

## Book Review

### Critique of Orlando Patterson's Blaming-the-Victim Rituals

Martin Kilson

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Orlando Patterson, *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries* (New York: Civitas, 1998)

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#### Why Protest So? Seems Conservative to Me

Let me say straight off that from where I sit the new collection of three essays by Orlando Patterson—a member of Harvard's Department of Sociology—amounts to little more than cannon fodder for white conservatives, who in the past couple of decades have come to relish what I call the trashing of African-American realities—contemporary realities and historical realities.<sup>1</sup> Over the past twenty-five years, white conservatives have fostered a cadre of black conservatives who practice a conservative intellectual discourse the main argumentative thrust of which might be called a black put-down mode, that is, an analytical perspective that critiques African-American patterns or realities (societal, social-structural, and political) in terms of how much they vary from dominant white American patterns and proffer black-averse explanations or causes for such variations of African-American patterns from dominant white patterns. Or to use Cornel West's language, black put-down-oriented discourse on the part of black conservative intellectuals is informed by a deep emotive preference for what West calls "white people's normative gaze."<sup>2</sup> Initially headed up by Thomas Sow-

ell, Shelby Steele, Anne Wortham, Glenn Loury (he has now exited from this network), Walter Williams, Steven Carter (he has also exited from this network), Robert Woodson, Alan Keyes, and a few others, this cadre of black conservative practitioners of black put-down-oriented analysis now counts Orlando Patterson as a newcomer to its ranks. Patterson's metamorphosis from a black Marxist intellectual of Caribbean background to the ranks of black conservative intellectuals has evolved over the past decade.

Published in 1998 with the title *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries* under the new publishing imprint Civitas, which is directed by Henry Louis Gates, the essays discussed in this review exhibit a palpable black-rejectionist aura, though packaged in a black-friendly veneer. In a word, the core essay in *Rituals of Blood* (the first and main essay, "Broken Bloodlines," which takes up 167 pages, or two-thirds of the book) is an exercise in blaming-the-victim discourse on twentieth-century African-American societal/familial patterns. Of course, Patterson denies that his core argument amounts to blaming-the-victim discourse, informing his readers that "my analysis offers no comfort to conservatives and reactionaries" (p. 167). But I beg to differ with him on this matter.

At the foundation of Patterson's main essay, "Broken Bloodlines," is the claim that American slavocracy bequeathed societal/fa-

miliar dysfunctions to the post-Emancipation African-American social system. Slavocracy bequeathed, above all, a dysfunctional and unstoppable ideology of black macho-sexual dalliance in regard to black women, and from Emancipation onward this slave-era legacy smashed overall viability in African-American societal/familial processes. The dysfunctional aspects of blacks' societal/familial patterns that are highlighted in Patterson's main essay include unwed births, female-headed households, separation/divorce, tension-laced male/female interactions, and spin-off problems from these interactions (e.g., number of sexual partners; warring attitudes in regard to cunnilingus, fellatio, anal sex, group sex, etc). In the second half of Patterson's main essay, data from polls covering our contemporary era are used to illustrate the greater degree of problem-riddled African-American societal/familial patterns as compared with white Americans' societal/familial patterns.

In general, Patterson's view of slavocracy's cultural legacy for African-American modern social development in the twentieth century is a totalistic one. That is, it amounts to a rigid cultural-reductionist argument, claiming that twentieth-century African-American societal/familial problems are merely a one-dimensional extension of blacks' slave-era cultural weaknesses. Put another way, nowhere in the main essay in *Rituals of Blood* does Patterson interface his discussion of the slave-era cultural impact on African Americans' societal/familial modern development with the massive impact of the racist American political economy on the African-American social system. Of course, Patterson is savvy enough not to ignore the impact of American racism totally, for he offers several incidental references to "injustices of American racism" here and there. But this is a veneer-level inference, not part of a rigorous

causal characterization of how, from Emancipation through all of the twentieth century, the racist American political economy has tormented, harassed, oppressed, and constrained modern social system development among African Americans, as compared with the interface of the American political economy with the modern social system development of White American groups—WASPS, Irish Americans, Italian Americans, Jewish Americans, and so on. In short, the core of Patterson's analysis of the problems that confronted African Americans' societal/familial patterns is militantly riveted to his view of the culture of black macho-sexual dalliance that was fostered during the era of slavocracy. As Patterson puts it:

Afro-American male slaves, and their descendants, like male slaves and their descendants all over the Americas, developed a reproductive strategy in which . . . bringing a child into the world became a virtual obligation [ideologically] of manhood and of ethnic survival [but] did not entail any considerations of the means whereby one would support it. Afro-Americans, and American society at large (like Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latin societies), are still living with the devastating consequences of this male attitude towards reproduction. In all of these ex-slave societies, male descendants of slaves firmly believe that "birth control is a plot to kill the Negro race." And in all of them, men bear children whom they have no resources to support and whom they, in the majority of cases among the lower classes, simply abandon. (p. 43)

. . . Slavery is important [therefore] not only for our understanding of the high proportion of female-headed households resulting from fragile unions and male abandonment of their spouses and children but also for any explanation of other gender and familial patterns. (p. 47)

Here, then, is a quite curious historical argument about post-Emancipation African-American society, namely, that its societal/familial patterns are nothing more than a full-blown totalistic extension of slave-era cultural processes. This core argument is, I submit, little more than a crudely one-dimensional version of cultural reductionism. And despite Patterson's protests, the basic conservatism of his argument is unmistakable to any discerning observer. It is conservative first in orientational and aesthetic terms, which is to say that Patterson's argument is riddled with a black-rejectionist or Negrophobic aura. And it is conservative especially in analytical terms, and thus, also in prescriptive terms, public policy terms.

It must be noted especially that Patterson's crude cultural reductionist characterization of problem areas faced by post-Emancipation development of African-American societal/familial patterns is shrewdly cagey and deceptive. It is cagey because it feigns a "progressive" tone or aura. Patterson does this by giving that cruel forced-labor political economy and social system called American slavery a dominant causal role—identifying it as a "totalistic historical legacy"—in the post-Emancipation experience of African-American societal/familial patterns.

Thus, on the surface, Patterson's drawing of a tight causal nexus between slavery on the one hand and blacks' societal/familial development on the other hand, has a seemingly first-level validity. *But that is precisely all Patterson's core argument has going for it: a superficial first-level validity.* At this superficial level, Patterson's argument even appears to be congruent with the progressive thinking underlying the activist or militant sector of today's Black Reparations Movement—the sector represented by, say, Dr. Randall Robinson of TransAfrica and Congressman John Conyers.

On closer scrutiny, however, there is no progressive public policy dimension whatever associated with Patterson's approach to causal linkage between slavery, on the one hand, and problem areas that have confronted African-American societal/familial patterns, on the other hand. Closer scrutiny of Patterson's approach also reveals *an explicit contempt toward African Americans' capacity for social development creativity and agency when faced with social and cultural crises in the process of modern history.* Indeed, a strange amalgam of old-fashioned American conservative discourse and black-rejectionist (Negro-phobic) orientations lies at the heart of Orlando Patterson's crude cultural-reductionist thinking in the main essay in *Rituals of Blood*.

There is no understanding at all in Patterson's main essay—"Broken Bloodlines"—that since emancipation and throughout the twentieth century, as African-American citizens faced a cruel combination of the legacy of American slavery and everyday American racism, they persistently exhibited an enormous capacity for social development creativity and agency, and blacks have done so heroically I submit. Without an enormous capacity for social development creativity and agency, African-American twentieth-century society and culture would have experienced something amounting to *full-fledged social suicide*, an outcome I believe most white Americans would have welcomed. However, what I call *African-American social development creativity and agency* prevented this terrible outcome of social suicide, though of course the twentieth century did witness important social problems in black societal/familial patterns. But so did America's white ethnic groups witness major problems in their societal/familial patterns, though benefiting from American racism.

## Evaluating Patterson's Argument: I. Perspective and Method

There is no better intellectual and analytical source for mounting a critique of Patterson's blaming-the-victim discourse than E. Franklin Frazier's *The Negro Family in the United States* (1939).<sup>3</sup> This tome remains the classic probe of the formation of the post-Emancipation and early-twentieth-century African-American social system, and as such it should have been more broadly titled, such as *The Negro American Social System*. Both Frazier's mode of analysis and the fine data he employed point the way to a rigorous critique of Patterson's conservative cultural-reductionist discourse.

