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The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

General Information

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Global Africana Review
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Chair's Note

We are excited to announce the publication of the seventh volume of our undergraduate research journal, the *Global Africana Review*. This edition continues our tradition of promoting some of the best scholarship produced by our students over the past year. This collection includes a range of articles that cover Africa and the larger diaspora, and, as usual, it was made possible by the fine research and authorship of our student contributors, along with the work of several others. Professor Lydia Boyd has served as an erudite and effective executive editor, and we are again fortunate to employ the services of managing editor Angela Pietrobon. Also, we are grateful for the efforts of Rebekah Kati of Davis Library, who has been instrumental in the publication of this edition. Finally, we are especially appreciative for the support of the Dean's Office and to Nicci Gafinowitz and her family for helping to defray the cost of this year's volume.

Claude A. Clegg III, PhD
Chair, Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies

Editorial Team: Global Africana Review, Volume 7, Spring 2023

Contributors: Global Africana Review, Volume 7, Spring 2023

Executive Editor Bio

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Author Bios

Jorren Biggs is a senior African and African American Diaspora Studies and Political Science student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill from Durham, North Carolina.

Stephanie Bruton is a recent graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she obtained a bachelor's degree in Biology with a minor in Religious Studies. Her interest in research involving the preservation of Black historical districts stems from zoning efforts currently affecting her hometown, which is Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Jerry Charleston (Lexington, NC) is a senior undergraduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill set to graduate in May of 2023 with a degree in exercise and sports science and a minor in medical anthropology.

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Cho Nikoi is a senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill majoring in History with a self-designed concentration in Modern Intellectual History, and minoring in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. She designed her thematic concentration to bridge "intellectual history" (the study of ideas, intellectuals, and ideological patterns over time, with an emphasis on the conditions of their propagation and dissemination) with concepts of "modernity." She has grounded her research in fascist, anticolonial, and pan-national movements in the twentieth century, examining their respective visions of history and alternative futures. This year, Cho has worked on her senior thesis tracking the development of "Black collective consciousness," from early Pan-Africanism to South Africa's Black Consciousness movement in the 1970s.

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Susie Webb is a rising senior from Fredericksburg, VA, majoring in global studies and journalism with a minor in data science. She has worked as the data editor and city and state editor for *The Daily Tar Heel*, UNC's student newspaper. Previously, she worked as a metro news intern for *The Charlotte Observer* and as the editor of *Potomac Local News*. Susie is currently studying international politics in Rabat, Morocco, where she is an editing intern for *Morocco World News*.

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Introduction

Lydia Boyd
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

I am happy to introduce the seventh volume of the Department of African, African American and Diaspora Studies' *Global Africana Review*. As in the past, this issue features the work of AAAD majors and minors and students from AAAD's courses. The student authors included in this year's issue have worked diligently over the past six months under the guidance of faculty mentors to revise and expand papers that began as class assignments. The breadth of this year's contributions demonstrates the diversity of student scholarship in the department, and the commitment of our students to engaging in research both in and beyond the classroom.

This issue's articles take up topics that focus on both US and international contexts. Stephanie Bruton's and Jorren Biggs's papers address the history of residential segregation in the United States and the rise and fall of Black-dominated commercial centers in Colorado and North Carolina, respectively. Bruton draws attention to the specific policies of urban development that drive decreases in property value in Black-dominated neighborhoods, even commercially successful ones such as the Five Points neighborhood in Denver. She examines the ways efforts at urban renewal in Five Points, beginning in the second half of the twentieth century, have tended to increase racial segregation and weaken the ability of Black property owners to benefit from gentrification projects. Biggs analyzes a similarly successful and historically significant Black neighborhood—Durham's Hayti neighborhood, one of the most successful "Black Wall Streets" of the early twentieth century—in terms of Booker T. Washington's theories of racial uplift, which were at the center of political debates over racial inequality in the first half of the last century. Susie Webb also turns a historical lens on early twentieth-century US politics by examining one of the most influential Black newspapers of that era, the *Chicago Defender*. Webb reviewed the paper's headlines at the beginning and end of the 1920s to explore the way the paper transformed the representation of Black communities by featuring positive portrayals of Black Americans, but also at times reproduced the racialized stereotypes of that era. Cho Nikoi's article shifts attention to the post-colonial period in West Africa, exploring the formation of Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah's political philosophy, and arguing that Nkrumah's ideological orientation was shaped by his varied engagement with ideas throughout the Black diaspora, including in the United States.

Finally, we have a trio of book reviews that address the topic of race and health inequality. Jerry Charleston's review of Alondra Nelson's *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* (2013) examines the role of the Black Panthers in health activism in the 1970s, including their work establishing low-cost health clinics in predominately Black communities and their efforts to promote awareness of the risks of sickle cell disease, a genetic disorder that disproportionately impacts Black Americans. Abigail Ladd reviews Linda Villarosa's *Under the Skin: The Hidden Toll of Racism on American Lives and on the Health of Our Nation* (2022), a comprehensive examination of the health consequences of racism in the United States, and the drivers of persistent gaps in health outcomes between Black Americans and Americans of other races. Expanding this discussion beyond the borders of the United States,

Neha Saggi reviews Claire L. Wendland's *Partial Stories: Maternal Death from Six Angles* (2022), which explores the reasons why maternal health outcomes in Malawi remain persistently poor despite increased attention to the issue and funding for health interventions. As with the studies by Nelson and Villarosa, Saggi's discussion of Wendland's work highlights the complex ways in which discrimination and inequality are institutionalized and historically produced, leading to entrenched gaps in health and wellness that disproportionally impact Africans and people of African descent.

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"The Social Life of the Socially Dead": Gentrification and Displacement in the Five Points District of Denver, Colorado

Stephanie Bruton

ABSTRACT

The establishment of historically Black towns and districts across the United States provided African Americans a sense of agency through developing wealth, residency, and sustainable businesses. Such areas highlighted the formation of hubs of Black affluence, which grounded the economy and infrastructure of such towns and generated community morale. However, these minority communities face the threat of gentrification when external groups relocate into these distinct areas and introduce other forms of commerce. Black citizens have often been forced out of these areas into surrounding cities and must attempt to rebuild their former identities elsewhere. Such is the case with Five Points, Denver, Colorado, which began as a hub of Black social advancement and a base for transient job opportunities. Ironically, its vibrant economic base became a key contributor to its subsequent downfall. This article seeks to examine the Five Points Historical Black District through a historical lens. It presents recommendations for the current planning and redesigning of the neighborhood, pointing out factors that might further prevent former and current Black residents from regaining a sense of self, both financially and socially. The case study of Five Points also allows room for discussion concerning issues of gentrification and the subsequent social death of the Black community in Colorado. The article ends by comparing the gentrification of Five Points to the Hayti District of Durham, North Carolina to demonstrate that such patterns are present in the larger, nationwide context.

