

The very essence of his doctrine is this:

"Get yourself right, and the world will be all right."

His whole work and his life have said to the white man:

"You've set us apart. You don't want us. All right; we'll be apart. We can succeed as Negroes."

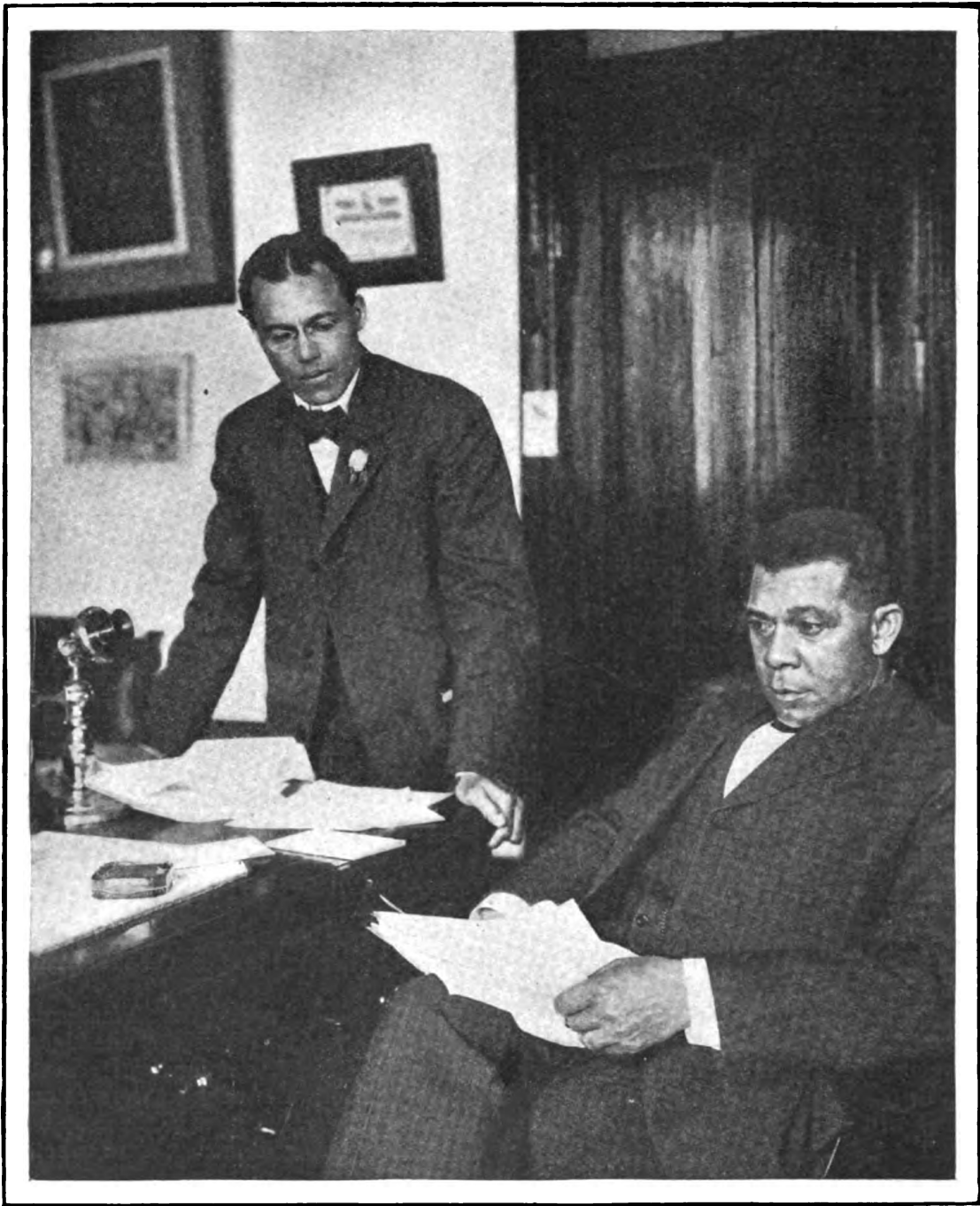
It is the doctrine of the opportunist and optimist: peculiarly, indeed, the doctrine of the man of the soil, who has come up fighting, dealing with the world, not as he would like to have it, but as it overtakes him. Many great leaders have been like that: Lincoln was one. They have the simplicity and patience of the soil, and the immense courage and faith. To prevent being crushed by circumstances they develop humor; they laugh off their troubles. Washington has all of these qualities of the common life: he possesses in high degree what some one has called "great commonness." And finally he has a simple faith in humanity, and in the just purposes of the Creator of humanity.