Frazier's analysis deftly weighs and calibrates the impact on African-American societal/familial development of the intricate interplay of blacks' capacity for cultural agency on the one hand and the systemic constraints built into a racist American social system on the other hand. What lends Frazier's study its special significance vis-à-vis Patterson's argument is Frazier's conceptual insistence that the problematic side (the dysfunctional dimension) of African-American societal/familial evolution from Emancipation into the twentieth century can only be seriously probed one way, *namely, through contextual interaction with the dominant processes of a racist American capitalist society*.

When we juxtapose Frazier's analysis with Patterson's crude cultural-reductionist discourse, what we discover is this: that, yes, Frazier and other progressive analysts during the first half of the twentieth century (e.g., Charles Spurgeon Johnson, Hortense Powdermaker, Arthur Rapier, Horace Mann Bond, Allison Davis, etc.) recognized that African Americans' societal/familial processes exhibited problems in their evolution from slavery to Emancipation and into the

twentieth century. And Frazier, Johnson, and other analysts even thought some of those problems might be reinforcing themselves, displaying "pathology," that is. Yet, at the very same time, Frazier's analysis and data demonstrated that, in fact, the dominant developmental thrust in African-American societal/familial processes by the early twentieth century also exhibited an important degree of cultural agency and viability. Thus Frazier formulated the starting point of his study of African-American societal/familial patterns as follows: "The poverty and disorganization of Negro family life in the urban environment only becomes intelligible when they are studied *in relation to the organization of Negro communities and the social and economic forces [racist American political economy forces] which determine their development*" (emphasis added).<sup>4</sup>

Frazier's study, which was produced in the 1930s, focused on three main areas of African-American societal/familial processes: (1) "Negro female-headed households," (2) "Negro divorce rate," and (3) "Negro unwed births." These areas of study involved, of course, "problem areas" for the evolving African-American social system from Emancipation into the twentieth century. But on the basis of Orlando Patterson's argument, one would have expected by, say, the World War I era a hypercrisis level of problem-riddled African-American societal/familial processes in such areas as female-headed households, perhaps in the 50 percent plus range. But in fact, this hypercrisis level in African-American societal/familial patterns does not surface until the era of capitalist deindustrialization of American urban communities from the late 1960s onward, some 100 years (five generations) after Emancipation! And of course, the era of cynical capitalist deindustrialization of American society inevitably ravaged the limited job market niche that working-class



*In Mourning.* Photo by Phillippe Cheng

black males had acquired during the 100 years prior to deindustrialization—a situation that was hardly conducive to fashioning stable working-class and lower-class African-American households.

What did Frazier's work reveal about the dynamics of African-American households by the early twentieth century in regard to the issue of female-headed households? By 1930 in the South (where of course the majority of African Americans resided—90 percent), in what Frazier classified as “rural non-farm areas,” female-headed households ranged between 15 and 25 percent of Black families; and in “rural-farm areas” such households

ranged between 3 and 15 percent. Put another way, despite the slave-era cultural legacy, *between Emancipation and 1930 the vast majority of rural African-American families (which is to say in the 70 to 90 percent range) were two-parent or male-headed families.* Thus Frazier's data showing non-female-headed black families in the South in the 70 to 90 percent range was evidence of an important modern developmental achievement, given the nearly three-century American slavocracy experience. Although this was still perhaps an imperfect achievement vis-à-vis the white American rate of reducing female-headed households by the 1930s, the

African-American range of 70 to 90 non-female-headed (two-parent-headed) households by the 1930s was nonetheless an important modern cultural evolution. Patterson completely misreads this achievement.

Moreover, both Frazier's data and his analysis were in synch with the study undertaken a generation earlier by W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Study* (1899). Like Frazier, Du Bois viewed middle-class family norms among white Americans as standards, and so he looked for similar patterns in the evolving African-American social system. But Du Bois also recognized, as Frazier did, the unique impact on a fledgling African-American societal/familial evolution of a racial-caste-delineated Robber Baron American capitalist system from the 1870s onward. The Brandeis University historian Jacqueline Jones recently remarked on Du Bois's keen sociological eye for the dysfunctional—pathological—impact on African-American societal/familial processes that emanated from an evolving racist American political economy. As Jones puts it:

By the late-nineteenth century, the city's [Philadelphia] labor force had been transformed [from a sizable artisan black working-class sector], as successive waves of Black workers were displaced by a new (White-ethnic, immigrant-based) economic order....Dubois showed clearly that when individual black workers lost their livelihoods and their places in the city job structure, *the black community registered these effects in dramatic and specific ways*. With the erosion of a Black economic base, *families fragmented, crime increased, and class divisions within the community intensified*. Meanwhile, groups of white skilled and menial workers and, by extension, their families and neighborhoods prospered by virtue of their privileged [racial caste] status relative to the black population. (emphasis added)<sup>5</sup>

It is also noteworthy that by 1900 the post-Emancipation black Philadelphia community had traveled rather well down the road to two-parent African-American households. Thus, in Du Bois's turn-of-the-century black Philadelphia community, some 70 percent of black families were two-parent families and 25 percent were female-headed households. This pattern compared quite favorably with the much more economically and socially advantaged white Philadelphia community. By 1900, white Philadelphia had 80 percent two-parent households and 14 percent female-headed households.<sup>6</sup> Thus what Jacqueline Jones's analysis of Du Bois's insights tells us in regard to turn-of-the-twentieth-century black/white family patterns is this: that the ability of white Philadelphia working-class families to reduce their rates of female-headed households better than African-American families could was intimately tied to the racial-caste capitalist systemic constraints (and the cultural and social dislocations associated with such constraints) on the everyday life and interpersonal interactions of African-American citizens. When contrasted with this more multifaceted analytical approach to the evolving twentieth-century societal/familial processes among African Americans as practiced by both Frazier and Du Bois, Patterson's discourse in *Rituals of Blood* is thoroughly shallow.

It should be emphasized here that the crudeness of Patterson's bid to strip black Americans of agency and viability in developing modern societal/familial processes is underlined vividly not just by post-Emancipation and early-twentieth-century data relating to black Philadelphia's achievement of viable societal/familial patterns fairly comparable to white Philadelphia's patterns. The black-rejectionist crudeness of Patterson's argument is underscored as well by the ante bellum, or pre-Emancipation, black Philadelphia experience. One of the most

thorough studies available of pre-Emancipation-era social system development among African Americans is Gary Nash's brilliant case study of black Philadelphians, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (1988). Numbering some 14,000 souls among 164,000 whites by the 1830s, the pre-Emancipation black Philadelphia community was a perpetually fluid community, so to speak, with steady streams of newcomer former slaves entering it annually. Now, apropos Patterson's argument, this meant that slave-era cultural practices were continually being transported into the black Philadelphia community. Yet Gary Nash's analysis and data show something really remarkable, I suggest: that notwithstanding slave-era patterns and the always tenuous and tormented status of life among Free Negro enclaves like those in Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, and elsewhere—so graphically portrayed in the studies on Free Negro communities by Leon Litwack, Ira Berlin, and Barbara Fields—the black Philadelphia pre-Emancipation community proved incredibly effective at fashioning viable societal/familial processes.