Keywords: urban redevelopment, gentrification, displacement, exclusionary zoning, transit-oriented development, Black social death

Introduction

Gentrification refers to the altering of community dynamics in which poor urban areas experience an influx of wealthy residents who renovate and change the valuation of the area. The increased property values that result aid in the displacement of former residents. In most cases, the persons being displaced are persons of color. This article examines displacement and gentrification as experienced by the African American residents of Five Points, which is a historically Black district located in Denver, Colorado. Designated as a historic district in 2002, Five Points was once a hub of African American culture and city-wide transit. However, over the course of the gentrification of the area, which began as early as the 1920s and continues into the present day, many Black-owned business and housing centers have been closed by white property owners and reconstructed. As a result, African Americans have been pushed out of the community as poor urban areas have become hubs of new buildings and housing opportunities. The displacement of long-term residents has been amplified by the zoning of several corridors

throughout Welton Street that has selectively preserved certain buildings as landmarks within the area (Bryant 2016). While landmarks such as the Nathan Savage Candy Company, Original Fire Station #3, Metropolitan Investment Company, and the Douglas Undertaking building were preserved, the Denver Community Planning and Development Department has not made attempts to create more affordable housing and business opportunities for Black residents (Bryant 2016, 17). As a result, former residents have experienced a type of social death, even as they have aimed to reclaim what was built and rebuild the communal spirit that once lay at the heart of the neighborhood. "Social death" refers to the exclusion of people or groups within a society because of changing social dynamics, which is often caused by economic vulnerability and/or racial hierarchy (Bauman 2000, 170).

Image 1. The Savage Candy Company Factory at 2162 Lawrence Street, at the intersection of 23rd and Welton Street. Source: "Historic Savage Candy Factory Building Hits Market for 5.9M," *Nakeddenver.com*, https://www.nakeddenver.com/post/historic-savage-candy-company-building-hits-market-for-5-9m.

To better examine the issue of gentrification in Five Points, Denver, Colorado due to race-based tensions caused by urban redevelopment and the creation of new jobs, in this article, I first investigate the history of Five Points over time and the subsequent mass exodus of African American families from the area. I then point to the redlining of the historical district in earlier periods and to the more recent transit-oriented development as causes of this racialized exodus. I use the Hayti community of Durham, North Carolina as a comparator case to demonstrate that targeted commercial development and exclusionary zoning practices are engines of displacement and gentrification across contexts. Here, urban redevelopment and the creation of transportation infrastructure led to the destruction of the Hayti District as Durham's Black Wall Street, and gentrification continues to have impacts on the displacement of African Americans in the area

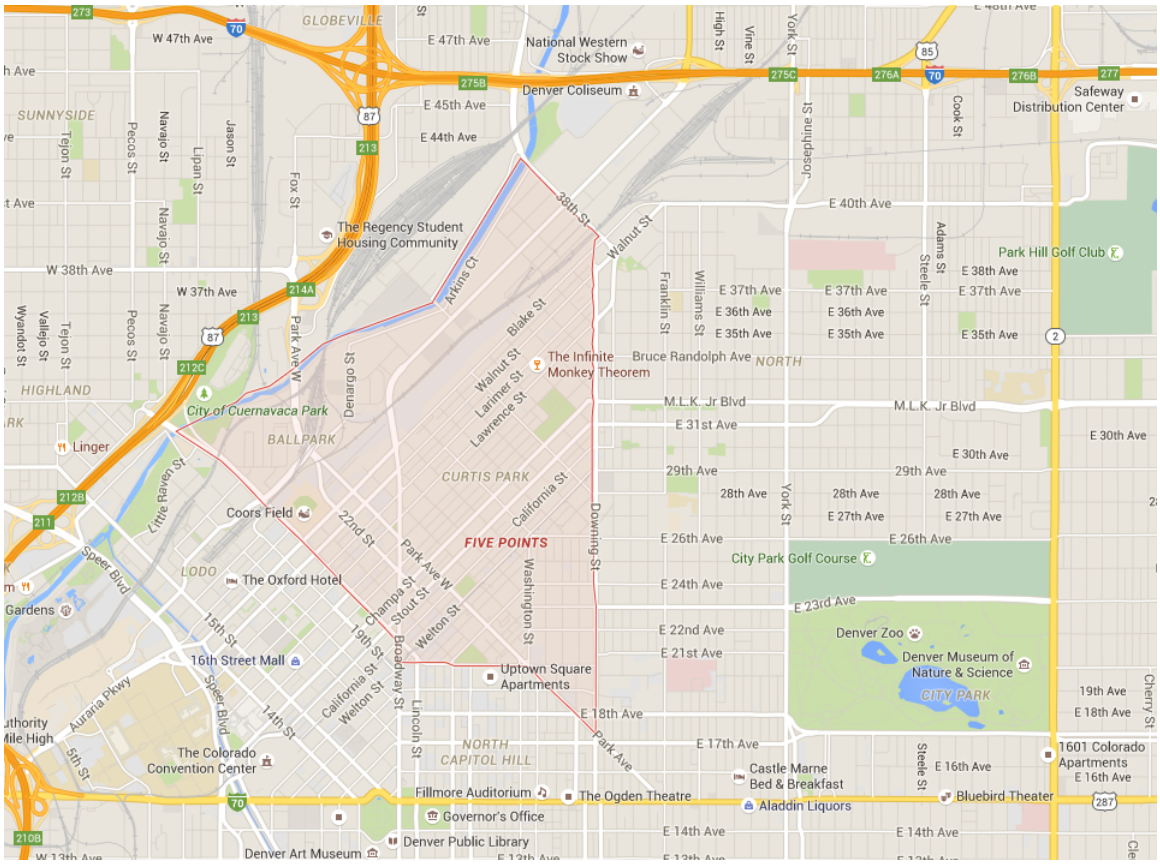
today. I then provide insight into the current social climate of Five Points, where citizens are rallying for the right to the city as changes in community dynamics due to gentrification and displacement have led to a decrease in affordable housing. Presenting these cases of racialized displacement through the mechanisms of urban redevelopment and gentrification helps demonstrate how Black residents endure a "social death" as they rebuild their former social identities.