Being a hopeful opportunist, Washington takes the Negro as he finds him, often ignorant, weak, timid, surrounded by hostile forces, and tells him to go to work at anything, anywhere, but go to work, learn how to work better, save money, have a better home, raise a better family.

### *What Washington Teaches the Negro*

The central idea of his doctrine, indeed, is work. He teaches that if the Negro wins by real worth a strong economic position in the country, other rights and privileges will come to him naturally. He should get his rights, not by gift of the white man, but by earning them himself.

"I noticed," he says, "when I first went to Tuskegee to start the Tuskegee Normal



BOOKER T. WASHINGTON  
WITH HIS SECRETARY, EMMET J. SCOTT

*"I have not said much thus far in these articles about Booker T. Washington, but as I have been travelling over this country, South and North, studying Negro communities, I have found the mark of him everywhere in happier human lives. Wherever I found a prosperous Negro enterprise, a thriving business place, a good home, there I was almost sure to find Booker T. Washington's picture over the fireplace or a little framed motto expressing his gospel of work and service."*

and Industrial Institute, that some of the white people about there rather looked doubtfully at me. I thought I could get their influence by telling them how much algebra and history and science and all those things I had in my head, but they treated me about the same as they did before. They didn't seem to care about the algebra, history and science that were in my head only. Those people never even began to have confidence in me until we commenced to build a large three-story brick building; and then another and another, until now we have eighty-six buildings which have been erected largely by the labor of our students, and to-day we have the respect and confidence of all the white people in that section.

"There is an unmistakable influence that comes over a white man when he sees a black man living in a two-story brick house that has been paid for."

In another place he has given his ideas of what education should be:

"How I wish that, from the most cultured and highly endowed university in the great North to the humblest log cabin school-house in Alabama, we could burn, as it were, into the hearts and heads of all that usefulness, that service to our brother is the supreme end of education."

It is, indeed, to the teaching of service in the highest sense that Washington's life has been devoted. While he urges every Negro to reach as high a place as he can, he believes that the great masses of the Negroes are best fitted to-day for manual labor: his doctrine is that they should be taught to do that labor better: that when the foundations have been laid in sound industry and in business enterprise, the higher callings and honors will come of themselves.

His emphasis is rather upon duties than upon rights. He does not advise the Negro to surrender a single right: on the other hand, he urges his people to use fully every right they have or can get—for example, to vote wherever possible, and vote thoughtfully. But he believes that some of the rights given the Negro have been lost because the Negro had neither the wisdom nor the strength to use them properly.

#### *Washington's Influence on his People*

I have not said much thus far in these articles about Booker T. Washington, but

as I have been travelling over this country, South and North, studying Negro communities, I have found the mark of him everywhere in happier human lives. Wherever I found a prosperous Negro enterprise, a thriving business place, a good home, there I was almost sure to find Booker T. Washington's picture over the fireplace or a little framed motto expressing his gospel of work and service. I have heard bitter things said about Mr. Washington by both colored people and white. I have waited and investigated many of these stories, and I am telling here what I have seen and known of his influence among thousands of common, struggling human beings. Many highly educated Negroes, especially in the North, dislike him and oppose him, but he has brought new hope and given new courage to the masses of his race. He has given them a working plan of life. And is there a higher test of usefulness? Measured by any standard, white or black, Washington must be regarded to-day as one of the great men of this country: and in the future he will be so honored.