Thus, as Gary Nash informs us, by the 1820s, "In general [black] households headed by women were small, so it appears that the vast majority of black children in this era, possibly as many as 85 to 90 percent, grew up in male-headed, and in most cases two-parent households." Furthermore, Nash makes special reference to what was especially significant *in social system terms* about these data, namely, *that this success at fashioning viable societal/familial patterns among black Philadelphians by the 1820s took place despite the black-family-destroying cultural legacy of American slavocracy*. As Nash puts it:

Slavery had damaging effects on the black family, particularly when masters separated

husband and wife or parent and child by selling one or more family members. But so far as the admittedly imperfect records will allow us to determine, *black sojourners in Philadelphia constructed and reconstructed families very quickly and maintained them through the first quarter of the nineteenth century with at least as great success as white families of the working class*. (emphasis added)<sup>8</sup>

Nash continues further by informing his readers of his understanding of certain features of black civil society in pre-Emancipation black Philadelphia that facilitated the construction and reconstruction of viable societal/familial patterns. As Nash puts it:

Free black Philadelphians formed independent households only by cautious and sometimes painful steps. They married later than white Philadelphians, often because they were indentured until their middle to late twenties. *Fortunately they joined together to form extended or augmented households, taking in relatives and friends who arrived recently from the countryside and were emerging from slavery with few assets and little knowledge of urban life*. Evidence of this doubling up survives in the city directories, which listed free blacks of different surnames living at the same address, and in the manuscript reports of a few census takers who made notes on the particular living arrangements along the streets they walked. (emphasis added)<sup>9</sup>

Finally, Nash provides data from the first U.S. Census in 1790 to the fifth U.S. Census in 1830 on comparative black/white female-headed households. By 1810, the rate of white female-headed households was greater than blacks', standing at 15.5 percent, compared to 12 percent for black Philadelphians. By the 1830s, the black female-headed

household rate increased to 24.4 percent, but so did the white rate increase, to 18.7 percent. When one takes into account the enormous social system disadvantages possessed by black Philadelphians in the pre-Emancipation era, the capacity of black civil society in Philadelphia to maintain the vast majority of black households along two-parent lines was remarkable evidence of agency and viability in black civil society.

As already noted above, on the basis of Patterson's argument one would have expected early in the post-Emancipation era and into the early twentieth century something like a 50 percent plus rate of women-run black households to have appeared. Now such a truly crisis-level rate of female-headed black households does in fact appear, but not when Patterson's argument would have predicted it. *Such hypercrisis rates of female-headed households do not appear until over 100 years after Emancipation!* This can be seen in Table 6.1, which shows data presented by Andrew Hacker of Cornell University in an article that critiqued the original version of the main essay in *Rituals of Blood*—an essay published in a 1993 issue of *Transition*. What Hacker argues in his article is basic to a critique of Patterson's claim in *Rituals of Blood* that the problem-riddled black societal/familial patterns in our contemporary era are merely a one-dimensional extension of African-American slave-era cultural weaknesses.

Hacker tells us that in our post-Civil Rights era, the new deindustrialized and hyperplutocratic American political economy has not only overwhelmed the capacity of African-American civil society to buffer black societal/familial processes from numerous problems. The new hyperplutocratic postindustrial American system has now cynically begun to generalize the spread of societal/familial crises into white American households at exponential rates. Thus, since

1970, census data have indicated a weakening of white civil society agencies' capacity to shield white family patterns from disintegrating postindustrial forces. Hacker formulates this development thus:

[Data show] we now have three-and-a-half times as many white families with no husband in the house. What is especially interesting is that the white and black figures have been rising in tandem. While the ratio of black women-headed households remains discernibly higher, *the important story is that white and black men have been fleeing the confines of fatherhood at essentially the same rate [since the 1970s].* (emphasis added)<sup>10</sup>

## Evaluating Patterson's Argument: II. Data and Analysis

In returning to the great E. Franklin Frazier's 1930s analysis of the thrust toward agency and viability in African-American societal/familial processes, we grasp something in regard to the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century evolution of the modern African-American social system that Patterson completely ignores. Frazier's analysis underlines for us the special role of a quite vibrant African-American civil society, which nurtured black societal/familial metamorphosis in face of both slavocracy's cultural legacy and the dehumanizing and authoritarian white supremacist marginalization and exploitation of African Americans in the post-Reconstruction era and beyond. This vibrant black civil society had roots broadly in African-American life, too—roots in the black church and clergy in the pre-Civil War era, as studies by scholars like Eugene Genovese, Robert Hall, Gayraud Wilmore, and Albert Raboteau, among others, have demonstrated; roots among Free Negro communi-



TABLE 6.1 Households Headed by Women in the United States, 1950, 1970, 1993

YEAR	BLACK	WHITE	B:W Ratio
1950	17.2 %	5.3 %	3.2
1970	34.5 %	9.6 %	3.6
1993	58.4 %	18.7 %	3.1

SOURCE: Andrew Hacker, "We All Drink the Same Water: Reply to Orlando Patterson," *Transition* No. 66, (1995).

ties both in the South and North, as studies by Gary Nash (Philadelphia), Barbara Fields (Maryland), and Ira Berlin (the North), among others, have shown; and roots, too, among post-Emancipation black communities in the North and South, as studies by Horace Mann Bond (Alabama), John Hope Franklin (North Carolina), Charles Spurgeon Johnson (Mississippi), and Carter G. Woodson (Virginia), among others, have demonstrated. Indeed, the short shrift given the role of black civil society in Patterson's schema jumped out of his pages at me, so to speak, for my own ancestral roots were deep in the formative process of black civil society—among African Methodist clergy, yeoman farmers, artisans, and caterers in Free Negro enclaves in Maryland and among former Civil War soldiers whose families spawned clergy, artisans, caterers, farmers, and teachers who chiseled out a part of post-Emancipation black civil society in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Virginia.

Patterson simply ignores the intervening role of a vibrant black civil society in the post-Emancipation and evolving twentieth-century metamorphosis of the African-American family. This central analytical flaw was keenly seized on by the social historian Eric Foner in a review for the *New York Times Book Review*:

Without acknowledging the social resources, often rooted in family life, that enabled blacks to survive the experience of enslave-

ment, it is impossible to explain why, in the immediate aftermath of emancipation, blacks considered the establishment of stable family relations essential to their new freedom. *Black men, no less than black women, searched for kin separated by slavery, sought to educate their children, eagerly legalized their marriages and shouldered the responsibilities of freedom.* (emphasis added)<sup>11</sup>

What Frazier's data and analysis reveal in *The Negro Family in the United States* is not Patterson's claim of the failure of agency and viability in African Americans' emergent familial dynamics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but the surprising success of a serious thrust toward agency and viability. Patterson makes one or two strategic references to Frazier's work when some Frazier data fit his pathology argument, but the fulsome range of Frazier's data and analysis is ignored by Patterson and for good reason. Frazier's overall data and analysis dispute Patterson's argument.

Although, I believe, Frazier's data and analysis point clearly to an important degree of agency and viability on the part of post-Emancipation and early-twentieth-century African-American societal/familial processes, Frazier also recognizes that the combination of a cruel peonage agrarian capitalism in the South, on the one hand, and an exploitative and human rights/civil rights-denying white supremacist social system, on the other hand, contributed inevitably to important familial

problems for the evolving twentieth-century African-American social system. The facet of African-American societal/familial processes that was most problem riddled related to unwed births. In general, Frazier's data—beginning with 1900 and continuing through the following thirty years—show that in urban areas of both the South and North, unwed births among blacks were greater than among white Americans. As a worst case situation, Frazier's data on Baltimore, Maryland (shown in Table 6.2), showed a 26.2 percent black unwed birthrate in 1900, which declined to 21.5 percent by 1929, compared to 2.8 percent and 1.4 percent for whites in 1900 and 1929, respectively. Interestingly, and in keeping with Frazier's long-standing proposition that the character of American urban industrialism in the North was especially distressful for African-American societal/familial processes, the Southern industrial city of Birmingham, Alabama, experienced a black unwed birthrate significantly lower than that in Baltimore, although the black Birmingham unwed birthrate was still greater than the white unwed birthrate. Thus, in 1918, the black unwed birthrate in Birmingham was 12.3 percent, increasing to 16.5 percent in 1929, whereas the unwed birthrate for Birmingham's white community was 2.5 percent in 1919 and 3.6 percent in 1929.