Black Utopia: History of the Neighborhood

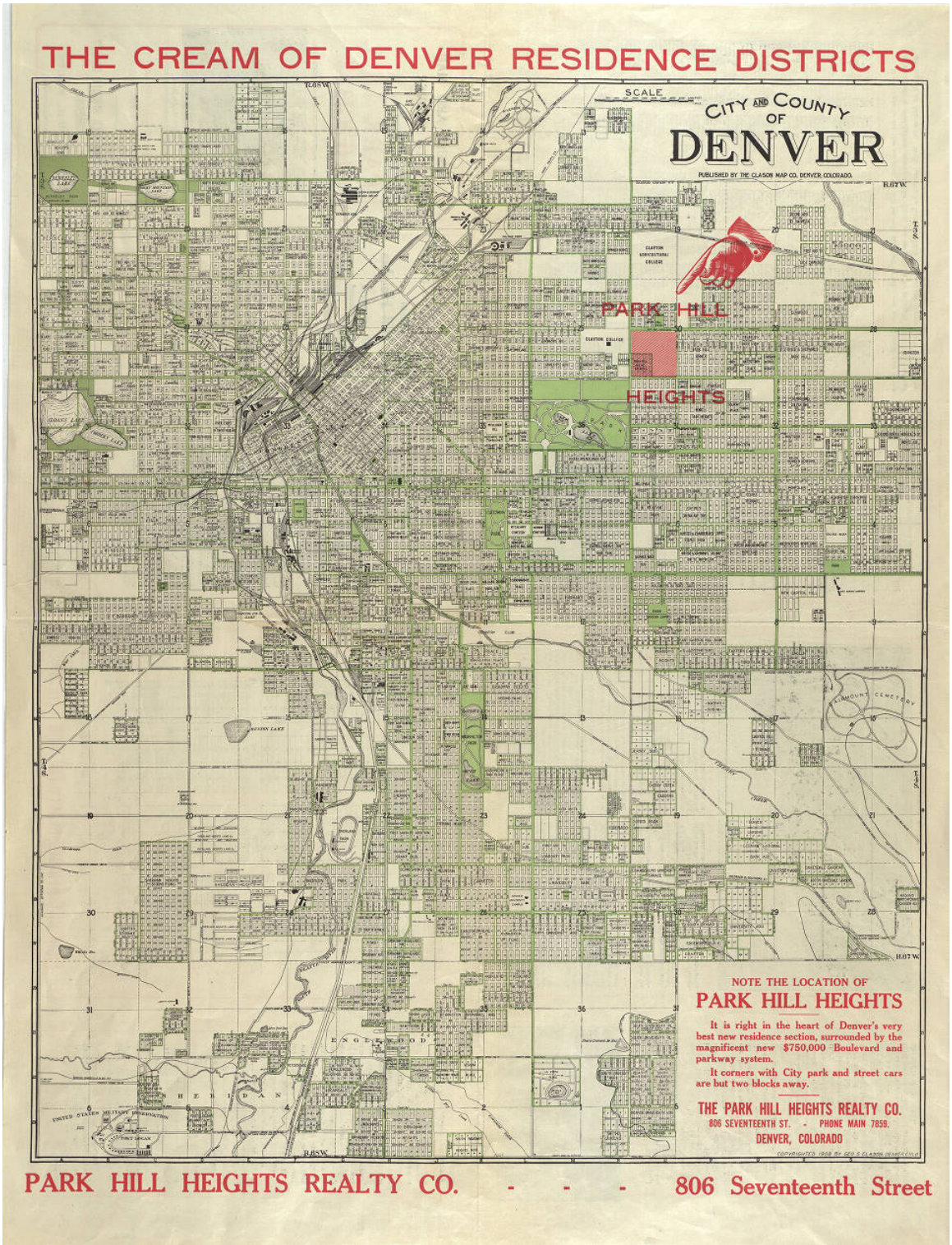
The history of the Five Points neighborhood of Denver, Colorado dates back to the 1870s. It was originally known for its interconnected transit hubs that helped citizens navigate 27th Street, Welton Street, 26th Avenue, and Washington Street. The Five Points neighborhood was originally occupied by white residents, and the surrounding areas were densely comprised of small businesses and large residential properties. This complex spatial pattern was the result of the construction of the Denver Horse Railroad Company, which began using street railcars as early as 1871 (Bryant 2016). Following the construction and success of the Denver Horse Railroad Company, the population of Five Points rose to 35,629 persons, which was a significant increase from the roughly 4,700 residents three decades prior (Duran 2019, 21–23). Scholar Genene L. Duran explains changing residential patterns around Five Points over time and asserts that:

> Transit-oriented development was born as multiple businesses began to be built along the rail line. This contributed to a significant number of white community members vacating the neighborhood for nicer, more affluent communities and an influx of African Americans moving to the more modest Five Points neighborhood over the next two decades (2019, 19).

Over time, white former residents of Five Points started venturing into areas such as Capitol Hill and Park Hill. By 1930, over 90 percent of Denver's Black population resided in the Five Points community (Duran 2019, 20). The community would later be nicknamed the "Harlem of the West"; it was a site of recreation for African American men seeking rehabilitation after World War II and would become a popular venue spot for jazz musicians such as Louis Armstrong and Miles Davis.



Map 1. Five Points historic district. Source: "The 'Harlem of the West': Denver's Five Points," *First Coast News*, August 8, 2015, https://www.firstcoastnews.com/article/features/the-harlem-of-the-west-denvers-five-points/73-129148311.



Map 2. Park Hill community in Five Points, Denver, Colorado in 1908. Source: Denver Public Library Special Collections, [CG4314.D4 1908.C55a], https://digital.denverlibrary.org/digital/collection/p15330coll5/id/924/.

Between 1930 and 1953, Five Points also became home to historical Black landmarks such as the Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library and the Black American West Museum, which would host the annual Black Arts Festival as well as Juneteenth celebrations. However, property values began to decline in response to municipal neglect caused by exclusionary zoning practices; eventually, the Black population of Five Points decreased as wealthier newcomers bought into the neighborhood (Hansen 2007). Laws for fair and equal housing under the Federal Housing Authority did not appear in Denver until the mid-1960s. However, even following these equal housing laws, African American residents were steered away by real estate agents who engaged in "bank redlining." Redlining in this context refers to the practice of "refusing to give mortgages to African Americans or extracting unusually severe terms from them with subprime loans" (Rothstein 2017, 5). Under policies of redlining, real estate agents began designating certain areas as being appropriate for Black settlement. Real estate maps demarcated with a red line were used by mortgage lenders in practice to indicate the areas for which African Americans and certain other racialized populations should be refused loans for housing. These designated areas were often rampant with crime, situated well below the poverty line, and positioned in localities with limited job opportunities and access to features such as intercity transit. As a result of these exclusionary zoning practices, white residents in areas like Capitol Hill and Park Hill were able to expand their neighborhoods as they were able to buy out and flip properties in Five Points, and "by 1974, the Black population in Five Points was 8,700, which was significantly lower than the 32,000 people who resided there in 1959" (Duran 2019, 22). Due to this population shift, property values decreased in Five Points as the conditions of the homes surrounding the area improved but not those within the historical district. In turn, this caused home prices to increase in the area.

Given the disparity in home values between Five Points and its surrounding areas, discussions on the redevelopment of Five Points emerged in subsequent years. The Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA) further hastened the displacement of Black citizens when the Regional Transportation District began the development of a light railroad system, with the construction being completed in 1994 (Duran 2019, 22–23). Between the initial formation of DURA in 1958 and the completion of the light rail system, Black residents were actively discouraged by white land proprietors from moving into surrounding areas such as Highlands, Montclair, Park Hill, and Berkeley via the buying and flipping of new properties in these areas, with realtors often refusing to assist Black residents in purchasing these homes. The influx of white residents into the district shifted the socioeconomic outlook of the area. This has been seen in drastic increases in home valuation and a lack of Black representation in the community. The Piton Foundation highlighted such discrepancies in a 2011 housing and census report that stated:

> In 2010, the average household income in the Five Points neighborhood was $35,519. In 2016, the average was $81,992. This is significant because in 2011, the number of whites who resided in the neighborhood skyrocketed to 56.95%, which was almost 4% greater than the population of whites in the entire Denver metropolitan area. As of 2016, only 12.76% of the population within the historically Black Five Points neighborhood was African American (as quoted in Duran 2019, 23).

Over time, these dynamics of gentrification and racialized displacement have meant that Black residents of Five Points have experienced what I think of as a quintessential "social death" penalty.

