

Being Red *and* Black *in* Jim Crow America

*Notes on the Ideology
and Travails of Afro-
America's Socialist
Pioneers, 1877-1930*

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Men make their own history, but not of their own free will; not under circumstances they themselves have chosen but under the given and inherited circumstances with which they are directly confronted.¹

—Karl Marx

Although there is a welcome and growing body of literature on black socialists² in the United States, it is largely concentrated on the Depression years when the Communist Party and its influence among Afro-Americans, and indeed others, was at its height.³ Despite the valiant efforts of the late Philip Foner and a few others, the black socialist presence in the United States before the 1930s is understudied and largely unknown.⁴

Yet the prominence of black people in the Communist Party from the 1930s to the 1960s cannot be separated from the earlier existence and efforts of black socialists. There is in fact a strong and organic connection between the developments in the first thirty years of the twentieth century and the later influence of black socialists in American political life.

Though numerically small, perhaps never exceeding more than a few thousands up to 1930, black socialists constituted a significant presence within the wider Afro-American community. The political and ideological influence they exerted, especially between 1910 and 1930, extended well beyond their numerical weight. Concentrated in New

York, Philadelphia, and Chicago, they demanded equality and struggled for a wider emancipation based on socialist principles. They joined the Socialist Party and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Others formed the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), the leadership of which became the nucleus of black membership in the newly formed American Communist Party by the middle of the 1920s. Chief among them were Hubert Harrison and Ben Fletcher, pioneering black members of the Socialist Party and the IWW; A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, who edited the black socialist magazine the *Messenger*; Cyril Briggs, founder of the ABB and editor of its organ, the *Crusader*; and an early member of the Communist Party; Otto Huiswoud, the only black charter member of the Communist Party; Grace Campbell, a Socialist turned Communist; Claude McKay; Wilfred A. Domingo; and Richard B. Moore. Huiswoud, Campbell, McKay, Domingo, and Moore had joined Briggs in founding and leading the ABB.⁵

What attracted these black men and women to the ideology of revolutionary socialism and the building of socialist organizations on the sandy ground of the United States? As black people in a racist society, how did their condition inflect their class politics and ideology? What was the extent of their influence? And what were the forces that hindered their political practice and inhibited their impact and organizational growth in the black community?

In this article, I argue that the answers to these questions are not as self-evident as they may at first seem; that the socialist ideology developed by these Afro-Americans was even more profoundly influenced by considerations of race than it was by those of class, though class and race largely overlapped; that the black socialists were not as quixotic as some commentators made them out to have been; that they provided pertinent analyses—

especially of the relation between race and class—about the condition of Afro-America under capitalism that still merit respectful attention; and that the challenges that these black socialists faced in developing their project came not just from American capitalism, and not just from racism within the socialist and trade union movements, but also from important structural, institutional, and ideological obstacles located in the black community itself.

If American socialism has lacked the capacity to retain Afro-American adherents, it has never failed to attract them to its banners. Peter Humphries Clark (1829–1925), was the first Afro-American to answer the call of modern American socialism. Within a year of the founding the Workingmen's Party of the United States (WPUS), America's first socialist party, in 1876, Clark had joined its ranks. Born in Cincinnati in 1829, Clark struggled for an education and became by the early 1850s a respected and distinguished schoolmaster in the city's black community. But his world was not confined to teaching. He served as a conductor on the Underground Railroad and was a correspondent of *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. Like Douglass, he was a Republican in the 1850s. But Clark's disillusion with the Republican Party took a more radical turn than that of Douglass. Frustrated with the party's accumulated betrayals of Afro-Americans, Clark left the Republicans by the 1870s.

Clark helped to form the Colored Teacher's Co-operative Association and served as its delegate to the 1870 convention of the National Labor Union. It was there that he first met William Haller, a former militant abolitionist, and fellow Cincinnati who edited the *Emancipator*, the leading English-language socialist paper in the Midwest. The men became lifelong friends and Clark soon became convinced that the socialism propounded by Haller and his comrades offered

the best answer to the problems faced by Afro-Americans. As his faith in the Republican Party declined, so grew his attraction to socialism. And on March 26, 1877, Clark publicly renounced his allegiance to the Republican Party at a large meeting of socialists in Cincinnati and expressed his support for the WPUS.

Clark was appalled at the growing inequalities that accompanied the rise of American capital during and after the Civil War and was especially outraged at the oppression of his fellow Afro-Americans in the South. "Go to the South," said Clark,

and see how the capitalists banded together over the poor whites. They carefully calculate how much, and no more, it will require to feed the black laborer and keep him alive from one year to another. That much they will give him for his hard labor, on which the aristocracy live, and not a cent more will they give him. Not a foot of land will they sell to the oppressed race who are trying to crowd out the degradation into which capital has plunged them.⁶

Clark viewed with scorn the growth in the number of millionaires as the misery of the poor became more unbearable. He recalled in his speech the suicidal despair that gripped him when as a young man, he could not find work for several months to feed his hungry wife and baby. "Capital," said Clark, "must not rule, but be ruled and regulated. Capital must be taught that man, and not money, is supreme, and that legislation must be had for man."⁷

Although Clark apparently remained a Unitarian, his enthusiasm for his new faith in socialism was unbounded. He spoke at street-corner meetings and at trade union gatherings on behalf of the WPUS and wrote for the party press. But it was not until the great railroad strikes of 1877 that Clark came

to wider public attention. Through his support of the strikers, he rose in the WPUS, running on the party ticket in the fall of 1877 for the state superintendent of schools. Haller praised his candidacy, seeing it as "most thoroughly represent[ing] the contest between laborers and capitalists, of the proscribed race, whose sorrows made the name of the United States the synonym of robbery and murder throughout the world." Clark's nomination was "above all others the finest vindication of the claim that the Workingmen's Party is a purely cosmopolitan organization."⁸ Clark fared best of all the WPUS's candidates in Ohio, but they all failed in their electoral bids. In 1878 he was elected to the national executive of the newly formed Socialist Labor Party (SLP), the left wing of the WPUS, which split at the end of 1877. But Haller's antiracist influence in the party declined after 1877, and factionalism absorbed much of the Socialists' energies. Clark was disillusioned with the party's racism and its ignoring of the plight of Afro-Americans as well as the enervating effects of the factional fights. On July 29, 1879, Clark resigned from the SLP. He announced that he was still a socialist, but would wait for a movement to arise that speaks to the interests and needs of Afro-America. "The welfare of the Negro is my controlling political motive," he told his erstwhile comrades as he bade farewell to the SLP.⁹

Twenty-one years after Clark's resignation, George Washington Woodbey, a Baptist minister, emerged next in the line of distinguished Afro-American socialists. George W. Slater, another Baptist pastor, heard Woodbey speak in Chicago in 1908 and soon thereafter joined the Socialist Party. Relatively little by the way of biographical detail is known about these men. Woodbey was born a slave in Tennessee in 1854 and had two terms of schooling after emancipation; he lived in Kansas and Nebraska but did

most of his political work in California, mainly Los Angeles and San Diego. He served on the executive board of the California Socialist Party and became the party's first black national organizer.