When it is recognized that it was just a two-and-one-half-generation post-Civil War time frame in which the foregoing unwed birth figures in the worst case situation of black Baltimore reached one-fourth of black births by 1900, retreating to one-fifth by 1930, it cannot be said that these figures are particularly friendly to Patterson's crude cultural-reductionist argument in *Rituals of Blood*. Indeed, when Frazier's data are read from the vantage point of in-marriage births, they tell us more about the successful thrust toward agency and viability of African-American societal/familial processes in the

rather short time frame of two and one-half generations after the Civil War covered by Frazier's data. Thus even in a complicated Northern city like Baltimore 74 percent of black births in 1900 were in-marriage-births, and these births increased to nearly 80 percent of black Baltimore births by 1930. Similarly, in black Birmingham nearly 88 percent of black births were in-marriage births in 1918, as were nearly 84 percent by 1930. Moreover, Frazier's data reveals even higher rates of in-marriage black births for the Northern cities of Trenton, New Jersey, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, during the evolving twentieth-century phase in African-American societal/familial processes. In Trenton, nearly 90 percent of black births were in-marriage births in 1916 (10.7 percent unwed births), and 82 percent were in-marriage births in 1929 (18% unwed births). In Philadelphia, nearly 87 percent of black births were in-marriage births in 1920 (13.6 percent unwed births) and nearly 85 percent in 1929 (15.3 percent unwed births). In short, it can be said that the attainment of in-marriage birthrates ranging between 82 percent and 90 percent within two and a half generations after Emancipation in cities like Birmingham, Trenton, and Philadelphia (as well as the in-marriage rates of 74 percent and 80 percent in black Baltimore between 1900 and 1930) was solid evidence of enormous societal/cultural agency and resilience on the part of an evolving modern African-American social system. This in-marriage birthrate achievement in urban communities North and South in the period 1900 to 1930 by former African-American slave populations flies in the face of Orlando Patterson's crude analytical effort in *Rituals of Blood* to explain post-Emancipation and evolving twentieth-century African-American societal/familial processes in terms of a one-dimensional linkage to or dependence on slave-era cultural patterns.

**TABLE 6.2** Number and Percentage of Illegitimate Births Among Total Births in Baltimore, Maryland, 1900–1929

Year	Total Births		Illegitimate Births			
	White	Colored	White		Colored	
			Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
1900	7,242	1,411	210	2.8	370	26.2
1901	7,125	1,670	206	2.8	490	29.3
1902	7,193	1,757	326	4.5	453	25.7
1903	7,001	1,619	305	4.3	395	24.4
1904	6,863	1,736	267	3.8	448	25.8
1905	7,077	1,874	302	4.2	495	26.4
1906	7,300	1,802	315	4.3	436	24.2
1907	7,128	1,663	227	3.1	392	24.0
1908	7,564	1,614	263	3.4	433	26.8
1909	7,313	1,483	233	3.1	345	23.3
1910	7,941	1,917	309	3.7	508	26.5
1911	7,592	1,691	346	4.5	410	24.2
1912	9,387	2,011	405	4.3	467	23.2
1913	10,309	2,233	376	3.6	471	21.1
1914	10,665	1,972	300	2.8	432	21.9
1915	11,460	2,174	359	3.1	533	24.5
1916	12,662	2,423	325	2.5	550	22.7
1917	12,582	2,368	270	2.1	512	21.6
1918	12,975	2,317	243	1.8	504	21.7
1919	14,908	2,723	256	1.7	569	20.9
1920	15,934	2,853	210	1.3	621	21.8
1921	15,882	2,926	228	1.4	652	22.3
1922	14,920	2,925	262	1.8	583	20.8
1923	14,773	3,107	232	1.5	666	21.4
1924	14,445	3,216	235	1.6	665	20.6
1925	14,576	3,380	236	1.6	693	20.5
1926	13,507	3,403	223	1.6	711	20.9
1927	13,547	3,432	192	1.4	697	20.3
1928	12,972	3,366	215	1.6	716	21.2
1929	12,156	3,305	182	1.4	713	21.5

SOURCE: E. F. Frazier, *The Negro Family in the U.S.*

In a word, by the 1930s—some three generations following Emancipation—a vibrant and culturally skillful black civil society had assiduously fashioned a significant degree of agency and viability in the sphere of African-American family development. What is more, this vibrant black civil society evolved against the exploitative, human rights-violating, and Black-pariahizing white supremacist grain of the American system. What an achievement that was, I suggest! On the other hand, the white American family's higher degree of societal viability during the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century was disproportionately and undemocratically assisted and favored in its development by the racist American system and would remain so throughout the Great Depression of the 1930s and the World War II and postwar era and beyond, to our own era in fact.<sup>12</sup> In the case of someone like Orlando Patterson, who parades around so ostentatiously in newcomer conservative garb as a scholar of African-American history, one would have thought this last point would be properly understood. But Patterson—his earlier sojourn as a black Marxist intellectual notwithstanding—does not understand this point, a measure no doubt of Patterson's quite fervent conversion to American conservative discourse.

Finally, when we turn to Frazier's findings relating to separation and divorce patterns in the evolving twentieth-century African-American social system, the analytical shallowness of Orlando Patterson's crude cultural-reductionist argument is apparent yet again—so apparent in fact that Patterson's argument in *Rituals of Blood* must be viewed as thoroughly propagandistic in its raw ideological calibration. In *The Negro Family in the United States*, Frazier presents data in regard to divorce patterns on Alabama, Virginia, and elsewhere.

The Virginia data are particularly striking, I thought, for in various cities of Virginia Frazier observes "that the relative frequency of divorces among Negroes . . . coincides with the frequency among whites."<sup>13</sup> In fact, for four major cities shown in Table 6.3 the black divorce rate by the 1920s to the 1930s was more favorable than the white divorce rate. In the major city of Richmond, for instance, the viability of African-American marriages, as they were fashioned in the late-nineteenth-century post-Emancipation era and into the twentieth century, stood up well vis-à-vis the more advantaged (developed) social system milieu in which white marriages took form. Thus by 1923 whites' divorces in Richmond were 23.1 per 100 compared to 13.6 per 100 for blacks, and by the 1930s the relative favorability of the black divorce rate held firm. Indeed, the performance of African-American societal/familial patterns in the sphere of divorce caught Frazier's attention in a special way some sixty-odd years ago, as can be seen from his commentary on this:

In Danville, where both the white and the Negro rates have been extremely low, the Negro rate has declined on the whole as the white rate has declined. On the other hand, in Norfolk and Newport News, with their highly mobile population, both the Negro and white rates have been higher than in Richmond, where the white and Negro population are more stable. *However, in all four cities During the nine years [studied] the Negro rate has been significantly lower than the white rate.* (emphasis added)<sup>14</sup>

Thus none of the data, findings, and analysis in regard to the evolving twentieth-century African-American family processes found in E. Franklin Frazier's great work *The Negro Family in the United States* (1939) support the crude cultural-reduction-

TABLE 6.3 Divorce per 100 Marriages, Virginia, 1923, 1927, 1931

City	Year	Race	Rate
Danville	23/27/31	White	8.6/ 5.7/ 2.1
		Black	6.2/ 3.6/ 1.5
Norfolk	23/27/31	White	25.8/33.3/44.6
		Black	8.4/13.5/16.0
Richmond	23/27/31	White	19.4/22.8/23.1
		Black	14.1/17.0/13.6
Newport	23/27/31	White	21.0/26.5/33.9
		Black	18.6/23.4/22.1

SOURCE: E.F. Frazier, *The Negro Family in the U.S.* (1939), p. 382.

ist argument employed by Orlando Patterson in *Rituals of Blood*. None of Frazier's findings lend credence to Patterson's conservative-skewed propagandistic assault on African Americans' capacity for agency and viability in the sphere of modern social system development or to Patterson's arrogant and testy put-down of the important work of the late Herbert Gutman and his colleagues as a "legion of revisionists clad in white armor who truly believe that they have handed back to Afro-Americans their pride and historical claim to agency."<sup>15</sup> Our black American post-Emancipation and early-twentieth-century ancestors—yours and mine—fully demonstrated quite on their own what Eric Foner has aptly called their civil society's capacity to "shoulder the responsibilities of freedom."<sup>16</sup> *They did so better than any other African-descended population in the Diaspora moreover, whether in the Caribbean or in Afro-Latin communities in South America, to whom Patterson equally and arrogantly extends his crude cultural-reductionist argument in *Rituals of Blood*. In this connection, it would be most interesting if a black social analyst of Caribbean background critically tested (along the lines I pursued via Frazier's fine data in *The Negro Family in the United States*) Patterson's cultural-reductionist argument in *Rituals of**

*Blood* in the context of post-Emancipation modern social system development in the Caribbean. I have in mind progressive social historians such as Winston James, Michael West, the social philosopher Lewis Gordon, the cultural historian Selwyn Cudjoe, and others.