***Persona Non Grata*: "Social Death"**

Social death theory helps us think about the ways in which the people of Five Points, Denver, Colorado have had to build sociocultural enclaves to combat mistreatment. Social death is an analytic and descriptive term used by scholars to encompass "the ways in which someone is treated as if they were dead or nonexistent. Social death is distinguished from biological or physical death" (Borgstrom 2016, 5). While originally used to understand slavery and the Holocaust by historians, Zygmunt Bauman (2000) extended his usage of the term to describe modes of social segregation and a loss of social connectedness through a loss of communal identity. Such exile can be compared to racial banishment. "Racial banishment," as theorized by Ananya Roy (2019), refers to the ways in which the state perpetuates violence against racialized communities. Roy posits that,

> Banishment is entangled with processes of regulation, segregation and expropriation and it is embedded in the legal geographies of settler-colonialism and racial separation. It often entails "civil death" and indeed even social death. Banishment shifts our attention from displacement to dispossession, especially the dispossession of personhood which underpins racial capitalism (2019, 227).

In the case of Five Points, displacement and gentrification were compounded by an increase in white business owners and increased access to commuter rail stations; as a result, low-income Black residents were unable to remain within the community. However, white home and business owners did not experience these same changes. Duran explains the linkages between neighborhood change, gentrification, and public services, emphasizing that race intersects these changes:

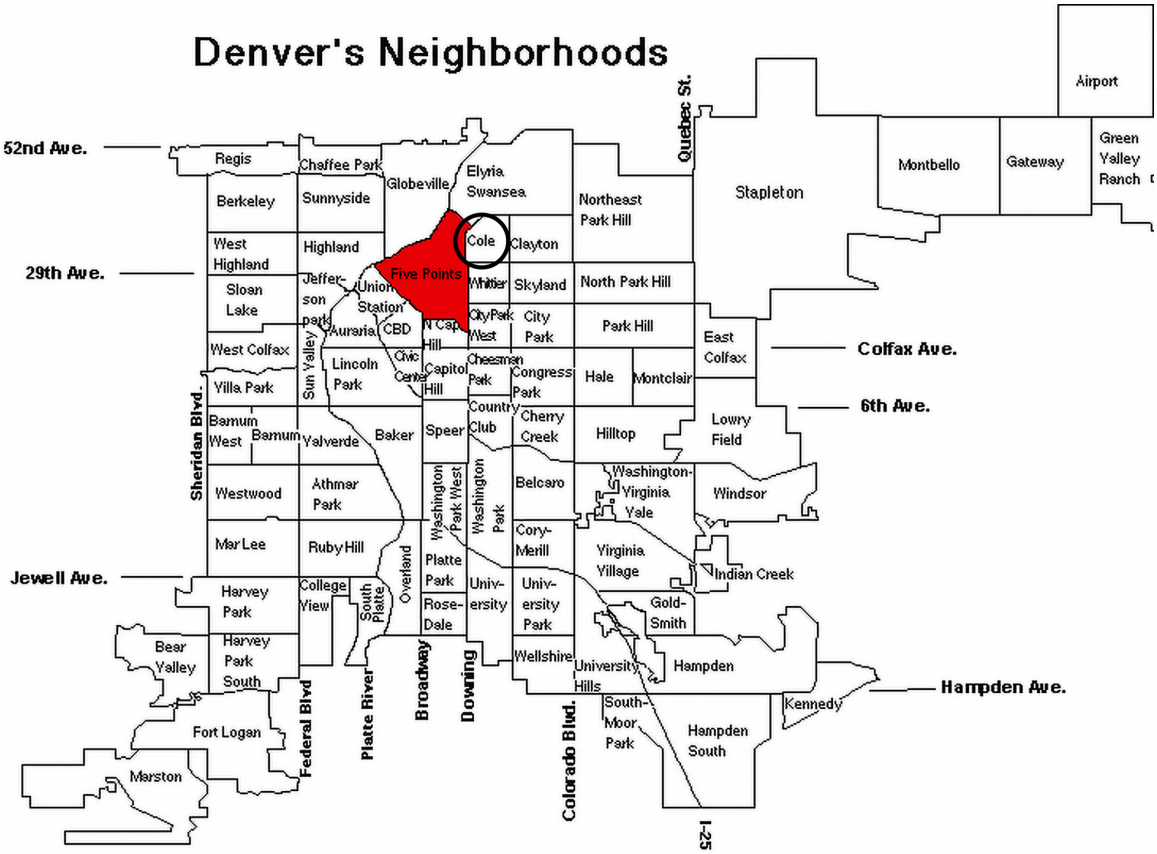
> Community members feel a sense of helplessness over changes being implemented within their neighborhood and those yet to be displaced have expressed concerns about having to leave their current neighborhood, and that they will not find affordable homes with the same quality of living that includes support from other minorities, acceptance, and respect, as well as the access to train/rail stations they have in their existing communities (2019, 51).

Amidst gentrification, Black residents were provided no alternatives to offset the new housing costs in Five Points, which decreased their social capital and means to remain. For Black residents such as those in Five Points, social death hence serves as an intersectional lens to help explain the multifaceted process of losing one's social identity. Such ostracism manifests both physically and psychologically, with independent social structures developing out of the need to combat gentrification.

To better understand the effects of gentrification and displacement on the Black population within Five Points, I will examine studies conducted with members of the town between its period of prominence (1930s to 1970s) and its rapid decline (which began in the late 1960s and continued into the 1980s). Qualitative interviews conducted in these studies have proved useful in demonstrating the factors linked to the displacement of long-term residents in the Black community. For her thesis "Psychopathology of the Insomniac American Nightmare," Tiffany Tasker interviewed community members of Five Points from January 2020 to early January 2021. She split the interviews between policymakers, business owners, and former residents who had moved out of the area. Many Black community members left following the expansion of job

opportunities, which were often not accessible to people of color, and the mass flow of white residents into the area. Issues of inadequate educational opportunities and struggles with law enforcement arose as Black residents moved into areas surrounding Five Points.

Using the etic ethnographic approach to gain familiarity with the areas in and surrounding Five Points before and during her study, Tasker (2021) asked participants to define gentrification, detail what this looks like in neighborhoods (specifically Black neighborhoods), explain their opinion as to whether Five Points had become gentrified, and elaborate on the benefits of gentrification, if any. Using the etic perspective enabled Tasker to get to residents' views on the physical characteristics of neighborhood level change and allowed for a holistic review of the information provided. Two of Tasker's interviews deserve further examination here: interviews with Dr. Lisa Calderon and Brother Jeff Fard. Dr. Calderon grew up on Cole Avenue, which is adjacent to Five Points from the east.



Map 3. Five Points Historical District, with Cole Avenue circled. Source: Encyclopedia Staff, "Five Points," Colorado Encyclopedia, last modified November 2, 2022, https://colorado encyclopedia.org/article/five-points.

In discussing gentrification, the question of what displacement is, and how gentrification affects the economic prospects in the Black community, Dr. Calderon answered:

> Black economic infrastructure was created out of necessity for Black folks to be able to support themselves and their families. And part of that economy included folks who were also pushed out of other areas such as you know immigrant people and poor folks. Having

> that economic, cultural, and racial legacy of self-sufficiency and economic empowerment, you know, is something that we should have preserved and expanded. But instead, as a result of government policies, both on the local and national levels we were essentially, you know, pushed out and then redlined out of other communities and what that did was that destabilized us for generations (Tasker 2021, 139).