A most remarkable man, Woodbey educated himself, becoming an outstanding pamphleteer and orator. He had a fine analytical mind that he put to excellent work in the cause of socialism. Evident from his surviving body of writings is an outstanding ability to make complex ideas clear in his attempt to reach a wide, and in particular a black, audience.¹⁰ His turn to socialism was like a religious conversion, and when he joined the Socialist Party in 1900 he resigned from his church in Omaha and vowed that his life henceforth would be "consecrated to the Socialist Movement."¹¹ But he never abandoned his Christian faith, for he saw no contradiction between his religious beliefs and his socialist politics. Indeed, he saw Marx as a descendant of the Hebrew prophets and was "convinced that Socialism is but the carrying out of the economic teachings of the Bible."¹² As he put it in one of his pamphlets, "Why the Negro Should Vote Socialist":

For my part as a preacher, I know that we would all be far better off if we had Socialism. The Bible says: "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need for all these things." Meaning by that, food, clothing and houses. But God has put the things that you need here on the earth and the capitalist class has gobbled them up and you must by your votes change the condition.¹³

In 1902 Woodbey moved to San Diego, where his ill mother was living, and was made minister of Mount Zion Baptist Church. He became deeply involved in socialist politics in California and nationwide. His black congregation liked him and despite his dissident views was patient with him, but

in the end the people of Mount Zion evidently were not convinced, despite his great powers of persuasion, that socialism and Christianity were as compatible as he made out. They eventually got rid of him, and one of his flock reported that his dismissal was "a direct result of [his] mixing too much Socialism with his Bible, and this the members of his church resented."¹⁴ He was apparently very adept at "loosen[ing] up his flock with the Bible, then finished his sermon with an oration on Socialism,"¹⁵ but in the end his talent failed him.

That George Woodbey, of all people, had been unsuccessful in persuading his congregation of the compatibility of Christianity and socialism is a stern lesson that the black socialists who came after him would have done well to ponder. For Woodbey, perhaps more than any other black socialist to operate in the United States, was keenly aware of the deep resistance that many black Christians had toward socialism. Moreover, he consciously devised strategies to reach those who were religious and explicitly chided his comrades who believed that it was "necessary to make atheists, infidels or agnostics of the professed Christian before you can make a Socialist out of him."¹⁶ In "Why the Socialists Must Reach the Churches with Their Message," he complained, "I have not only been told by this class of comrades, but have read from the pens of others that man cannot be a Christian and a Socialist. Because our party circulates these opinions and declares them from the soap box, occasionally, I find myself compelled to keep on explaining when I speak to church people."¹⁷

He argued that the only way to reach church people is to show them that the "economic teaching of the Bible and of Socialism are the same" and that for them "to stand consistently by the teaching of [their] own religion" they must accept socialism. He suggested that when the socialist is speaking to



Sunday Morning Service. Photo by Philippe Cheng.

the Christian on socialism from the Biblical standpoint, he or she should confine himself or herself "strictly to its economic teachings." He went on to say:

It is my experience, that when you show the church member how the Bible, in every line of it, is with the poor as against their oppressors, and that it is only because we have not been following out its teaching, that professed Christians have been found among the worst oppressors of the poor and that no man is entitled to be called a Christian who does not measure up to the teaching of the Bible, you have made the first step toward converting him to the idea that it cannot be done in its entirety without the collective ownership and operation of industries.¹⁸

Woodbey pointed out that through its ineptitude or arrogance the Socialist Party was making it difficult for him to win converts among church members. "It will not do," he declared, "to send those who do not understand the Christian people, to carry this message, for the reason that they are sure to say something that will spoil the whole thing." He pointed out that he was not particularly concerned with the merits of religious belief and disbelief but simply drawing attention to "the difficulties" he found in reaching church people and how to deal with them. He was confident that "[w]hen once we have succeeded in showing the church people and the pastors of small churches, that if they are to follow the teachings of the Bible, they must be with us in advocating the overthrow of the

capitalist system, we will have made the greatest step yet made in the cause of socialism."¹⁹

There are a number of unanswered questions about Woodbey's departure from Mount Zion Baptist Church in San Diego. Were the members of his congregation so deeply opposed to his socialism that they would throw him out on that account only? Were there other considerations at work in his ousting? Was there any pressure from higher authorities to have him removed? Important though these questions are, as of now

we have no clear answers to them. And Philip Foner, who has done the most digging—wonderful digging for which we are deeply in his debt—to resurrect Woodbey, is mute on these questions.

It is a pity that Randolph, Owen, and the *Messenger* magazine did not heed Woodbey's wise counsel. They perhaps were not aware of it. Hubert Harrison, however, knew Woodbey and heard him speak. Woodbey was, said Harrison, "very effective."²⁰ But Harrison ignored Woodbey's advice and, indeed, advocated a militant rationalism and atheism that Afro-America had not seen before within its ranks. And the political consequences were predictable.

Nothing is known about Woodbey after 1915, when his last article appeared in the Socialist press. The Reverend George W. Slater, however, attributed his political awakening to the work of Woodbey. We know even less about Slater's life. We do not know when or where he was born or when he died. We know that between 1907 and 1912 he lived in Chicago, where he served as the

minister of Zion Tabernacle church. Between 1912 and 1919 he lived in Clinton, Iowa, where he was pastor of the Bethel African Church. Like Woodbey, he was a distinguished orator, pamphleteer, and contributor

to the socialist press. And like Woodbey, Slater saw no distinction between socialism and Christianity. "Scientific Socialism," wrote Slater in a 1915 article, "is the only systematic expression of the social message of Jesus."²¹

Slater had served as Secretary to the Colored Race for the Christian Socialist

Fellowship and as a Socialist Party lecturer. In 1909, Eugene Debs publicly praised Slater for his "excellent work in educating the black men and women of the country and showing them that their proper place is in the Socialist movement." Debs described Slater as "a fine example of the educated, wide-awake teacher, of his race, whose whole heart is in the work and who ought to be encouraged in every possible way to spread the light among the masses."²² And during the 1911 municipal elections in New York, Harrison reported that he used, with some success, a pamphlet by Slater, "The Colored Man's Case as Socialism Sees It," in an effort to win Afro-Americans to the Socialist cause.²³

The Afro-American socialists active during the first three decades of the twentieth century were thus not ancestorless. With the exception of Hubert Harrison, it does appear, however, that the black radicals' knowledge of their illustrious predecessors was rather limited.

Although it is impossible to tell with any precision how many black socialists there were between 1900 and 1930, we do know

Clark was appalled at the growing inequalities that accompanied the rise of American capitalism during and after the Civil War and was especially outraged at the oppression of his fellow Afro-Americans in the South.

that their number was relatively small—certainly minuscule when set beside the large army, numbering perhaps as many as two million in the United States alone, recruited by Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Though concentrated in the Northern states, black socialists were widely distributed across the United States. And the efforts of Clark, Woodbey, and Slater bore fruit.