### The Politics and Ideology of Patterson's Discourse

As already noted, the normative and political thrust of the essays in *Rituals of Blood* is patently conservative. This is true especially for the main essay critiqued in this article—the first essay, "Broken Bloodlines." My charge of conservatism relates not merely to how Patterson's crude reductionist argument is mounted and delineated but also to the prescriptive or problem-solving outlook presented by Patterson. The social historian Eric Foner notes in this regard a rather curious feature of Patterson's argument in *Rituals of Blood*: On the one hand, in his testy assault on the Gutman school regarding the degree of African-American initiative and viability in societal/familial processes between slavocracy and the early post-Emancipation era, Patterson, says Foner, "seeks to revive the notion popularized in the 1960s by Daniel P. Moynihan's controversial re-



*Held.* Photo by Phillippe Cheng

port—*The Negro Family*—that slavery inflicted enduring psychological damage on black men by destroying the traditional roles of father and husband.” But, Foner continues, in regard to Moynihan’s quite progressive public policy position offered in *The Negro Family* for correcting what was by the late 1960s an emerging hypercrisis of female-headed black households, Patterson rejects Moynihan’s progressive policy prescription. As Foner put it:

[The] Moynihan Report had as its subtitle “The Case for National Action.” Moynihan’s recommendations included a Federal commitment to full employment for black men, better housing for black families and opening up the suburbs to black residents. Patterson [on the other hand] proposes a more

modest social agenda, including such things as expanded day care. But in keeping with the temper of the times, his remedies rely more on individual initiative than social policy: black men must stop cheating on their wives and blacks, especially black women, ought to marry whites more frequently.

Yet surely if 250 years of slavery, followed by a century of segregation, lie at the root of our racial problems, American society bears a greater responsibility to help resolve the crisis than Patterson suggests, however much one may also urge wayward men to alter their behavior.<sup>17</sup>

Orlando Patterson’s exit from progressive and even Marxist discourse actually predates *Rituals of Blood* by a decade at least and gained its broadest airing several years ago in

a collection of essays titled *The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in America's Racial Crisis* (1997), published, like *Rituals of Blood*, under the Civitas imprint edited by Henry Louis Gates. The essays in this volume were enthusiastically welcomed in the American conservative intellectual camp, especially among conservative analysts who work on African-American affairs. In a review essay for the *New York Times Book Review*, the doyen among conservative political scientists, James Q. Wilson, put out the welcome mat for Orlando Patterson: "The intellectual heart of Patterson's book [*The Ordeal of Integration*] is his rumination on the superiority of the doctrine of individual moral autonomy." Wilson, following up on this observation, then quotes Patterson to underline the sway of this conservative doctrine, noting: "by which he [Patterson] means 'dignity and ethic of personal responsibility.'" Wilson then adds his own elaboration of Patterson's view of conservative individualism doctrine as applied to African Americans: "At root this doctrine requires one to renounce the whole idea of race [blackness], because racial identity is a form of social determinism. It is for this reason that Patterson refers to the people generally called blacks as Afro-Americans, no different as a group from Irish-Americans or Italian-Americans."<sup>18</sup>

As a discourse style, Patterson's conservatism is characterized by a curious convergence of a hypermoralism on the one hand and a palpable black-rejectionist tone or aura on the other hand. This can be demonstrated by juxtaposing Patterson's main essay in *Rituals of Blood*—"Broken Bloodlines"—with its original version, titled "Blacklash: The Crisis of Gender Relations among African Americans," which appeared in *Transition*. In the original essay seven years ago, Patterson writes from a vantage point of being "within African-America" not "outside African-America," so to speak. Seven years ago, Pat-

erson regularly used the group identifying pronouns "we," "our," "us," and so on. Six years later, in *Rituals of Blood* Patterson makes it patently clear—in a haughty and testy tone no less—that he is writing now from a vantage point "outside African-American patterns." He now harbors no personal sense of affinity for African Americans—especially Blacks' societal/familial processes—preferring instead the non-black identifying pronoun "them" or variations thereon, as in "Afro-Americans have no one to blame [for their societal/familial problems] but themselves."<sup>19</sup>

In short, both the normative thrust and the calibrating tone of the main essay in *Rituals of Blood* are black-averse in orientation, virtually Negrophobic, I dare say. This antipathy on Patterson's part even takes on nit-picking or petty features, as in the prefatory pages of *Rituals of Blood* where Patterson explains his preference for the terms "Afro-American" and "Euro-American" and thus his newfound and quite fervent rejection of the terms "black" and "white" and above all the term "African American." As Patterson puts it, testily of course: "I refuse to call any Euro-Americans or Caucasian person 'white,' and I view with the deepest suspicion any Euro-American who insists on calling Afro-Americans 'black'" (p. xxii).

If this complaint by Patterson appears a bit strange and forced—which indeed it is—note Patterson's further complaint against the term "African American." For Patterson, the term "African American"

mutes the Americanness of Afro-Americans (which is culturally and politically unwise) and fails to distinguish the growing number of immigrants from Africa who, whatever sentimentalists and mythmakers [among African Americans] may think, are far more culturally different from Afro-Americans

than are Afro-Americans from any group of Euro-Americans. (p. xxii)

It is clear that we are here dealing with an Orlando Patterson—involved in a rather tortured self-consolidation of his conversion to American conservatism—who harbors rather deep and twisted black-rejectionist feelings, near-Negrophobic tendencies, feelings that rest on a foundation of ignorance and intellectual dishonesty moreover. First, it is strange indeed that Patterson considers the term “Euro-Americans” a more culturally valid nomenclature for, say, “Polish Americans,” “Italian Americans,” and so on than the term “African Americans” for black Americans. I grew up in a small textile mill town—a typical Robber Baron-age WASP-owned company town—in eastern Pennsylvania during the 1930s and 1940s, where my childhood playmates included Polish-American, Italian-American, and Irish-American kids who were third-generation Americans and exhibited no serious patterns that could be legitimately labeled “European.” They were as American as cherry pie and, like their parents, were obsessed in the 1930s and 1940s with becoming “white.” This meant two things: (1) becoming like White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) who constituted the upper-class stratum in my hometown and who in general looked down on my Polish-American, Italian-American, and Irish-American childhood playmates; and (2) not being like Negroes or black Americans, which is to say not being like America’s most denigrated, despised, and pariahized “Other.” In short, although Patterson’s newfound preference as a conservative convert for the term “Euro-Americans” in place of “whites” or “white Americans” for describing our non-black compatriots is essentially an to-each-his-or-her-own matter, his effort to characterize this choice as resting on a more genuine or generic evidential basis regarding the every-

day characterological makeup of our non-black compatriots is groundless if not just ridiculous.

Moreover, Patterson’s further commentary about black Americans’ use of the nomenclature “African-American” as some kind of cultural violation of the term “African” is equally ridiculous. It happens that from the dawn of the embryonic cadre of educated black Americans among the Free Negro communities before the Civil War, dating back to the late eighteenth century, the term “African” was employed by members of this educated Free Negro stratum in both North and South to identify their churches and other black civil society agencies. Furthermore, today’s immigrant black communities have no natural monopoly over the term “African,” as Patterson’s commentary implies. And anyway, the vast majority of immigrant black communities from Africa attach a nation-state prefix to their American nomenclature (as in “Nigerian-American,” “Senegalese-American,” “Ethiopian-American,” etc.) or they attach a tribal prefix (as in “Yoruba-American,” “Amharic-American,” etc.). This mode of black group identification in America is not new either, for it appeared earlier in the twentieth century among smaller numbers of African immigrants and within a generation or two tended to give way to the use of “Negro American” or “Black American,” as studies on black immigrants by Ira Reid in the 1930s revealed—see his *Negro Immigrants*—as did recent work by Winston James in *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*.<sup>20</sup> And I suspect that something like this pattern might well occur again among today’s black immigrants, a pattern of cultural incorporation generally with the dominant black or African-American community—a pattern that Patterson, nurturing his conservative black-rejectionist tendencies, clearly abhors.



I should also note that Patterson's observation that the use of the prefix "African" will forestall or prevent African Americans' incorporation into full-fledged American status is an instance of Patterson's parroting the worn-out black put-down discourse of white American conservatives like Jim Sleeper, Tamara Jacoby, Michael Novack, and others. Has, may I ask, the prefix "Irish" attached to "Irish Americans" or the prefix "Italian" attached to "Italian Americans" prevented these white ethnic groups from becoming full-fledged American cultural creatures? It has not, and Patterson should know as much. Although Patterson's neoconservative conversion leads him to believe otherwise, the dominant barrier today to African Americans' full-fledged social and cultural incorporation as American citizens remains the multifaceted dimensions of America's racism legacy, not black Americans' use of the prefix "African" as part of their group nomenclature.