The businesses that previously made up Five Points were a testament to a Black legacy of self-sufficiency and interdependence in the community. The result of white residents buying up properties and homes to flip was the impoverishment of Black residents who had previously owned businesses and homes within Five Points and its surrounding areas. The result has been financial downfall and cultural devastation within the community. Calderon later explained her perspectives on the problem of gentrification as well as the benefits it may provide the community. Gentrification negatively affects those currently living in the area. However, Calderon noted that the benefit of this is that spotlights are placed on these areas as hubs of interest, emphasizing the racialized dynamics of attention to "up and coming" gentrified neighborhoods (Tasker 2021).

I now turn to Tasker's second interview of interest, with Brother Jeff Fard, the founder and executive director of "Brother Jeff's Cultural Center" in Historic Five Points. Fard grew up in two homes: his mother's home in Park Hill and his grandparents' home in Five Points. When asked what gentrification was, he instead described how it looked in a neighborhood. He gave an overview of Denver, Colorado and juxtaposed Five Points as a "photo finish" of urban renewal. His usage of the terminology "photo finish" reflects the changes in the community from its previous structure to its current one, which sees the exclusion of African Americans through means of gentrification. In narratives and photographs of the area, Five Points is portrayed as a successful case of redevelopment amidst urban decay. However, Ford described gentrification as a form of class warfare. His answer to the question posed by Dr. Calderon equates gentrification with colonization:

> What you see in historic Five Points is the colonization of a community that is largely hailed as an asset to investors that are not in any way connected to Colorado, except through their investments. And how does that impact Black folks? Well, it impacts us because when you look at the policies that generate the, the investment of gentrification, then you start looking into property ownership. And when you think about property ownership, you will see that it was just in recent years that Black people across the nation have the largest loss of assets in terms of their equity, home equity in the, in our entire history of being here in America. So, with that being said, how does it look for Black folks in general as a mask, it looks like our property has been turned over through nefarious means (Tasker 2021, 177).

This response navigates the question of community benefit and answers the question of how gentrification looks in a neighborhood such as Five Points. Both interviewees acknowledged that displacement and financial constraint have led to a decrease in the Black community and its social capital in Five Points. This reasserts that social death, as experienced by the Black community, includes an element of spatial and social ostracism from the wider area that diminishes both their self and community identity. Tasker's interviews highlight that these same practices have engendered the downfall of other historically Black spaces, and it is to a comparative case that I now turn.

Exclusion Elsewhere: Hayti, Durham, North Carolina

The gentrification of Five Points and displacement of its African American residents share parallels with various urban renewal projects that have resulted in the destruction of historically Black settlements. One example of this is the Hayti neighborhood of Durham, North Carolina.

Hayti appears in North Carolina historical records as early as the 1880s, at which time the name "Haiti" and its multiple variants were often associated with Black settlements outside of the broader Caribbean. W.E.B. Du Bois referred to the area as the "Black business Mecca of the South" and would further link Black affluence to the blossoming of historically Black towns and hubs of commerce (as quoted in Vann 1999, 7). At its peak, Hayti consisted of over two hundred African American owned and operated businesses that took up the majority of Fayetteville Street, Pettigrew Road, and Pine Street (each of which shared a border with the Hayti neighborhood), and it was formerly regarded as the Black Wall Street (Vann 1999).

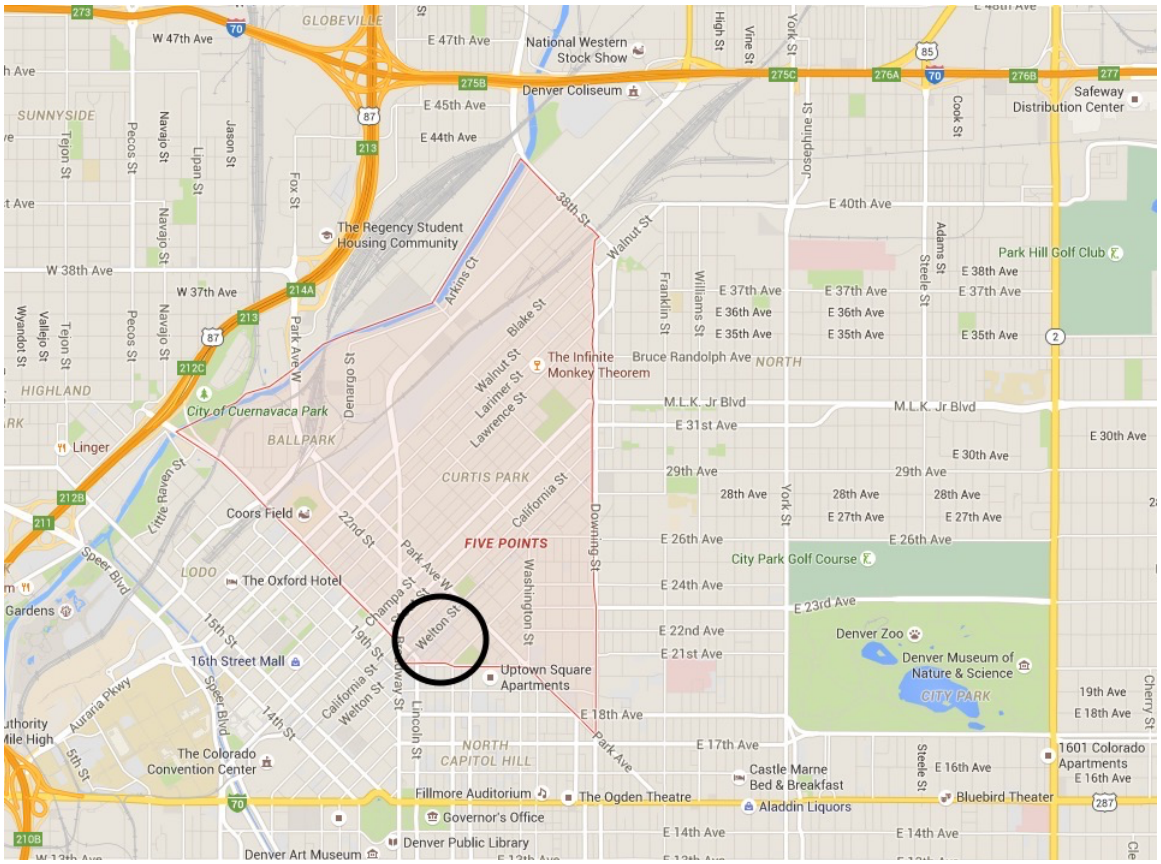
Following the US Housing Act of 1949, Hayti became a space of interest for developing North Carolina's Highway 147. The area was targeted for the initial mapping of the Durham Freeway, the construction for which started in 1950 and which was referred to as the "R-17 Project" (Ehrsam 2010, 11). Four renewal bonds for city development and expansion were voted upon by the North Carolina General Assembly and the Durham Redevelopment Commission. All four bonds mentioned the necessity of preserving Hayti and extending the community in a way that promoted the welfare of small and minority owned businesses, and the approval of the first bond in 1957 was based on the premise that "Hayti will be developed in the best interests of the citizens of Durham in general" (Ehrsam 2010, 7). However, a lack of financing for the preservation of the community and the destruction of public housing units forced many Black business owners out of the Hayti district, as it was determined that preserving and restoring the neighborhood would cost more than the construction of Highway 147.