In 1913 the Socialist Party conducted a survey to ascertain the status of black members in its locals across the country. All the secretaries of the Northern states who replied reported the presence of black members, but could not specify numbers because, they said, records were not kept on the basis of race. Of the nine secretaries who replied from Southern states, eight—Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, and the District of Columbia—indicated that they had black members. In addition to these, the party in Texas in 1915 also reportedly had some black members. Through its courageous fight against the disenfranchisement of black citizens, the Socialist Party in Oklahoma apparently won a significant, though undetermined, number of Afro-Americans to its flag.²⁴ Wherever it operated and there were black workers, the IWW—which was originally aligned to and founded by members of the Socialist Party—recruited black members.²⁵

By 1919, however, the center of gravity of black membership in the Socialist Party had shifted dramatically to the North. The locals in the South had either ceased functioning or were in terminal decline, and the IWW had been smashed ferociously in the South and the West and barely survived in the North after 1919.²⁶ New York's Harlem had become the unrivaled center of black radicalism, nationalist as well as socialist by 1919. It was there that the *Messenger*, the *Crusader*, the *Emancipator*, and the *Negro*

World, among others, were published; it was there that the headquarters of the Liberty League of Afro-Americans, the ABB, and the UNIA were located.

Whereas the *Negro World* was black nationalist in outlook, the *Messenger*, the *Crusader*, and the short-lived *Emancipator* were, albeit with different admixture of black nationalism, explicitly revolutionary socialist publications, which by 1922 were in sharp opposition to Garvey. But the *Messenger*, the *Crusader*, and the *Emancipator* were run by men and women who not only wrote, analyzed, and propagandized but also engaged in sustained political activity. The *Messenger* was the publication around which black members of the Socialist Party organized in New York and nationally. The *Crusader* was the propaganda arm of the ABB, and the *Emancipator* was edited by Domingo and Moore, two staunchly anti-Garveyite members of the black left.

Hubert Harrison (1883–1927), whom A. Philip Randolph dubbed the “father of Harlem radicalism,” started the ball rolling. A brilliant and erudite orator and writer, Harrison had been one of the pioneering black members of the Socialist Party in New York. He joined the party in 1909, but tiring of the racism of its leading comrades, he left it in 1914 and concentrated his effort on mobilizing black people in the struggle against racism. He advocated a defensive policy of “race first,” but never abandoned or renounced his deeply ingrained Marxism. He was greatly admired by all of Harlem's black radicals and intellectuals. Even those who later disagreed with him acknowledged their debt to Harrison and his pioneering effort.²⁷

Harrison must be credited with undertaking the first sustained analysis of the class position of black people in the United States and the coincidence of black people's interest with anticapitalist projects.²⁸ Thus, he provided unstinting support to William “Big

Bill" Haywood and the IWW, which he greatly admired. When Haywood was recalled from the National Executive Committee and expelled from the Socialist Party in 1912, Harrison, himself a supporter of direct action, publicly protested and was one of the signatories to the resolution of protest put together by leading members of the party.²⁹ He was an active participant in the Paterson, New Jersey, silk strike and spoke at the strikers' rallies. Harrison defended Africa against both European and Euro-American racism, on the one hand, and the patronizing civilizationism advocated by New World Africans for their continental brothers and sisters, on the other. Connected to this effort was his unassailable critique of scientific racism in the United States. Brought up in the church in his native St. Croix, he broke from it in the United States and became one of the nation's first black freethinkers.³⁰ He invested great faith in rationalism and advocated a scientific outlook on life, including the Negro Question. Harrison told black Harlemites that their loyalty to the Republican Party was misplaced; that they owed neither Lincoln nor the Republicans anything. On the contrary, the Republicans, he argued, had used and betrayed black Americans and were deeply indebted to them. Harrison was merciless in his attacks on Booker T. Washington and Washington's allies and heirs who sought accommodation with American racism. (His attacks on Washington would cost him his civil service job at the post office.) He vigorously advocated black self-defense against racist violence in the South as well as the North and denounced black leaders who counseled otherwise.

Harrison made three especially noteworthy contributions to the Afro-American socialist tradition he inherited. First, to him must be attributed the development of not only a secular, but an anticlerical, black socialist political culture in the United States. He effected a

sharp break with the Christian Socialist tradition begun by Peter Clark and so ably developed by Woodbey and Slater. (As I shall argue, his militant nationalism is, at best, a dubious distinction.) Harrison was forthright in his condemnation of Christianity and religion in general. He was struck and disappointed by the absence of a free thought tradition among Afro-Americans. In a 1914 article first published in the *Truth Seeker*, a free thought and agnostic newspaper, Harrison acknowledged that there were "a few" black agnostics in New York and Boston, but these were generally from the islands. He particularly noted the prominence of Puerto Rican and Cuban cigar makers—"notorious Infidels," he called them—among their number. Here and there, he said, "one finds a Negro-American who is reputed to have Agnostic tendencies; but these are seldom, if ever, avowed." Harrison expressed sympathy for their predicament. "I can hardly find it in my heart," he wrote, "to blame them, for I know the tremendous weight of the social proscription which it is possible to bring to bear upon those who dare defy the idols of our tribe. For those who live by the people must needs be careful of the people's gods."³¹ This did not stop him, however, from attacking religion in the most ferocious terms. He invoked Nietzsche's contention that "the ethics of Christianity are the slave's ethics." "Show me a population that is deeply religious," Harrison declared, "and I will show you a servile population, content with whips and chains, contumely and the gibbet, content to eat the bread of sorrow and drink the waters of affliction. The present condition of the Negroes of America is a touching bit of testimony to the truth of this assertion."³²

Second, unlike Clark, Woodbey, and Slater, who were all somewhat pacifist, repeatedly counseled against the use of violence, and had an elevated view on the efficacy of the vote, Harrison advocated the use

of violence on the part of black people, if only in self-defense. Like Malcolm X two generations later, he did not believe in turning the other cheek. Harrison made his views known in no uncertain terms in the aftermath of the East St. Louis Massacre. On July 2, 1917, scores, if not hundreds, of black people—men, women, children (including little babies)—were wantonly murdered, largely by white workers and members of the police force, in an extraordinarily savage orgy of violence.³³ Harrison was so enraged by the “Horror of East St. Louis,” as it was commonly dubbed by Afro-America, and so vociferous in his advocacy of armed self-defense on the part of black people that the Department of Justice sought his deportation. In the very first issue of his magazine, the *Voice*, published on July 4, 1917, a mere two days after the events, Harrison declared: “If white men are to kill unoffending Negroes, Negroes must kill white men in defense of their lives and property. This is the lesson of the East St. Louis massacre.”³⁴ The editor of the *Age*, New York’s oldest black newspaper, told an interviewer, “The representative Negro does not approve of radical socialistic outbursts, such as calling upon the Negroes to defend themselves against the whites.”³⁵ He condemned Harrison, though not by name, in an editorial in the *Age*. Harrison responded, noting that such “cringing,” “lickspittle,” “conspicuous and contemptible cowardice” will avail Afro-Americans nothing but more attacks. He pointed out that where the mob in East St. Louis found black people “organized and armed, they turned back.”³⁶ “When murder is cheap,” Harrison observed, “murder is indulged in recklessly; when it is likely to be costly it is not so readily indulged in.” He went on,