Thus one might ask, where does one locate the foci of the intellectual mechanism underlying Orlando Patterson's type of black-rejectionist discourse found in the main essay in *Rituals of Blood*? I get some of my cues on this query from an observation by my left-wing Harvard colleague Cornel West, who remarked at some point that there are perhaps two cultural mind-sets among black intelligentsia personalities, two types of black intellectuals, if you will:

1: One cultural mind-set might be called the "sovereign black intellectual" mind-set. It identifies with black folks' interior societal/cultural modalities, as these were fashioned under the trauma of American slavery and later under white supremacist oppression and passed on by great-great grandparents, great-grandparents, grandparents, and par-

ents. I include myself in this category and would place my colleague Cornel West here too.

2: A second mind-set might be called the "accommodationist cultural mind-set." This mind-set among certain black intellectuals is shaped by what Cornel West calls "white people's normative gaze," which is to say that white Americans' societal/cultural predilections represent a special niche in one's worldview; whites' cultural predilections condition the accommodationist cultural mindset.

For sovereign-type black intellectuals, then, there is no intellectual obligation to shun black folk's core societal/cultural patterns; there's no intellectual burden to apologize to white Americans about these patterns, for African Americans' cultural patterns have their own generic history. Consequently, along with Langston Hughes and that sovereign mind-set strand of the New Negro Movement intellectuals nearly eighty years ago, sovereign mind-set-oriented black intellectuals today also opt "not to hide our Black [cultural] face," which is to say not to be cultural robots for white Americans' cultural predilections. On the other hand, the accommodationist mind-set strand among black intellectuals today finds fulsome representation in Orlando Patterson's discourse in *Rituals of Blood*. I suggest that the conservative ideological and cultural-reductionist discourse in *Rituals of Blood* is arrayed against the sovereign mind-set cultural strand among the black intelligentsia in general, and especially against its activist leadership demeanor vis-à-vis the American racist system. There is a key purpose underlying a kind of sleight-of-hand deployment in *Rituals of Blood* of a crude cultural-reductionist schema, namely, to give readers the impression that a high degree of crisis has characterized African-American so-



*Profession of Faith.* Photo by Phillippe Cheng

cietal/familial patterns from their embryonic origins in the post-Emancipation era through the twentieth century. Through recourse to E. Franklin Frazier's towering study of the evolving twentieth-century African-American social system—*The Negro Family in the United States* (1939)—my foregoing deconstruction of Patterson's argument in this article has laid bare *Rituals of Blood's* multifaceted analytical fallacies, unmasking thereby the raw ideology-driven discourse in Patterson's *Rituals of Blood*.

### **Patterson's Janus-Faced Discourse on Black Women**

There is a subsidiary but important aspect of the politics of Orlando Patterson's discourse

in *Rituals of Blood* that requires consideration. This subsidiary feature relates to the shift in Patterson's feminist outlook between the time of the appearance of the original essay on which the main essay in *Rituals of Blood*—"Broken Bloodlines"—is based and the appearance of the book version. Whereas the 1993 article (in *Transition*) reeked of what bell hooks aptly characterized as "so much mother-blame,"<sup>21</sup> the discussion on black women and feminism in *Rituals of Blood* takes on an almost Janus-faced alteration, being virtually fawning in its putative feminist-friendly tilt. The new fawning demeanor is, however, deceptive.

There is no doubt that the six years between the appearance of Patterson's *Transition* article ("Blacklash: The Crisis of Gender

Relations Among African Americans" ) and its revised and extended version as the main essay ("Broken Bloodlines") in *Rituals of Blood* spawned a major shift in Patterson's outlook on black feminism. In the original 1993 article, Patterson's posture bordered on contempt. Patterson sharply criticized black women in the 1993 article for their views on the character of crises in African-American societal/familial patterns, exhorting black feminists above all to surrender the "double jeopardy" claim or privilege. The "double jeopardy" claim holds that black women suffer twice under the oppressive writ of American racist capitalism—as pariahized blacks and pariahized women—and holds also that any corrective response would require a special regime of correctives related to the status of African-American women, that is, a regime of correctives emanating from both the mainstream American system and the black American subsystem, especially from errant black males. Thus, writing in "Blacklash: The Crisis Of Gender Relations Among African Americans" in 1993, Patterson raps black feminist intellectuals on the knuckles, so to speak:

One major factor accounting for the failure of communication on this most urgent of problems among African Americans is the tendency of Black feminists, who dominate the discourse, to confine the problems of Gender—which concern both males and females in their relations with each other—with those of women's issues, or, when relational problems are considered, to privilege the standpoint of women, on the assumption that they are always the victims of the interaction. (emphasis added)<sup>22</sup>

Needless to say, black feminist intellectuals responded to Patterson's put-down formulations—as did progressive black male intellectuals like Derrick Bell—prominent among

them bell hooks. For bell hooks, Patterson's essay took the form of "so much mother-blame," amounting to "anti-feminist propaganda in black-face."<sup>23</sup>

What a difference six years can make! In *Rituals of Blood*, one of the occasions when Patterson's discourse takes on a veneer of progressivism is when he treats black feminist concerns. This occurs especially in regard to two issues and amounts to a full reversal from Patterson's discussion in his 1993 article. One issue is the growing education and professional achievement gap between black males and females during the past fifteen years or so. The other relates to a pet issue in Patterson's eyes, seeking resolution of America's racial problems in general and African Americans' societal/familial problems in particular through interracial marriage.

Patterson actually commences the main essay in *Rituals of Blood* with a discussion of the greater secondary school graduation and college attendance rates for black females as compared with black males. This discussion, however, is tendentiously skewed in two directions: First, it is part of the overall tilt in Patterson's main essay toward a characterization of black males as *the natural dregs* of both African-American society and American society. Second, Patterson's discussion of black women's education achievement edge is part of a sleight-of-hand maneuver by Patterson to do two things: First, to cover up the antifeminist portrayal of black women that he put forth in his 1993 article in *Transition*; and second, to lend a profeminist veneer to his new intellectual demeanor and, in fact, to go one step further and foster warfare between today's black males and females. In regard to this second facet of Patterson's new put-down posture toward black males, I suggest that black women today—feminist or not—would have to be intellectually daft to bite Patterson's profeminist bait in *Rituals of Blood*.

TABLE 6.4 Percentage of Positions Held by Women, 1992

	Among White Workers	Among Black Workers
Total Workforce	45.2%	51.0%
Professionals	52.6%	65.1%
Managers	41.1%	52.2%
Technical	50.6%	57.3%
Blue Collar	16.2%	24.6%
Military Officers	10.1%	20.5%
Enlisted Personnel	8.9%	14.5%

SOURCE: Andrew Hacker, "We All Drink The Same Water: Reply To Orlando Patterson," *Transition*, No. 66 (1995).

In regard to Patterson's discussion of greater education achievement among black females compared with black males, there is no doubt solid evidence in support of his discussion, and this greater education achievement has, in turn, translated into important new job market outcomes for black women. As shown in Table 6.4, black women now outpace both white women and black males in professional jobs, manager jobs, and technical jobs, whereas black males prevail in military officer jobs and in blue-collar production jobs. But what is noteworthy about Patterson's discussion here is the politics that I believe informs it. Note first that Patterson assumes that the black female/male education gap has mainly contemporary origins, and from this assumption he asserts that the black female/male education gap represents a major upheaval in African-American society, in the middle-class and upper-stratum sector especially. Patterson commences his argument regarding a putative crisis-riddled black female/male college and professional achievement gap as follows: "The impressive growth in the numbers proportion of Afro-American women with 'some college' or 'bachelor's degree or more' levels of education discussed below, is a post-1970 phenomenon" (pp. 10-11).