#### *Dr. DuBois and the Negro*

The party led by Washington is made up of the masses of the common people; the radical party, on the other hand, represents what may be called the intellectuals. The leading exponent of its point of view is unquestionably Professor W. E. B. DuBois of Atlanta University—though, like all minority parties, it is torn with dissension and discontent. Dr. DuBois was born in Massachusetts of a family that had no history of Southern slavery. He has a large intermixture of white blood. Broadly educated at Harvard and in the universities of Germany, he is to-day one of the able sociologists of this country. His economic studies of the Negro made for the United States Government and for the Atlanta University conference (which he organized) are works of sound scholarship and furnish the student with the best single source of accurate information regarding the Negro at present obtainable in this country. And no book gives a deeper insight into the inner life of the Negro, his struggles and his aspirations, than "The Souls of Black Folk."

Dr. DuBois has the temperament of the scholar and idealist—critical, sensitive, unhumorous, impatient, often covering its

deep feeling with sarcasm and cynicism. When the question came to him:

"What shall the Negro do about discrimination?" his answer was the exact reverse of Washington's: it was the voice of Massachusetts:

"Do not submit! agitate, object, fight."

Where Washington reaches the hearts of his people, DuBois appeals to their heads. DuBois is not a leader of men, as Washington is: he is rather a promulgator of ideas. While Washington is building a great educational institution and organizing the practical activities of the race, DuBois is the lonely critic holding up distant ideals. Where Washington cultivates friendly human relationships with the white people among whom the lot of the Negro is cast, DuBois, sensitive to rebuffs, draws more and more away from white people.

### *A Negro Declaration of Independence*

Several years ago DuBois organized the Niagara movement for the purpose of protesting against the drawing of the color line. It is important, not so much for the extent of its membership, which is small, but because it represents, genuinely, a more or less prevalent point of view among many colored people.

Its declaration of principles says:

"We refuse to allow the impression to remain that the Negro-American assents to inferiority, is submissive under oppression and apologetic before insults. Through helplessness we may submit, but the voice of protest of ten million Americans must never cease to assail the ears of their fellows, so long as America is unjust.

"Any discrimination based simply on race or color is barbarous, we care not how hallowed it be by custom, expediency, or prejudice. Differences made on account of ignorance, immorality, or disease are legitimate methods of fighting evil, and against them we have no word of protest, but discriminations based simply and solely on physical peculiarities, place of birth, color of skin, are relics of that unreasoning human savagery of which the world is and ought to be thoroughly ashamed."

The object of the movement is to protest against disfranchisement and Jim Crow laws and to demand equal rights of education, equal civil rights, equal economic opportunities, and justice in the courts. Tak-

ing the ballot from the Negro they declare to be only a step to economic slavery; that it leaves the Negro defenseless before his competitor—that the disfranchisement laws in the South are being followed by all manner of other discriminations which interfere with the progress of the Negro.

"Persistent manly agitation is the way to liberty," says the Declaration, "and toward this goal the Niagara movement has started."

The annual meeting of the movement was held last August in Boston, the chief gathering being in Faneuil Hall. Every reference in the speeches to Garrison, Phillips, and Sumner was cheered to the echo. "It seemed," said one newspaper report, "like a revival of the old spirit of abolitionism—with the white man left out."

Several organizations in the country like the New England Suffrage League, the Equal Rights League of Georgia and others, take much the same position as the Niagara movement.

The party led by Dr. DuBois is, in short, a party of protest which endeavors to prevent Negro separation and discrimination against Negroes by agitation and political influence.

### *Two Negro Parties Compared*

These two points of view, of course, are not peculiar to Negroes; they divide all human thought. The opportunist and optimist on the one hand does his great work with the world as he finds it: he is resourceful, constructive, familiar. On the other hand, the idealist, the agitator, who is also a pessimist, performs the function of the critic, he sees the world as it should be and cries out to have it instantly changed.