Recent efforts to address the damage to the Hayti neighborhood caused by the construction of the Durham Freeway have failed, as private investors have succeeded in receiving funding and approval from Durham City. For example, parts of the area have recently been rezoned to build shopping centers. In the 2006 article "Project in Hayti Gets Go Ahead: The Durham Council Backs Rezoning for a Plan that Divided the Black Community," social humanities writer Michael Biesecker discusses local developer Andy Rothschild's plans to build a $130 million center featuring new retail shops, restaurants, condos, and offices in the heart of Downtown Durham. Biesecker recounts that the approval was a contentious process as many residents of the area compared the new plans to the destruction of Hayti to construct Highway 147 decades ago. Following a longstanding battle for approval with the Durham City Council, Rothschild acquired 9.6 acres of land to start the construction of his shopping center. Describing the emotions of long-term residents and apparent concessions made by the developers, Biesecker writes,

> The site that Rothschild plans to raze is currently occupied by the downtrodden Heritage Square Shopping Center, a one-story strip mall just off the Durham Freeway. But the land under the shopping center was once the heart of the Hayti district that flourished under segregation. It is sacred ground to many of Durham's black residents. Rothschild tried to soothe the concerns by promising to include public art, plaques and other features that honored Hayti's heritage at his new development. He also promised to hire minority workers during construction, lease space to Black-owned firms and give any of the businesses displaced by the demolition of the old shopping center the opportunity to move into the new development (2006, 2).

However, construction of Rothchild's shopping mall has not begun nor have the citizens of Hayti been provided any relief efforts needed as a result of the demolition of the old Heritage Square Center.

The redevelopment of Hayti and Five Points demonstrates the links between urban redevelopment, gentrification, and displacement across contexts. In late 2018, The Flyfisher Group spent approximately $12 million to buy eleven buildings along a two-block section of Welton Street, which borders Five Points (O'Neill 2022). However, small business owners in the area are now suing Flyfisher CEO Matthew Burkett, as his leasing policies are leaving them penniless (O'Neill 2022). Burkett has retaliated against these small business owners and filed lawsuits against them, as many were unable to pay him because of last-minute lease terminations and the frequent relocation of these businesses.



Map 4. Five Points Historic district, with Welton Street circled as a point of interest. Source: "The 'Harlem of the West': Denver's Five Points," *First Coast News*, August 8, 2015, https://www.firstcoastnews.com/article/features/the-harlem-of-the-west-denvers-five-points/73-129148311.

In addition to commercial redevelopment, the housing crisis in Five Points has also been addressed inadequately. The successful completion of Welton Park in 2016 aided former residents in moving back into the area. Welton Park is a 223-unit family housing project, in which 212 units are offered to households earning up to 60 percent of the area's average median income, with the remaining 11 designated for those earning up to 30 percent of that income. The project cost approximately $40 million, with the bulk of it being financed through low-income

housing tax equity credits, which is an option commonly used by private investment brokers to reduce their own tax costs (HUD User 2018). However, following the completion of the project in 2016, city officials put a temporary ban on selling land for housing, as labor shortages and construction costs had left tenants unable to keep up with their payments and brokers were uninterested in taking such risks (HUD User 2018). In 2020, the Denver Board of Adjustment for Zoning rejected plans to erect affordable housing units in a series of empty buildings along 29th Avenue, which is adjacent to Welton Street. In 2022, Pastors Eddie and Robert Woolfolk bought this space, which will be turned into a complex called the Charity House (Hernandez 2022). The Charity House will be a 36-unit housing complex made especially available to residents living well below the poverty line. This proposal was initially met with much scrutiny by lawmakers, as the land had been selected for a plan to build more shopping centers. However, after the developers revealed their plans to also renovate the area, lawmakers approved of the plan (Hernandez 2022).

Comparatively speaking, in both the case of Five Points and the ongoing fight for the redevelopment of Hayti, private investors and lawmakers are neglecting the needs of those directly affected by urban renewal. Instead, lessons can be taken from these two cases in terms of recommending the prioritization of affordable housing across contexts. The importance of quality public housing in addressing the crisis of displacement is critical here. As Richard Rothstein demonstrates in his 2017 study of racial segregation and housing in the United States, *The Color of Law*, public housing in the country has segregated and marginalized just as much as it has helped. Rothstein argues that affordable housing's original purpose was to provide shelter to those unable to find housing due to a lack of availability, often on a racialized basis. He states that public housing efforts were not designed to aid Black individuals, but rather to segregate them into areas less structured and far more densely populated than those lived in by their white counterparts. Rothstein asserts that,

> without the public housing, tens of thousands of African Americans would have had to remain in tenements that were out of compliance with the most minimal municipal building and health codes. But with the segregated projects, African Americans became more removed from mainstream society than ever, packed into high-rise ghettos where community life was impossible, where access to jobs and social services was more difficult (2017, 31).

While this segregation and neglect speaks to the ghettoization of Black neighborhoods through public housing programs, Rothstein's scholarship also provides a lineage of city planning that needs to be remembered. Policy recommendations must factor in affordable housing that is sensitive to historic location and accessibility, and which addresses community life as well as access to basic needs. As seen in the cases of Welton Park and Charity House in Denver, many cities are focusing on housing residents who can afford to stay in certain areas, whereas they must instead act to house those who have limited or no housing options.

Rebuilding Black Spaces: Conclusion

The fight for the right to the neighborhood by African Americans and persons of color is deeply rooted in being able to navigate exclusionary geographical spaces where Black individuals make up an urban minority. Examples of such racialized exclusion related to redevelopment can be examined across contexts, for instance, the condition of New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. New Orleans's African American population dropped from 67 percent in 2004

to under 60 percent in 2005, whereas the white population increased from 24 percent to 30 percent during the same period (Sastry and Gregory 2014, 756). Over 100,000 Black individuals are still missing from New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. In the present moment, gentrification and targeted policies are focused on remaking certain parts of the city. This selective focus includes the renovation of white-occupied spaces and an overt disregard for Black communities affected by the hurricane's flooding, such as in the Lower Ninth Ward (Sastry and Gregory 2014, 758).

As this article has demonstrated, gentrification and racialized patterns of displacement across contexts mean that inner-city dwellers are forced to leave their homes. Zackary's work on the gentrification of Denver sums up changes in income and rental value:

> In 2012 median income in Denver had gone down more than 15% since 1997; but between 2010 and 2014 median incomes increased by 21.9%, far more than the national average. But even that was not enough to keep up with increasing real estate prices. Rents had increased by an astonishing 50% between 2011 and 2015 (2005, 86).

A decrease in income in conjunction with an increase in the cost of living means that long-term residents have no choice but to allow their homes and businesses to be bought out. There are no clear signs of these trends changing in Five Points, as homes in the area with property values in the tens of thousands at the height of its golden age are now multimillion-dollar mansions. While the building of affordable housing projects and urban redevelopment seems promising in the cases of Welton Park and the Charity House, many more such projects must emerge for Five Points and its surrounding neighborhoods to even mimic a fraction of what once lay there.