Now, as a question of fact, this statement by Patterson is wrong, but wrong I think with a tendentious twist. The fact of the matter is that a college-going edge on the part of black females extends backward in time to the pre-World War II era and earlier. The reason for this was partly that the major professional job category available to African Americans starting in the early twentieth century was that of schoolteacher. Also, the culture of American schools tilted the teacher market toward women teachers. So, as can be seen in Table 6.5, schoolteachers had a prominent position in the African-American professional stratum already in the 1890s and it continued into the 1970s. Put another way, then, the college-going and college graduation advantage among black women today is not related as such to black female/male tensions or problems associated with African-American societal/familial patterns, as Patterson, with his rather sleight-of-hand manipulation of these issues in his discussion, wants his readers to believe. In short, Patterson's discussion of the contemporary black female/male education gap gets distorted owing to his being quite ideologically obsessed by his cultural-reductionist argument, straining to demonstrate linkage between contemporary African-American soci-

etal/familial problems and slave-era cultural weaknesses. Caught in this analytical rut, so to speak, Patterson feels no need to probe seriously or in multidimensional terms the social and institutional history of twentieth-century African-American society.

Any serious historical probe by Patterson of social patterns surrounding African-American education development from the post-Emancipation era into the twentieth century would have informed him about special gender aspects of this development. First, fathers in both working-class and middle-class African-American families were, from the post-Emancipation era onward, quite feminist friendly in regard to having achieving daughters (or nieces or other female relatives) attend postsecondary education institutions for training in nursing, catering, hairdressing, and especially more full-fledged college training as teachers. Negro colleges that took form after the Civil War gave special attention to teacher training and clergy training, while broadening their curriculums in liberal arts direction as well, so it made pragmatic sense to encourage black females to attend postsecondary institutions. It might even be said that the pragmatic feminist-tilt syndrome among black males in the early twentieth century in regard to females attending postsecondary institutions amounted to a full-blown belief system, for this feminist tilt among black males appeared as well in some black churches and in other black civil society agencies. We have been informed of this by the research of scholars like Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Jacquelyn Grant, and Dennis Dickerson, among others. In his marvelous study of the black church and clergy in the urban socialization of the early-twentieth-century black proletarians in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area, Dickerson shrewdly notes that spearhead roles for women in black churches were not uncommon:

[The] wives of Black steelworkers . . . depended upon churches to provide outlets for talent and leadership and as a forum for social fellowship. They joined in founding Black churches throughout the Pittsburgh area between 1890 and 1930, and they served as officers in important church auxiliaries. Rue Jennings, for example, born in Patrick County, Virginia, in 1865, migrated to Duquesne [Pennsylvania] in 1908. She became an organizer and charter member of Macedonia Baptist Church. In later years, she assumed the title of "church mother." Occasionally, Black women, while spouses to mill workers, ministered to them and other laborers as pastors. In Coraopolis, St. Paul AME Zion Church which had been established in 1900 had the Reverend Mrs. U.L. Stout as one of its early pastors. The Reverend Mrs. Carrie Smith served as the minister of the Church of the Living God . . . in Duquesne.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, quite contrary to Patterson's rather sleight-of-hand suggestion that contemporary high college-going achievement by black women reflects tension in black societal/familial processes, such black female college-going and entering of professions have in fact reflected rather broad cross-gender cooperation in African-American society, a pattern extending back to the early twentieth century no less. An important segment of African-American males—working class and middle class—have recognized since the early twentieth century that college education advancement by black women benefits and serves the aggregate modern advancement of all African Americans.

Furthermore, in his rather Janus-faced twist from his 1993 anti-black feminist position to his 1999 feminist-friendly face, Orlando Patterson employs another analytical maneuver as well. He claims that African Americans have the lowest "social network

TABLE 6.5 Selected Occupations of Black Intelligentsia 1890, 1910, 1940, 1970

Occupations	Year			
	1890	1910	1940	1970
Clergy	12,159	17,495	17,102	12,850
Teachers	14,100	29,485	63,697	235,436
Doctors	909	3,077	3,524	6,106
Lawyers	431	798	1,052	3,728
Educators		242		

SOURCE: Bureau of Census, Census Reports.

ranking” among American ethnic communities, such ranking being important for effective positioning in regard to socioeconomic status and power processes. Why is this so? The reason for black Americans’ low “social network ranking” in Patterson’s thinking is not the racist processes associated with the century-plus era of white supremacist marginalization and pariahization of African-American citizens. Patterson explains what he calls African Americans’ “impoverished networks” (“Afro-Americans are the most isolated ethnic group in America”) basically by blaming African Americans for doing something wrong in the fashioning of their social system during the twentieth century, especially during the post-Civil Rights era. And what have African Americans done wrong? Patterson blames African Americans for “the extremely low rate of intermarriage with persons who are not Afro-Americans [and this accounts] for their external separation [isolation]” (p. 150). He explains thus: “The truth of the matter is that, today, the pressure toward endogamy [in-group marriage] is as strong among Afro-Americans as it is among Euro-Americans, indeed may even be stronger” (p. 139).

Now this is a curious admixture of both the bizarre and falsehood. First, notice Patterson’s comparative pseudoequating of black and white Americans as coequal practitioners of ethnocentric marriage norms, which is to say, Patterson presents an aura of blacks-being-as-racist-as-whites regarding intermarriage. He even shifts his ground slightly to make African Americans appear even worse than whites in this regard: “indeed [blacks] may even be stronger [in opposition to marriage].” Now as a question of plain simple fact, polls have shown African Americans to be far more open or pluralistic about black/white intermarriage than white Americans. The social analyst Michael Lind, in an appraisal of 1990 U.S. Census data on intermarriage patterns, concluded:

While many blacks frown upon marriage by blacks to members of other groups . . . it seems very unlikely that such conservative attitudes are more pronounced among black Americans than among whites or Hispanics or Asian immigrants. *The major cause of low black out-marriage rates may well be anti-black prejudice—the most enduring feature of the [otherwise] eroding American caste*

system. Furthermore, anti-black prejudice is often picked up by immigrants, when it is not brought with them from their countries of origin. (emphasis added)<sup>25</sup>

There's a suggestion here of something obsessive about Patterson's belief that African Americans are responsible for the low level of black/white marriages—a rate currently of 8 percent for black males and around 4 percent for black women. I say this partly because after claiming that blacks' ethnocentrism is responsible for their "impoverished [social] networks" Patterson goes further and charges African Americans with responsibility as well for preventing American society as a whole from solving its racial problems by failing to take advantage of interracial marriage outlets. As Patterson puts it: "In purely demographic terms, when we take account of the fifth or so of all Euro-Americans who would consider marrying across the color line, it can be said that, in theory, *America could solve its 'racial' problem overnight by this means, if Afro-Americans chose to make a point of marrying out*" (p. 158) (emphasis added).

Moreover, Patterson particularly encourages black women toward interracial marriage: "I urge Afro-Americans, especially Afro-American women, to engage more in out-marriage."<sup>26</sup> Patterson says this would produce dual benefits: help end American racism speedily and make black males more dutiful toward black women.

Although I view the foregoing discourse by Patterson on interracial marriage as naïve and falsehood-riddled, his thinking on this gets even worse in *Rituals of Blood*. Patterson reserves his main criticism of African Americans' putative opposition to intermarriage for the mainline African-American intelligentsia and leadership. As Patterson puts it: "I see little prospect of that [end of racism through intermarriage] happening now or in the near fu-

ture, given the present [oppositional] mood of Afro-American intellectual, political, and cultural leadership" (p. 158).

Now the foregoing charge against the mainline black intelligentsia as the main barrier to broad intermarriage between blacks and whites is both ridiculous and intellectually dishonest. For one thing, Patterson can adduce no credible evidence that any major section of the mainline African-American intelligentsia (writers, scholars, artists, political leaders, civic leaders, etc.) articulates opposition to interracial marriage. Nor do black entertainers and sports figures do so. In this matter of interracial and interethnic marriage, there is in fact no activity today among African Americans comparable to activity opposing intermarriage that's occurring among, say, key Jewish-American intelligentsia figures, among some rabbinical circles, among some Jewish civic networks, among some scholars such as Alan Dershowitz of Harvard Law School, and among leading Jewish writers like Cynthia Ozick.<sup>27</sup> Patterson, by the way, makes no reference to such Jewish-American fostering of an ethnocentric or in-marriage paradigm in our contemporary American society, a society currently thrusting toward a multiculturalization of ethnic and racial boundaries in a serious way for the first time in our history. I suspect Patterson ignores such Jewish-American ethnocentrist patterns because he doesn't want to disturb the establishmentarian elements among Jewish Americans. Furthermore, Patterson appears unaware of or just ignores the fact that African Americans have a long-standing experience with the multiculturalization of their bloodline in American society and they have managed their multivariied color hues, their miscegenated bloodlines, if you will, in a pluralistic manner in general. Blacks who have been light-skinned enough to "pass" (to cross over into white American life) have done so without systemic opposi-

tion among African Americans and, conversely, black Americans have welcomed "passers" back to the fold if they returned, even letting former "passers" acquire numerous leadership roles in African-American institutions. I dare say we African Americans have more to teach our white compatriots about managing the multiculturalization of racial boundaries than they have to teach us. But never mind. It is noteworthy that Orlando Patterson doesn't hesitate one minute to practice black bashing in regard to the issue of interracial marriage, even when his evidence is wrong. In this connection, according to Patterson's close conservative friend Glenn Loury of Boston University, Patterson "relishes [being] iconoclastic" toward African-American realities.<sup>28</sup> I suspect Patterson considers this iconoclastic or black-bashing posturing toward African-American patterns as an expression of his newfound conservative intellectual toughness. Patterson shares this fantasy, by the way, with other black conservative intellectuals, such as Shelby Steele, Thomas Sowell, Alan Keyes, K. A. Appiah, Stephen Carter, Stanley Crouch, Armstrong Williams, and Robert Woodson, among others. Black conservatives' presumed intellectual toughness is invariably reserved for and directed against African-American patterns in American society.