Will *The Age* venture to deny this? No? Then we say, let Negroes help make murder costly, for by so doing they will aid the officers of

the city, state and nation in instilling respect for law and order into the minds of the worst and lowest elements of our American cities. And we go further: We say that it is not alone the brutality of the whites—it is also the cowardice of Negroes and the lickspittle leadership of the last two decades which, like *The Age*, told us to “take it lying down”—it is this which has been the main reason for our “bein’ so aisily lynched,” as Mr. Dooley puts it. . . . We are aiming at the white man’s respect—not at his sympathy.³⁷

Harrison made a third and very significant contribution to the black socialist tradition. It is this: He was the first black member of the Socialist Party to publicly criticize the party’s racism while he was still a member. Others, from Clark to Du Bois, voiced their criticisms publicly only after they had left. Despite its bold and militant stance, you will look in vain in the pages of the *Messenger* for any criticism of the Socialist Party. Indeed, Harrison felt that Randolph and Owen—“lackeys,” he called them—were guilty of misleading their black readers in not criticizing the racism of the Socialist Party.³⁸ Well before he finally gave up on the Socialist Party, Harrison was at war with what he called “Southernism,” which corrupted the politics of the party’s leadership. Whereas Woodbey, Slater, Randolph, and Owen confined their work to winning black adherents to the Socialist Party, Harrison concentrated his effort on making the party a suitable, worthy, and welcoming political home for black people. Whereas Woodbey and Slater and Randolph and Owen wrote frequently on such topics as “Why the Negro Should Vote the Socialist Ticket,” Harrison was the only one to pen articles with titles such as “The Duty of the Socialist Party [to Afro-Americans].”³⁹ From the 1920s on, Briggs, Moore, Harry Haywood, and Otto Huiswoud would raise similarly pointed questions about the in-

ternal health of the Communist Party in relation to Afro-Americans.

Harrison, then, was the great pioneer, and others followed in his footsteps. At the height of their radicalism, nothing appeared in the *Messenger* and the *Crusader* that had not been prefigured and articulated by Harrison. The antithetical relationship between the interest of black people and that of capital; Christianity as a backward and imprisoning superstition; the power of scientific analysis; the need for a nonparochial and internationalist outlook; the need for black people to meet force with force; the necessity to abandon the old leadership and replace it with that of the New Negro—all these positions articulated by Harrison became the stock-in-trade of the black left. Harrison died unexpectedly and young in 1927, but his organizational, if not his intellectual and political influence, had diminished years before with the rise of Garvey.

Why were these black men and women attracted to Marxism? They were—from Peter Clark in the 1870s to William Patterson in the 1970s—attracted to it because they saw the ideology as, first and foremost, a means of solving the race problem. As black people were, as Slater put it, “almost to a man . . . of the working class,”⁴⁰ it made sense for them to support the ideology and the party that fought for and defended the interest of the working class, of which they were a part. The race stood to benefit from the general emancipation of the class. Randolph and Owen put it best:

Socialism is the political party of the working people. Now 99 per cent. of the Negroes

are working people, so they should join the working people's party. The Republican party is the party of monopoly, big business and wealth. It represents plutocracy. Negro plutocrats should belong to the Republican party, but Negro working people should join and support the workingmen's party. That is the Socialist party in all countries.⁴¹

After 1917, many were drawn to revolutionary socialism through the resonant anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism of the Bolsheviks and the Communist International. The Bolsheviks' handling of the “national question,” and especially the “Jewish question,” at least up to the rise of Stalin, also attracted Afro-American adherents. Bolshevik anticolonialism was the major force that brought Cyril Briggs over to Marxism, and he was not the only one to make the journey to Marxism via Moscow and the Comintern.⁴²

The membership of black left organizations and the presence of black people in left organizations during these years was small,

but the influence of black leftists was considerable. Through the written and spoken word, black socialists reached and influenced large numbers of Afro-Americans.

It is difficult to gauge with any precision the circulation of the radical magazines put out by the black

left. Randolph claimed that the *Messenger* reached a peak circulation of 33,000 per issue. But the correct figure is perhaps nearer 26,000.⁴³ Cyril Briggs, more likely than not, exaggerated too when he claimed that the *Crusader* had reached a peak of 36,000; a New York State Senate inquiry estimated a

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circulation of 4,000 for April 1920.⁴⁴ The true figure is perhaps nearer 20,000. The *Emancipator* is estimated to have had a circulation of 10,000 at one time, and William Bridges's *Challenge*, 6,000.⁴⁵ Frederick Detweiler, in his 1922 study *The Negro Press in the United States*, conservatively estimated that each copy of these publications was read by at least five people.⁴⁶ These magazines, especially the *Messenger* and the *Crusader*, were widely distributed, but circulated more readily in the North and West than they did in the South. In 1922, Owen gave a detailed breakdown of the stores in various cities that ordered the *Messenger* and the numbers they took. Briggs told a historian that the *Crusader* "reached many Negro communities throughout the country," and that in fact the ABB recruited most of its members through the magazine.⁴⁷ These publications were also available in many college and university libraries. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that hundreds of thousands of black readers were exposed to the ideas of the black left through their organs.

But the radicals did not only write, they also spoke, and spoke eloquently. Harlem was the central site of radical oratory and the gospel of socialism addressed to Afro-America. Howard University's Dean Kelly Miller, a follower of Booker T. Washington, complained that during the First World War, "Harlem was filled with street preachers and flamboyant orators haranguing the people from morning till night upon Negro rights and wrongs." The Justice Department intelligence reports bear eloquent testimony to this and to the large crowds that gathered to listen.⁴⁸ Among these were the black socialists—Harrison, Randolph, Owen, Moore, Domingo, Bridges, Otto Huiswoud, Grace Campbell, Anna Brown, Elizabeth Hendrickson, Tom Potter, Frank Crosswaith, and a host of others. But the preaching was not confined to Harlem. The radicals traveled

widely across the country and addressed black people and white sympathizers in various states—Huiswoud and Moore on behalf of the ABB and later the Communist Party, Randolph and Owen on behalf of the Socialist Party. Their socialist message reached tens, perhaps hundreds, of thousands of Afro-Americans during these decades through the spoken word alone.