As gentrification disproportionately affects people of color, historically Black communities such as Five Points have experienced an overall decrease in their quality of life as a result of struggling to remain in and around the area. Five Points's Black population has experienced a lapse in community vibrancy, and this has led to a social death that is only now being addressed. As shown in the legacy of Hayti in Durham, North Carolina, Black "representational spaces" (Mitchell 1995, 115) are negatively affected by capitalistic refurbishment. Black residents thus become a form of social currency; the areas they have enhanced through their building of place and community are able to thrive because of their initial inputs, even as Black long-term residents can no longer stay. Providing Denver's former Black residents of Five Points with affordable housing may provide a temporary solution to the problem of gentrification, but it does not restore the social capital and lineage of success they previously built. To ensure that cases like that of Five Points are handled effectively, policymakers must call for an end to the privatization of historical neighborhoods and enact ordinances that protect not only the buildings within these urban spaces, but also those who inhabit these districts.

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Black Dollar, Mixed City: A Comparative Analysis of Durham, North Carolina's "Black Wall Street" and the Political Philosophy of Booker T. Washington

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ABSTRACT

In the early twentieth century, Booker T. Washington stood as one of the foremost thinkers on the state of Black America. His influence on the perception of Black advancement came at a period that saw the financial burgeoning of numerous Black neighborhoods and communities across the country. Durham, North Carolina's Hayti community, often referred to as "Black Wall Street," stands as a unique case in the larger development of Black communities across the country due to its length of existence and relatively peaceful relationship with the city's white establishment. This article seeks to explore what enabled Hayti to play host to sustained development, by analyzing population metrics, media accounts of the community's development, and biographical information about business leaders of the period. The article also examines the relationship between white benevolence and Black progress. Through exploring how the changing political landscape of North Carolina may have guided actions by groups like the Duke family, this article offers a critical perspective of the role white leaders had in the community's expansion. Further, Hayti will be used as a site to test the economic theories posited by Washington. As Washington's public politics largely called for investment into manual labor education to spur Black progress, how might Hayti have pushed back against efforts to limit engagement with skilled labor?

Keywords: Booker T. Washington, Black Wall Street, Duke, development, Durham

Introduction

At the dawn of the 1900s, Black Americans stood at a crossroads between the unfulfilled promises made to them in the preceding century and the uncertainty of true equality in the future. Reconstruction, the South's post-Civil War era of rebuilding and progress toward civic inclusion of the newly freed class of Americans, effectively came to a standstill following the Hayes-Tillman Compromise of 1877. The removal of federal troops from the South marked the end of the former Confederate States' accountability for enforcing laws aimed at reconfiguring the existing social order. As Black Americans began to formulate ideas aimed at progress within a markedly more apathetic government structure and amid the imposition of de jure segregation in many facets of public life, a new crop of academics arose. Among these thought leaders was Booker T. Washington. Himself a former slave, Washington's personal and professional successes granted him a platform to provide his interpretation of a path toward equality for Black people. At the same time as Washington hit peak popularity, a class of "Black Wall Streets" sprung up across the country, with some estimates counting at least eight successful Black

communities across the country in the first thirty years of the century (A. Moore 2013). Notable among these was the Hayti neighborhood of Durham, North Carolina, which possessed the nation's largest Black-owned business at the time and a historically Black college (HBCU), as well as a relationship between Black and white residents noted for its relative tranquility. Considering the synchronicity of the rise of Durham's Black Wall Street and the peak of Booker T. Washington's prominence as a thought leader, an opportunity arises to use the former as a case study for the principles of the latter.

Through an analysis of the people and institutions that led to the rise of Durham's Hayti neighborhood/Black Wall Street during the early twentieth century, the feasibility of solutions to the "race problem" offered by Booker T. Washington, namely his belief that labor-focused economic growth would lead to an increase in Black political rights, can be tested. This article seeks to place the rise of Black Wall Street within the sociopolitical context of the early twentieth century, and to contrast the region's ideological underpinnings with those of the period's leading Black intellects. Further, through problematizing the area's reputation of having a "moderate" racial dynamic, a critical view of white benevolence can be formed.

Contextual Analysis of Booker T. Washington and Durham

The end of Reconstruction felt to many as though the federal government had opened a door to advancement simply to close it. In the wake of the Civil War, Black Americans saw the passage of federal legislation as directly aimed at their political and economic betterment. "Reconstruction Amendments" enacted the abolition of slavery, Black citizenship, and Black male suffrage, all within a five-year period. These developments sparked a dramatic increase in Black political power, with the bloc now empowered to participate in the election of local, state, and federal leaders. The brevity of this period of support created an environment that left Black Americans struggling to find their place in a social order rife with institutionalized prejudice and social injustices.

Under the backdrop of a changing America, Booker T. Washington emerged as one of the foremost theorists on the progression of the Black race. A clear link exists between his upbringing and his politics, as his emphasis on hard work aligns with his childhood under slavery and Jim Crow. Throughout his early years, physical labor played a large part in his life, as his race relegated him to service occupations. Relatedly, much of his educational experience was directly tied to service. Some of his earliest schooling came through the indulgence of a white woman, in whose house he served as a domestic, and his college experience at Hampton featured a curriculum rooted in the teaching of industrial skills (J. Moore 2003, xvi). This confluence of life experiences guided him toward a career in education, a role permitting him access to spheres of influence rarely entered by Black men. Hampton's then president recommended that Washington run the Tuskegee Institute, a new school in Alabama modeled after his alma mater, allowing him to play out his developing racial doctrine in a Southern town ripe for such experimentation.

Key to Washington's message was a prioritization of technical training and productive labor over advocacy for Black political equality. His 1895 address to the Atlanta Exposition has proven to be his most notable speech and its text is most representative of his evolving philosophy. Speaking to a largely white audience, he argued that "progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing" (1895). From this speech two primary themes can be extracted to roughly summarize his ideology: prioritization of economic progress over political progress, and

a correlation between Black financial success and the creation of positive relations with whites. Explicitly, his words spoke to the need for any new class of citizen to establish some form of stability as it entered society. Implicitly, they can be read as advocating for a compromise that would have Black Americans settle for social discrimination as a means to get to the ultimate goals of economic and political empowerment. This notion of segregation as a condition that needed to be accepted is perhaps most explicit in his statement that Blacks and whites could be "separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress" (1895). For Washington, an embracement of manual labor was as pertinent and practical as a classical or liberal arts education. In his view, the movement for political equity following emancipation should not detract from the immediate economic needs of the race. Further, he implied that the hard work required to create and sustain economically prosperous communities would inevitably lead to the development of positive race relations. These aspects of Washington's view of Black progress can be applied to Durham, as Hayti seemingly meets the prerequisites for a Black community that might experience the sort of gradual support from whites that he detailed in the Atlanta Address. However, his view of economic development and political progress as mutually exclusive proved controversial, as later academics ranging from W.E.B. Du Bois to William Monroe Trotter pushed back against his framing of the issue, with Du Bois (1903) dedicating a chapter of *The Souls of Black Folks* to directly addressing the philosophy of Washington on Black progress.