Thus with these two great Negro parties. Each is working for essentially the same end—better conditions of life for the Negro—each contains brave and honest men, and each is sure, humanly enough, that the other side is not only wrong, but venially wrong, whereas both parties are needed and both perform a useful function.

The chief, and at present almost the only, newspaper exponent of the radical Negro point of view is the Boston *Guardian*, published by William Monroe Trotter. Mr. Trotter is a Mulatto who was graduated a few years ago with high honors from Harvard. His wife, who is active with him



in his work, has so little Negro blood that she would ordinarily pass for white. Mr. Trotter's father fought in the Civil War and rose to be a lieutenant in Col. Hallowell's Massachusetts regiment. He was one of the leaders of the Negro soldiers who refused to accept \$8 a month as servants when white soldiers received \$13. He argued that if a Negro soldier stood up and stopped a bullet, he was as valuable to the country as the white soldier. Though his family suffered, he served without pay rather than accept the money. It was the uncompromising spirit of Garrison and Phillips.

### *A Negro Newspaper of Agitation*

The *Guardian* is as violent and bitter in some of its denunciations as the most reactionary white paper in the South. It would have the North take up arms again and punish the South for its position on the Negro question! It breathes the spirit of prejudice. Reading it sometimes, I am reminded of Senator Tillman's speeches. It answers the white publicity given in the South to black crime against white women by long accounts of similar crimes of white men. One of its chief points of conflict is the position of President Roosevelt regarding the Brownsville riot and the discharge of Negro soldiers: the attack on Roosevelt is unceasing, and in this viewpoint, at least, it is supported undoubtedly by no small proportion of the Negroes of the country. Another leading activity is its fight on Booker T. Washington and his work. Denouncing Washington as a "notorious and incorrigible Jim Crowist," it says that he "dares to assert that the best way to get rights is not to oppose their being taken away, but to get money." Two or three years ago, when Mr. Washington went to Boston to address a colored audience in Zion Church, Mr. Trotter and his friends scattered cayenne pepper on the rostrum and created a disturbance which broke up the meeting. Mr. Trotter went to jail for the offense. From the *Guardian* of September 2 I cut part of the leading editorial which will show its attitude:

"PROPHET OF SLAVERY AND TRAITOR TO RACE."

"As another mark of the treacherous character of Booker Washington in matters con-

cerning the race, come his discordant notes in support of Secy. Taft for President of the United States in spite of the fact that every Negro organization of any note devoted to the cause of equal rights and justice have condemned President Roosevelt for his unpardonable treatment of the soldiers of the 25th infantry, U. S. A., and Secy. Taft for his duplicity, and declared their determination to seek the defeat of either if nominated for the office of President of these United States, or any one named by them for said office. Booker Washington, ever concerned for his own selfish ambitions, indifferent to the cries of the race so long as he wins the approval of white men who do not believe in the Negro, defies the absolutely unanimous call of all factions of the race for Foraker. Leader of the self-seekers, he has persistently, but thank heaven unsuccessfully, sought to entangle the whole race in the meshes of subordination. Knowing the race could only be saved by fighting cowardice, we have just as persistently resisted every attempt he has made to plant his white flag on the domains of equal manhood rights and our efforts have been rewarded by the universal denunciation of his doctrines of submission and his utter elimination as a possible leader of his race."

Generally speaking, the radical party has fought every movement of any sort that tends to draw a color line.

### *Boston Hotel for Colored People*

One of the enterprises of Boston which interested me deeply was a Negro hotel, the Astor House, which is operated by Negroes for Negro guests. It has 200 rooms, with a telephone in each room, a restaurant, and other accommodations. It struck me that it was a good example of Negro self-help that Negroes should be proud of. But upon mentioning it to a colored man I met I found that he was violently opposed to it.

"Why hotels for colored men?" he asked. "I believe in hotels for men. The colored man must not draw the line himself if he doesn't want the white man to do it. He must demand and insist constantly upon his rights as an American citizen."