Who were the black readers of these publications? Speaking of the *Messenger*, the most widely circulated of the black socialist magazines, Charles Johnson claimed that "it cannot be said that the socialistic principles made any considerable headway, or that it reached as many Negro workers as it did merely restless Negroes of all stations." In a similar vein, Jervis Anderson suggested that the black readership was "mainly among the lower-middle-class intelligentsia, since the bulk of the masses were by then reading Marcus Garvey's *Negro World*." Spero and Harris went so far as to suggest that the *Messenger*, as early as 1918, directed its appeal at "enlisting the support of the middle-class Negro."⁴⁹

There is some truth in all of these statements. But the evidence also suggests that they all underestimated the extent to which the *Messenger* and similar journals reached ordinary black workers. In 1921 alone, the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union of Philadelphia, aligned to the IWW, with over 60 percent black membership at the time, contributed \$1,200 to the magazine and purchased 3,600 copies for its members.⁵⁰ And in 1917, largely through the work of the *Messenger*, Randolph, Owen, and other black members of the Socialist Party, Morris Hillquit, the party's mayoral candidate, won an estimated 25 percent of the Harlem vote. This was not solely or even largely attributable to black middle-class support. The Afro-American middle class at the time was still closely attached to the party of Lincoln. When Randolph himself ran for New York state comptroller in 1920, he won



A. Philip Randolph, 1920.
Messenger, November 1920.

202,381 votes, only 1,000 votes less than received in the state by Eugene Debs in his presidential bid that year.⁵¹

Most significant, the formation of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the choice of Randolph to lead its fight came from the influence of the magazine on a group of radical Pullman porters. Ashley Totten, the man who first approached Randolph in June 1925 seeking his help to form and lead a union of his fellow porters, had for many years been a keen reader of the *Messenger*, had listened to Randolph's soapbox speeches on the need for unionism among Afro-Americans, and was a great admirer of both magazine and man.⁵² Totten was by no

means the only *Messenger*-reading porter, and through the influence of the magazine and the porters' admiration for Randolph came the first large-scale unionization of Afro-Americans since the glory days of the IWW.⁵³

Similarly, the ABB, whose leaders by 1924 had joined the Workers' (Communist) Party of America, formed the organizing body around which the American Negro Labor Congress was formed in 1925. It took time to develop, but by the 1930s it had borne fruit, representing through its allied unions thousands of black workers across the country.

The influence of socialist magazines like the *Messenger* on black youth and the rapidly expanding black population of students in general during this period is still in need of exploration and documentation.⁵⁴ But there is sufficient evidence already available to indicate that its influence was considerable. The 1920s was a period of great turbulence on black college campuses and the *Messenger* and other journals intervened and fanned the flames of revolt. Writing in 1923, Abram Harris, an Afro-American student of Marxist political economy, reported that despite the hostility of the government and some middle-class Afro-Americans toward the *Messenger*, Randolph and Owen had a following that comprised "some of the best trained minds in the race." Some of these, said Harris, "are to be found in the Northern and Southern Universities."⁵⁵ Harris, who in 1930 became the first Afro-American to receive a Ph.D. in economics from Columbia, was himself very much influenced by the radicalism of the early *Messenger* and was a great admirer of the magazine before it entered its reformist phase around 1923. The young E. Franklin Frazier, who would become the most influential black sociologist in

the United States, also fell under the magazine's spell and went so far as to focus his 1920 master's thesis, "New Currents of Thought Among the Colored Population of America," around the arguments developed by Randolph and Owen in the pages of the magazine. Like his friend Harris, he was disappointed by the petty bourgeois turn of the magazine in the mid-twenties. In a 1928 article, Frazier noted that the *Messenger*, once the shining star of black radicalism, "is now no longer the spokesman of economic radicalism but has become an organ chiefly devoted to advertising negro enterprises and boosting black capitalists. Such," he lamented, "is the irony of fate."⁵⁶ The *Messenger* ceased publication in June 1928. The most vivid recollection of the profound impact that the *Messenger* had on him as a black student came from a man who ran across the magazine at the height of its radicalism when he was a struggling, working-class, and disillusioned youth studying law at the University of California, Berkeley. He wrote in his memoir, published more than five decades after the event:

I read the *Messenger*, a magazine published in New York by two young Black radicals—A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen. I was stirred by its analyses of the source of Black oppression and the attempt to identify it with the international revolution against working-class oppression and colonialism. This was an enriching and exhilarating experience. For the first time I was being made aware that the study of society and the movement to change it constituted a science that had to be grasped if Black America was ever to attain equal rights.⁵⁷

William L. Patterson spent the rest of his life in an unrelenting, costly, and selfless fight on behalf of Afro-America and the working class. He was a distinguished lawyer

and member of the Communist Party who drafted the historic petition to the United Nations, delivered by his comrade and friend, Paul Robeson, in 1951. The petition, painstakingly outlining the dark deeds of the United States government against its African-descended citizens, was aptly titled *We Charge Genocide*.⁵⁸

Given the historical record, then, David Levering Lewis's declaration that the *Messenger* "had an extremely modest impact in the Afro-American community," should not be taken seriously. He provides no evidence to support his claim, and informed contemporaries gave a contrary verdict. Abram Harris in his 1923 assessment regarded the impact as significant; five years later, E. Franklin Frazier, speaking of the black socialists around the *Messenger*, reported that their influence among Negroes was "strong"; James Weldon Johnson, one of the early black residents of Harlem and one of its keenest observers, writing in 1930 noted with particular reference to the *Messenger* and the *Challenge* that "These journals shook up the Negroes of New York and the country and effected some changes that have not been lost"; and Roi Ottley, a Harlemit and Afro-American journalist, reported in his 1943 book that the *Messenger* was "influential."⁵⁹

Of the black socialists who were politically formed during the two decades between 1910 and 1930, those of the ABB wielded the greatest influence on left currents in the United States and on unions aligned to the Communist Party during the 1930s and later. Otto Huiswoud, Cyril Briggs, Richard B. Moore, Lovett Fort-Whiteman, Otto Hall, Harry Haywood, and Grace Campbell were all to rise in prominence in the party during the late 1920s and 1930s.⁶⁰ Thus, the growth in influence of the Communist Party among Afro-Americans in the 1930s substantially issued out of the formation of these black cadres and their efforts in the previous decades.

Black socialists, however, even in the 1930s, did not enjoy the level of influence in the Afro-American community that they had anticipated and striven for. They never came close to creating a following remotely approaching the size of that generated by Garvey and the UNIA in the 1920s. Black nationalism was a far more powerful magnet than the socialism advocated by the black radicals. Why was this so?

Black radicals turned to socialism not through any blind or facile idea of class loyalty per se, but through the double recognition of the racial and skewed class position of Afro-Americans. Socialism, in theory, draws no color line. Of course, in racist America, the practice was very different from the theory—and there was the rub. Unions blocked the entry of black workers into their ranks; socialist leaders, more often than not, espoused and practiced racism in their parties; the Socialist Party of America generally turned a blind eye to the racism of its members, especially those in the South.⁶¹ Proletarian solidarity is fine in theory, but impossible when there is virulent racism.