Finally, in regard to the naïve dimension of Patterson's view of interracial marriage as a full-fledged prescription for "solving the racial problem," we encounter elements of a Booker T. Washington-type accommodationist underpinning of Patterson's conservative discourse in *Rituals of Blood*. A key and long-standing accommodationist precept is ultrafaith in presumed good intentions on the part of white Americans toward African Americans. One facet of this faith-in-white-folks syndrome in Patterson's discourse can be seen in the following observation:

Given that Afro-Americans are only thirteen percent of the population, even if only one in five men who are not Afro-Americans are interested in intermarrying with them this would immediately double the market of available spouses for them. I strongly suspect that the proportion of non-Afro-Americans so willing is indeed greater than one-fifth. (p. 165)

Now not only are there no serious data showing 20 percent of white males prepared to wed African-American women, neither are there any data to support Patterson's fantasy speculation that even more than 20 percent of white males are chafing at the bit to wed African Americans. If there were such an interracially ready pool of white males prepared for a major multiculturalization of racial boundaries in regard to black/white intermarriage, I myself would welcome such (I have a daughter married to a Scotsman), and I believe a majority of African-American citizens would too.

Even so, interracial marriage as such cannot, I believe, be taken as a path to a serious resolution of persistent racist dynamics in our American society. I, therefore, view Patterson's near obsession with this path to a resolution of American racism as an analytical ruse on his part, and so I view it with much circumspection. It strikes me as an accommodationist ploy on the part of a black conservative intellectual who abhors progressive public policy alternatives for challenging the ways in which America's 100-year plus white racist legacy has, in our post-Civil Rights era, come to scar the societal/familial face of African-American society. For new converts to the side of white American conservatism among black intellectuals like Orlando Patterson, one's self-serving professional agenda has much more going for it by trafficking in such an American system-deferring analytical ruse, such an accommodationist ploy.



### Conclusion: Black Conservatives and the Schutzjude Syndrome

What shapes and propels Orlando Patterson's type of contemporary conservative discourse on African-American realities? Patterson's discourse in *Rituals of Blood* is a variant of a broader discourse among conservative black intellectuals today that I would classify as a "trashing-attitudinal or put-down demeanor toward African-American realities." Patterson trafficks in this trashing-attitudinal demeanor toward black realities along with a growing cadre of black conservative intellectuals that includes, on one side, hard-core black conservatives like Thomas Sowell, Shelby Steele, Walter Williams, Allan Keyes, Anne Wortham, Hilton Als, Stanley Crouch, and others and, on the other side, soft-core black conservatives like Randall Kennedy, Stephen Carter, Glenn Loury, K. A. Appiah, Daryl Michael Scott, Henry Louis Gates, and Philip Richards, among others.

I seek an explanation of what propels Patterson's conservative discourse in *Rituals of Blood* by way of an historical analogy—by looking back across two centuries or so to the interesting status of the small Jewish intelligentsia in late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Germany—a marginalized Jewish intelligentsia that craved to be *Schutzjude*, that is, they craved for status as "Special Jews," as "Tolerated Jews." I suggest that today our new cadre of conservative black intellectuals are propelled, in part, by a comparable craving to be "Special Blacks."

*Schutzjude* was a special intelligentsia status in Prussia during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whereby one's ghetto Jewish intelligentsia marginalization might be lifted, thereby enabling a German-Jewish intellectual entry to mainstream German bourgeois circles. A Jew so favored "was allowed to live in Berlin," and through Berlin's

bourgeois circles such a favored German-Jewish intellectual could mount the treadmill of aristocratic acceptance and incorporation. There was, however, a price to be paid for this metamorphosis. *Schutzjude* status was possible only if German Jews "periodically made special payments to the Crown."<sup>29</sup>

Thus, arguing by historical analogy, I suggest that today's conservative black intellectuals like Orlando Patterson are seeking the equivalent of *Schutzjude* status. Their conservative discourse on African-American realities amounts to a special entry "payment" to the American conservative establishment circles, not unlike the financial payment German-Jewish intellectuals produced for entry to German bourgeois circles in the nineteenth century. I'm inclined to characterize Orlando Patterson's discourse in *Rituals of Blood* in light of the *Schutzjude* analogy. In Cornel West's deft phrase, I believe the discourse in *Rituals of Blood* defers to "White people's normative gaze." It does not rest on a viable historiographical and evidentiary foundation, as I have demonstrated in this article by critically filtering Patterson's argument in *Rituals of Blood* through E. Franklin Frazier's data and findings presented over sixty years ago in his classic work *The Negro Family in the United States*.

### Notes

1. Orlando Patterson, *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in two American Centuries* (Washington, D.C.: Civitas, 1998).
2. Communicated in personal conversation.
3. E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in The United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939).
4. *Ibid.*, p. 324.
5. Jacqueline Jones, "Lifework and Its Limits: The Problem of Labor in 'The Philadelphia Negro,'" in Michael Katz and Thomas Sugrue, eds., *W.E.B. DuBois, Race, and the City: 'The Philadelphia Negro' and Its Legacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), pp. 105-106.

6. Tera Hunter, "The Everyday Lives of Working-Class Women in Philadelphia and Atlanta in the 1890s," in Katz and Sugrue, *W.E.B. DuBois, Race, and the City*, p. 130.
7. Gary Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 162.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
10. Andrew Hacker, "We All Drink the Same Water: Reply to Orlando Patterson," *Transition*, No. 66 (1995), p. 101.
11. Eric Foner, "The Crisis Within," *New York Times Book Review*, February 14, 1999, p. 12.
12. For material on the disproportionate flow of public policy benefits to white American families—urban and rural—during the New Deal era under President Franklin Roosevelt, see Ralph J. Bunche, *The Negro in the Age of FDR* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).
13. Frazier, *The Negro Family*, p. 381.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 383.
15. Quoted in *The New York Times* (May 1, 1999).
16. Eric Foner, *New York Times Book Review*.
17. *Ibid.*
18. James Q. Wilson in *The New York Times Book Review*, November 16, 1997.
19. Orlando Patterson, "Blacklash: The Crisis of Gender Relations Among African Americans," *Transition*, No. 62 (1993).
20. Ira Reid, *Negro Immigrants* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939); Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia* (New York: Verso, 1997).
21. bell hooks, "Feminist Transformation," *Transition*, No. 66 (1995), p. 94.
22. Patterson, "Blacklash," pp. 7-8.
23. hooks, "Feminist Transformation," p. 94.
24. Dennis Dickerson, *Out of the Crucible: Black Steelworkers in Western Pennsylvania, 1875-1980* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 70.
25. Michael Lind, *The New York Times Book Review*, August 16, 1998.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
27. See, for example, Ed Siegel, "More Jewish Than Thou," *The Boston Globe* (November 9, 1997), p. K-1.
28. See interesting interviews with Orlando Patterson and Glenn Loury in Stephen Holmes, "Challenging Everyone's Conceptions About Blacks," *New York Times*, May 1, 1999.
29. See Amos Elon's brilliant essay on German Jews, "A Fugitive from Egypt and Palestine," in the *The New York Review of Books*, February 18, 1999, p. 20.