I found in Boston and in other Northern cities many Negroes who took this position. A white woman, who sought to establish a help and rescue mission for colored girls similar to those conducted for the Jews, Italians, and other nationalities in other cities, was violently opposed, on the ground that it set up a precedent for discrimination. In the same way separate settlement work (though there is a separate settlement for Jews in Boston) and the proposed sepa-



rate Y. M. C. A. have met with strong protests. Everything that tends to set the Negro off as a Negro, whether the white man does it or the Negro does it, is bitterly opposed by this party of colored people.

They fought the Jamestown Exposition because it had a Negro Building, which they called the "Jim Crow Annex," and they fought the National Christian Endeavor Convention because the leaders could not assure Negro delegates exactly equal facilities in the hotels and restaurants. Of course the denunciation of the white South is continuous and bitter. It is noteworthy, however, that even the leaders of the movement not only recognize and conduct separate newspapers, and ask Negroes to support them, but that they urge Negroes to stand together politically.

*Boston Negroes Seen by a New York  
Negro Newspaper*

But the large proportion of colored newspapers in the country, the strongest and ablest of which is perhaps the *New York Age*, are supporters of Washington and his ideals. The Boston correspondent of the *Age* said recently:

"It is unfortunate in Boston that we have a hall which we can get free of charge: we refer to Faneuil Hall. They work Faneuil Hall for all it is worth. Scarcely a month ever passes by that does not see a crowd of Afro-Americans in Faneuil Hall throwing up their hats, yelling and going into hysterics over some subject usually relating to somebody a thousand miles away, never in relation to conditions right at home. The better element of Negroes and the majority of our white friends in this city have become disgusted over the policy that is being pursued and has been pursued for several months in Boston. Your correspondent can give you no better evidence of the disgust than to state that a few days ago there was one of these hysterical meetings held in Faneuil Hall and our people yelled and cried and agitated for two hours and more. The next day not one of the leading papers, such as *The Herald* and *The Transcript*, had a single line concerning this meeting. A few years ago had a meeting been held in Faneuil Hall under the leadership of safe and conservative Afro-Americans, both of these newspapers and papers of similar character would have devoted from two to three columns to a discussion of it. Now, in Boston, they let such meetings completely alone.

"If there ever was a place where the Negro seems to have more freedom than he seems to know what to do with, it is in this city."

In spite of the agitation against drawing the color line by the radical party, however, the separation is still going on. And it is not merely the demand of the white man that the Negro step aside by himself, for the Negro himself is drawing the color line, and drawing it with as much enthusiasm as the white man. A genuine race-spirit or race-consciousness is developing. Negroes are meeting prejudice with self-development.

It is a significant thing to find that many Negroes who a few years ago called themselves "Afro-Americans," or "Colored Americans," and who winced at the name Negro, now use Negro as the race name with pride. While in Indianapolis I went to a Negro church to hear a speech by W. T. Vernon, one of the leading colored men of the country, who was appointed Register of the United States Treasury by President Roosevelt. On the walls of the church hung the pictures of colored men who had accomplished something for their race, and the essence of the speaker's address was an appeal to racial pride and the demand that the race stand up for itself, encourage Negro business and patronize Negro industry. All of which, surely, is significant.

*How Negroes Themselves Draw the  
Color Line*

The pressure for separation among the Negroes themselves is growing rapidly stronger. Where there are mixed schools in the North there is often pressure by Negroes for separate schools. The *Philadelphia Courant*, a Negro newspaper, in objecting to this new feeling, says:

"Public sentiment, so far as the white people are concerned, does not object to the mixed school system in vogue in our city half as much as the Afro-American people seem to be doing themselves. We find them the chief objectors."

One reason why the South to-day has a better development of Negro enterprise, one reason why Booker T. Washington believes that the South is a better place for the Negro than the North, and advises him to remain there, is this more advanced racial spirit. Prejudice there, being sharper, has forced the Negro back upon his own resources.

Dr. Frissell of Hampton is always talking to his students of the "advantages of disadvantages."