The conventional riposte to black people advocating socialism in the United States is that the white working class is irremediably racist. This is a powerful argument but not entirely adequate. It is in fact ahistorical and undialectical. It is a response that issues from horrendous events such as the East St. Louis Massacre. But just as there was East St. Louis, so there were the Knights of Labor, the IWW, and the brave and principled white socialists in Oklahoma who stood shoulder to shoulder with Afro-Americans. The challenge for the historian is to divine the laws of the conjunctures of solidarity and alliance, and conjunctures of dissolution and conflict. How may we systematically analyze what one historian has called the "crazy-quilt patterns of biracialism and hate"?⁶² In other words, under what circumstances do cross-

racial alliances develop and thrive? And under what circumstances do these alliances break down and antagonisms develop? These are difficult but important questions to address, and some historians have begun to address them, if only implicitly.⁶³

In short, the lazy shorthand—the white working class is incurably racist—that is passed off as analysis will not do. It cannot account for Big Bill Haywood, Joe Hill, and the Wobblies; it cannot account for the principled antiracism of Oscar Ameringer, who did splendid antiracist work among the Oklahoma Socialists; nor can it account for Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Robert Minor in the Communist Party or for the later phase of Eugene Debs's life. One may respond by saying that these are aberrations in American history that need not detain us. But not only is such a response too easy—and too cheap—the fact is that there are *too many* aberrations of this kind—which means they are not aberrations in any meaningful sense—even in these racist United States, for them to be so lightly dismissed. We need, therefore, to explain them.

The early black radicals were not fools when they advocated socialism and sought cross-racial alliance among the proletariat. Nor were they naïve, quixotic dreamers. They had fine minds, and certainly minds by no means inferior to those who accused them of foolishness. They carefully read the conjuncture in which they found themselves during and after the First World War. It was a historical moment filled with revolutionary promise—the impact of the war itself; revolution in Russia, Germany, and Hungary; the Seattle and record mass strikes of 1919; the black energies released through the Great Migration; the revolutionary courage and actions of the Wobblies; Indian and Irish nationalisms—and it gave every sign of a world being turned upside down. The radicals threw in their lot with the working-class struggle because black people had undergone a forced

and mass proletarianization (agrarian and urban) at the end of slavery. The mistake that they made—Harrison was the major exception here—was to not recognize early enough that the conjuncture had changed decisively by 1922 and that new tactics and strategies were called for; that Afro-Americans needed to aggregate as a people, to rely more heavily on their own political resources, on what they could do on their own, as the revolutionary tide turned domestically and globally. After all, it was no coincidence that Big Bill Haywood had fled the United States for Russia in 1921.

In short, after the high tide of 1919, that *annus mirabilis*, black nationalist projects were far more attractive to Afro-Americans and, I would say, far more viable than socialist ones. Because Garvey squandered the opportunity and resources of the UNIA on the Black Star Line does not mean that options such as black cooperatives in the urban North did not exist and could not have been pursued to ameliorate the condition and improve the economic and political prospects of Afro-Americans. As more and more racist blockages occurred in the Socialist and the Communist Parties and trade unions, as the economic recession hit in the early twenties, political energies should have been more systematically diverted to projects of greater self-reliance and the establishment of black unions such as the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, which Randolph helped to build in the late 1920s.

The black left, especially that around the *Messenger*, severely wounded itself and diminished its effectiveness in reaching the masses of Afro-Americans through its unrelenting and indiscriminate attack on religion, Christianity in particular. "We don't think very much of ministers," was the mildest rebuke they uttered. The black Chicagoan Fenton Johnson, a radical himself, rightly dubbed those like Owen and Randolph as "extreme

rationalists."⁶⁴ Harrison, Randolph, Owen, and McKay made the mistake of believing that because they were atheists others had to be, too, in order to establish a movement for struggle. True, there were some backward and reactionary black church men and women who ought to have been criticized when they did harm. But to make a bonfire of all black Christians with the incendiary language of Chandler Owen, a master of invective, was a major error that cost them dearly.⁶⁵

Garvey made no such error, partly because he was himself a believer. He appropriated the symbols of Christianity and turned them black. Garvey did not banish Jesus; he canonized him as the Black Man of Sorrows. He did not reject God, but worshipped the God of Ethiopia: He called on his followers to worship God, as he put it, "through the spectacles of Ethiopia."⁶⁶ It resonated with, rather than alienated, his Afro-American supporters and won new followers to the UNIA.

The black socialists had formidable structural obstacles to overcome in their attempts to win over black workers. One was the fact that the overwhelming majority of the black population still lived in the South and it became increasingly difficult and dangerous to carry out political work there. Socialists, black and white, encountered the double tyranny of racist white workers and white capitalists, along with the vehement objection of many of the small and besieged Afro-American middle class, who understandably, if shortsightedly, sought a quiet life.

On top of this, many Afro-Americans were confined to atomized and isolating service jobs such as domestic work, which made it difficult to develop a trade union consciousness and even more difficult to put such ideas into practice. How and under what circumstances does one, for instance, strike effectively as a domestic servant?⁶⁷ Randolph managed, after a titanic struggle, to succeed in organizing the Pullman porters, not only

because discontent among them was widespread in the mid-1920s, but because they were all employed by one and the same company. And this structural condition helped the porters, albeit after protracted struggle and countless sacrifices, to prevail during the New Deal period.

The Depression of the 1930s rearranged the political landscape—this time even more profoundly than the First World War had done—which improved the conditions for cross-racial class alliances. The pressure of the Communist International, especially the resolution of its Sixth Congress in 1928, placed the American Community Party in a position where it felt obliged to give greater attention and priority to the Negro Question. This gave black comrades like Briggs, Huiswoud, and Moore and their white allies in the party greater power to effect changes in key areas. The attention paid by the Communist Party to the Scottsboro case and black Southern workers came from a combination of favorable domestic conditions and pressure from Moscow.⁶⁸ The Cold War, McCarthyism, and structural changes in the American economy in the postwar years would significantly diminish, truncate, and indeed reverse many of the gains made by black socialists in the 1930s.

To conclude: Peter Clark and the black socialists of the first three decades of our century struggled against formidable odds. They dealt with difficult and still-unresolved problems and questions. Most significant, they wrestled with the question of the relation between race and class in a racist society in which the proportion of the population made up of black people was and is relatively small. How can a small, economically weak, racialized and maligned group—turned into a “minority” through the gerrymandered aggregation of Euro-Americans and overwhelmingly proletarianized—how can such a group organize to defend its interests? Can it pursue

its demands and defend itself without making alliances? How can it make alliances if it is rebuffed by those with whom it seeks to align? In Ghana the Asante say that one cannot clap with one hand. Do Afro-Americans have to learn how to clap with one hand? Is it possible to do so? Is it desirable? Are the prospects for alliance better today than they were in the time of the *Messenger*? Is it possible or desirable to make alliances when Afro-America itself is not politically organized as a group? What are the internal obstacles to Afro-America’s advancement? How may they be overcome?

Randolph, Owen, Moore, Campbell, Domingo, Huiswoud, Harry Haywood, and other black socialists struggled with such questions. They answered the questions in one way, and a few of them answered the questions differently over time. Garvey and the black nationalists answered such questions in a radically different manner—and asked different ones too. The UNIA gained mass support; the black socialists did not.

But as we have seen, despite the difficulty of their political project, the black socialists won support, and perhaps to an extent greater than one should have expected. In fact, their influence was considerable, especially among sectors of the black intelligentsia, but not only there. The black socialists made some gains, but suffered many defeats, some self-inflicted. They are unjustly ignored, unremembered, and uncelebrated. But even when we do not recognize it, the line of continuity between their struggles and those of the later period is strong and discernible. Interviewed in 1969, the high noon of the Black Power movement, the eighty-year-old Randolph, while professing his “love” for the young black militants, also complained that he was “greatly concerned about the lack of historical knowledge on the part of some of [them].” The old man displayed a remarkably Olympian overview of the links between the

different periods and phases of the black struggle:

We are creatures of history . . . for every historical epoch has its roots in a preceding epoch. The black militants of today are standing upon the shoulders of the "[N]ew Negro radicals" of my day—the '20s, '30s and '40s. We stood upon the shoulders of the civil rights fighters of the Reconstruction era and they stood upon the shoulders of the black abolitionists. These are the interconnections of history and they play their role in the course of development.⁶⁹

Notes

An earlier version of this article was presented on the panel "African American Politics and the Meanings of Equality in the Jim Crow Era," at the 113th Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, January 7–10, 1999, Washington, D.C.

1. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in his *Surveys from Exile*, ed. David Fernbach (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books in association with *New Left Review*, 1973), 146.

2. By socialists I mean anticapitalists, whether in the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, or the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The IWW membership comprised socialists as well as anarcho-syndicalists. For the present purposes I will ignore the finer distinctions between socialists and anarcho-syndicalists because both groups were committed anticapitalists. In what follows, when *Socialist* is written with a capital "S," it refers as a noun to a member of the Socialist Party, and as an adjective it pertains to the Socialist Party. Uncapitalized, *socialist* refers generically to anticapitalists and their activities.

3. See in particular, Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); Mark I. Solomon, *Red and Black: Communism and Afro-Americans, 1925–1935* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988); and Robin Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

4. Philip Foner, *American Socialism and Black Americans: From the Age of Jackson to World War II* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977); Philip Foner, ed., *Black Socialist Preacher: The Teachings of Reverend George Washington Woodbey and his Disciple, Reverend*

G. W. Slater, Jr. (San Francisco: Synthesis Publications, 1983), hereafter referred to as *Black Socialist Preacher*; Jervis Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* (1972; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Theodore Kornweibel, *No Crystal Stair: Black Life and the Messenger, 1917–1928* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975); and Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Verso, 1998).

5. See James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, chap. 5.

6. Foner, *American Socialism*, pp. 48–49. The details of Clark's political biography are drawn from William J. Simmons, *Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising* (Cleveland: Geo. M. Rewell & Co., 1887), 244–249; Herbert Gutman, "Peter H. Clark: Pioneer Negro Socialist, 1877," *Journal of Negro Education* 34, no. 4, Fall 1965; Foner, *American Socialism*, pp. 43–60; Paul McStallworth, "Peter Humphries Clark," in Rayford Logan and Michael Winston, eds., *Dictionary of American Negro Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982); and David Gerber, "Peter Humphries Clark: The Dialogue of Hope and Despair," in Leon Litwack and August Meier, eds., *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 173–190. Foner, however, provides the most detailed account of Clark's socialist politics, and it is on his work that I have primarily relied.

7. Quoted in Foner, *American Socialism*, p. 49; Gutman, "Peter H. Clark," p. 414.

8. Quoted in Foner, *American Socialism*, p. 56.

9. Quoted in Foner, *American Socialism*, p. 59.

10. His most important writings and those of Slater may be found in *Black Socialist Preacher*.

11. *Black Socialist Preacher*, p. 6.

12. *Black Socialist Preacher*, p. 201.

13. *Black Socialist Preacher*, p. 255.

14. *Black Socialist Preacher*, p. 35.

15. *Black Socialist Preacher*, pp. 27–28.

16. *Black Socialist Preacher*, p. 260.

17. *Black Socialist Preacher*, p. 260.

18. *Black Socialist Preacher*, p. 261.

19. *Black Socialist Preacher*, p. 262.

20. Hubert Harrison, "How to Do It—And How Not," *New York Call*, December 16, 1911.

21. *Black Socialist Preacher*, p. 352.

22. *Black Socialist Preacher*, pp. 336 and 346.

23. Harrison, "How to Do It—And How Not."

24. James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912–1925* (1967; Rutgers University Press, 1984), 67–69; H. L. Meredith, "Agrarian Socialism and the Negro in Oklahoma, 1900–1918," *Labor History* 11, no. 3, Summer 1970; Foner, *American Socialism*, chap. 10.

25. See in particular, Philip Foner, "The IWW and the Black Workers," *Journal of Negro History* 40, no. 1, January 1970; William Seraile, "Ben Fletcher, I. W. W. Or-

ganizer," *Pennsylvania History* 46, no. 3, July 1979; Lisa McGirr, "Black and White Longshoremen in the IWW: A History of the Philadelphia Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union Local 8," *Labor History* 37, no. 3, Summer 1995; Peter Cole, "Shaping Up and Shipping Out: The Philadelphia Waterfront During and After the IWW Years, 1913-1940," Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 1997. The best general history of the IWW is Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

26. Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America*, pp. 73-74; Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*.

27. Harrison's career is discussed in James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, esp. chap. 5, from which the details here are drawn.

28. Some of Harrison's essays were published in two volumes: *The Negro and the Nation* (New York: Cosmo-Advocate Publishing Company, 1917); and *When Africa Awakes: The "Inside Story" of the Stirrings and Strivings of the New Negro in the Western World* (New York: The Porro Press, 1920).

29. See "What Haywood says on Political Action," *International Socialist Review*, February 1913, pp. 622-623.

30. I can think of no native-born Afro-American who espoused atheism or even agnosticism before Randolph and Owen in the *Messenger* magazine, founded in 1917. David Walker, Martin Delany, Douglass, T. Thomas Fortune, James Weldon Johnson—all professed a religious faith. Even the iconoclastic Du Bois began his 1920 volume *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) with the first item of his Credo being: "I believe in God, who made of one blood all nations that on earth do dwell" (p. 3). Despite the many shifts in his ideology up to his death in 1963, there is no evidence to suggest that he changed his religious views.

31. Harrison, *The Negro and the Nation*, pp. 45-46.

32. Harrison, *The Negro and the Nation*, p. 44.

33. Despite its patently unsatisfactory character, Elliott Rudwick's 1964 study still stands as the only full-scale analysis of the East St. Louis Massacre: *Race Riot at East St. Louis, July 2, 1917* (1964; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982).

34. Harrison, *When Africa Awakes*, p. 15.

35. Quoted in Harrison, *When Africa Awakes*, p. 16.

36. Harrison, *When Africa Awakes*, p. 18. Harrison's emphasis.

37. Harrison, *When Africa Awakes*, pp. 18-19.

38. Harrison, *When Africa Awakes*, p. 81.

39. *New York Call*, December 13, 1911.

40. *Black Socialist Preacher*, p. 346.

41. *Messenger*, May-June 1919, p. 9.

42. For more on this, see James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, chap. 5, esp. pp. 180-182.

43. *Messenger*, August 1919, p. 19; *Messenger*, April 1922, p. 390; Frederick Detweiler, *The Negro Press in*

the United States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), 171; Kornweibel, *No Crystal Stair*, p. 54.

44. Cyril Briggs to Theodore Draper, March 17, 1958, Theodore Draper Papers, Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta; *Revolutionary Radicalism: Its History, Purpose and Tactics with an Exposition and Discussion of the Steps Being Taken and Required to Curb It, Being the Report of the Joint Legislative Committee Investigating Seditious Activities. Filed April 24, 1920, in the Senate of the State of New York: Part I, Revolutionary and Subversive Movements Abroad and at Home. Vol. 2* (Albany: J.B. Lyon Co., Printers, 1920), Table 1, p. 2004.

45. *Revolutionary Radicalism*, p. 2004.

46. Detweiler, *Negro Press*, pp. 1 and 11.

47. *Messenger*, April 1922, p. 390; Briggs to Draper, March 17, 1958, Draper Papers.

48. Kelly Miller, "After Marcus Garvey—What of the Negro?" *Contemporary Review* 131, April 1927, p. 494; James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, passim.

49. Charles Johnson, "The Rise of the Negro Magazine," *Journal of Negro History*, January 1928, p. 17; Anderson, A. *Philip Randolph*, p. 119; Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, *The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement* (1931; New York: Atheneum, 1968), 390.

50. *Messenger*, April 1922, p. 391; for more on this remarkable union, see Foner, "The IWW and the Black Workers"; Seraile, "Ben Fletcher"; McGirr, "Black and White Longshoremen in the IWW"; Cole, "Shaping Up and Shipping Out."

51. John J. Lyons, ed., *Manual for the Use of the Legislature of the State of New York, 1921* (Albany: J. B. Lyon Co., Printers, 1921), p. 786; Weinstein, *Decline of Socialism in America*, pp. 73, 114-115.

52. Anderson, A. *Philip Randolph*, pp. 153-155.

53. For more on the birth and struggles of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, see Spero and Harris, *Black Worker*, chap. 20; Anderson, A. *Philip Randolph*, pp. 151-225; and William Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925-37* (1977; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

54. Students enrolled in black colleges increased six-fold between 1917 and 1927, from 2,132 to 13,580; by 1927 there were another 1,500 in predominantly white colleges outside the South. In 1920, 396 black students received bachelor's degrees; in 1929, 1,903 did so. Raymond Wolters, *The New Negro on Campus: Black College Rebellions of the 1920s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 17 and 313; Herbert Aptheker, "The Black College Student in the 1920s—Years of Preparation and Protest," in his *Afro-American History: The Modern Era* (New York: Citadel Press, 1992), 175.

55. Abram Harris, "The Negro Problem as Viewed by Negro Leaders," in his *Race, Radicalism, and Reform: Selected Papers*, ed., William Darity Jr. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 48.

56. Anthony M. Platt, *E. Franklin Frazier Reconsidered* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), esp. chap. 4; E. Franklin Frazier, "The American Negro's New Leaders," *Current History*, April 1928, p. 58. Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, early admirers and contributors to the magazine, registered similar disappointment with the later *Messenger*. Hughes in his autobiography referred to the "curious career" of the *Messenger*. "It began by being very radical, racial, and socialistic, just after the [First World War]," he recalled. "Then it later became a kind of Negro society magazine and a plugger for Negro business, with photographs of prominent colored ladies and their nice homes in it." Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea: An Autobiography* (1940; London: Pluto Press, 1986), 233. In a 1928 letter, McKay similarly remembered the *Messenger* as "a splendid magazine during and right after the War. It had the *Crisis* licked miles and miles, it was so well-edited and strong in opinion. . . . But afterwards the tone of the *Messenger* went down a great deal in my opinion. I don't know why and how, one cannot always tell how decay begins." McKay to James Ivy, May 20, 1928, in Wayne Cooper, ed. *The Passion of Claude McKay: Selected Prose and Poetry, 1912-1948* (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), 146. Kornweibel, *No Crystal Stair*, provides a persuasive explanation of the *Messenger's* "decline."

57. William L. Patterson, *The Man Who Cried Genocide: An Autobiography* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 30-31.

58. William L. Patterson, ed., *We Charge Genocide* (1951; New York: International Publishers, 1970).

59. David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 9; Harris, "The Negro Problem as Viewed by Negro Leaders," p. 48; Frazier, "The American Negro's New Leaders," p. 58; James Weldon Johnson, *Black Manhattan* (New York: Knopf, 1930), 251; Roi Ottley, *New World A-Coming: Inside Black America* (1943; New York: Arno Press, 1968), 272.

60. For more on the ABB and the politics of the group that came out of it, see James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, esp. chap. 5 and Postscript.

61. The literature on the subject is vast and growing, but see in particular, R. Laurence Moore, "Flawed Fraternity—American Socialist Response to the Negro, 1910-12," *Historian* 32, no. 1, November 1969; Sally M. Miller, "The Socialist Party and the Negro, 1901-1920," *Journal of Negro History* 56, no. 3, July 1971; Foner, *American Socialism*; Philip Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619-1981*, 2nd ed. (New York: International Publishers, 1982).

62. David Roediger, *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness* (London and New York: Verso, 1994), 135.

63. See in particular, Eric Arnesen's excellent study, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1994).

64. [Fenton Johnson], "Religion Is Not Retarding the Race," *Favorite Magazine*, December 1919, p. 209.

65. For a similar criticism, see Spero and Harris, *Black Worker*, pp. 398-400, and George E. Haynes, *The Trend of the Races* (New York: Council of Women for Home Missions and Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1922), 14.

66. Cited in Randall K. Burkett, *Black Redemption: Churchmen Speak for the Garvey Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), 7. Burkett has provided the most detailed discussion of the religious side of Garveyism: *Garveyism as a Religious Movement* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1978).

67. Despite her triumphalist tone in discussing the black washerwomen strikes in Jackson (1866), Galveston (1877), and Atlanta (1881), Tera Hunter provides no evidence that any of these strikes yielded the results sought by the women. The fact that successful organized action eluded the washerwomen, the most independent of the domestic workers, showed the major obstacles that such workers had to face. Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labor After the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), esp. chap. 4.

68. James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*; Naison, *Communists in Harlem*.

69. Quoted in Phyl Garland, "A. Philip Randolph: Labor's Grand Old Man," *Ebony*, May 1969, pp. 31 and 36.