While Washington was beginning his education, Durham was experiencing the establishment of the first Black communities that would come to define the city in the next century. Following the Civil War, the Black population of Durham was sparse, as the highest clusters of Black people were reported in the neighboring Orange County. As the dawn of the new century came, the city experienced a steady rise in Black residents. A notable feature among many was their status as landowners. As noted in *Durham County: A History of Durham County, North Carolina*, Durham's burgeoning Black communities were anchored by "well off Blacks" from other areas of the state who purchased large plots on which their neighbors lived (Anderson 2011, 59). Many residents had been formerly enslaved at the Stagville Plantation, a nearby tobacco enterprise whose owners had ties to the Duke family. The city had played a comparatively minimal role in the Civil War effort in North Carolina, allowing for somewhat of a blank slate in terms of the formation of racial dynamics. As Durham entered the twentieth century, it emerged as one of the state's largest cities. The rapid growth led to a steady rise in the whole population during the early twentieth century. Between 1900 and 1920, Durham County's population grew by nearly 120 percent to 42,000 residents. However, the growth of other racial and ethnic groups exceeded that of the Black population. During the same two-decade period, the Black share of the population dropped by 2.1 percent, with the 13,168 Black residents in 1920 constituting 31.2 percent of Durham's population (US Census Bureau n.d.).

A factor that made the environment in Durham unique was the generally neutral relationship between Black and white residents. Many of the Black businesses operating there had received funding from white donors to support their opening costs, and while there were instances of racial animosity that boiled into violence, those were infrequent relative to other parts of the state and the country. In speaking on the impact of this racial dynamic on growth, W.E.B. Du Bois characterized it as "the greatest factor in Durham's development…the disposition of Durham to say 'Hands off—give them a chance—don't interfere'" (1912, 336). This notion of racial agreement needs to be questioned given the potentially limited segment of the white population that it applied to, and the politicization underlying the actions of both Black business leaders and

white benefactors. As Black Southerners found their politics beginning to align with some of the white elites, the opportunity arose for their relationship to act less as a show of good faith and more as an apparent avenue for ensuring the power of elites.

Black Wall Street Figures and Institutions

Among the prominent figures associated with Black Wall Street, physician Aaron McDuffie Moore is often cited as the founder of the community. Utilizing revenue from his medical practice to fund projects, he worked to shape the trajectory of Black business in Durham. Blake Hill-Saya's biography of the doctor provides insight into his upbringing and politics that aids in understanding the ideologies that underpinned economic progress in Durham during the twentieth century. Born to a well-off family involved in the turpentine and pine harvesting business, Moore's early life was marked by the type of manual labor advocated by Washington and his followers. However, their success in agriculture was not the family's only source of pride, as post-Reconstruction changes in the state and federal constitutions sparked a wave of political activism among the Moores. Both Moore's father and uncle had made history as the first Black elected officials in their respective counties, with the family holding a strong interest in Black representation within local governance (Hill-Saya 2020, 29). This foray into politics seemed directly in opposition to the Washingtonian principle of focusing on the development of manual skills and stood as one of the many ways the family diverted from Washington's theory.[1]

Education also enabled the family to stand out amongst other Black families in the area. Moore had been educated first in Sunday School, developing a passion for education that extended into his later years (Hill-Saya 2020, 35). Ultimately, his academic accomplishments led him on a professional education path that diverted him away from the careers in trade that many of his peers pursued. His career as a physician was marked by its singularity, as he stood as one of the only Black doctors in the state. This status enabled him to have not only a monopoly on the medical field, but direct access to local stakeholders. In his role as spokesperson for the city's Black population, Moore was able to utilize his credentials to advocate for the creation and funding of hospitals dedicated to serving Black patients, as Jim Crow stopped them from receiving care in other local infirmaries. Once he was firmly settled into his occupation, he began to venture into entrepreneurship, with his first investment leading to the creation of Durham's first Black pharmacy. One pharmacist, James E. Shepard, would found the National Religious Training School and Chautauqua for the Colored Race, now North Carolina Central University (Hill-Saya 2020, 89). Considering Moore's hand in much of the business happening in Durham, either through direct ownership or passive aid, his politics and behavior can be understood as somewhat emblematic of the leaders of Black Wall Street. As such, the institutions that came to most represent the Black people of Durham carried with them an implicit political lean that contradicts the theory of a strict separation between political progress and economic progress advocated by Washington.

Chief among the businesses that comprised Black Wall Street was the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company (NC Mutual). The idea for an insurance company that would primarily

[1] While Washington adopted a conservative public persona, it should be noted that certain actions in his private life aligned with the principles of his more radical contemporaries. Actions such as his cooperation in litigation seeking to end Louisiana's use of the Grandfather Clause are indicative of a care for Black political autonomy that was not always present in his rhetoric. See Smock (2006).

service the Black community proved risky, as low life expectancies and substandard health and environmental conditions made for an uncertain target market (Anderson 2011, 108). Despite this, eight leading Black businessmen came to form what became the largest Black business in America at the time. A common theme among the founders was their access to wealth by way of their primary occupations as professionals. Along with Moore, John W. Merrick was another cofounder of NC Mutual Life who served as a leader within Durham's Black business class and whose beliefs informed his financial practices. Himself a friend of Booker T. Washington, Merrick's relationship with Washington is noted as being cordial despite a marked difference in the two men's political opinions (Hill-Saya 2020, 93). In an example of the differences between the two men, Merrick explicitly called out to white sympathizers in the area to provide funding for the "Colored Fair," an event that served to display the strides Black Durhamites had made explicitly in business and education, albeit under a system that still enabled white leaders to preside over the event's proceedings (Hill-Saya 2020, 94). Considering the distinct political engagement of its founders, the business practices of NC Mutual arguably served as an outlet for the owners to bring their beliefs on progress to fruition through a large-scale financial enterprise.

In terms of NC Mutual's individual success, perhaps its largest impact was in its support of other Black institutions. Local churches, hospitals, and investment firms all received financial help from the company, with its impact eventually extending outside of North Carolina as it worked to "establish outposts in other communities across America" (McKoy 2022). Their actions outside of the scope of their formal insurance practices worked to ensure the success of Black people in facets of life outside of their direct purview. This type of self-investment fell squarely into Washingtonian principles of community investment, and worked in practice, as it did in theory, to strengthen the financial capacity of their neighborhood. However, other aspects of their philanthropic endeavors, such as their reach into areas such as classical education, seemed to be less in line with the ideological beliefs of Washington.

On the educational side, James E. Shepard, whose roots in Durham extended back to his opening of the first Black pharmacy with Moore, forged an intellectual path for the city's Black population to expand their knowledge without having to travel elsewhere in the state. Having left Durham for political office shortly after the creation of the pharmacy, Shepard returned to the city with increased political standing that granted him the insight necessary to navigate the funding process for a university. Being that Jim Crow still impacted the spaces that Black people were permitted to enter, segregationists and assimilationists arrived at different means to achieve the common end of Black-only educational institutions. As described by Hill-Saya, "Segregationists wanted Blacks to take care of their own, assimilationists wanted to improve Blacks through white-led education" (2020, 24). Schools like North Carolina Central University fit squarely in between these ideologies, as it was one of the few HBCUs founded by and for Black people, while it also provided a liberal arts education aligned with white-led thought movements of the period. The university's curriculum attracted a class of academics who favored the study of topics dismissed by Washington as taking away from the lessons gleaned from participation in technical training.

A full discussion of the sociopolitical context of Durham in the early 1900s requires a consideration of the role the Duke family played in both local and state happenings. Having amassed a tobacco fortune that placed them among the wealthiest clans in the South, the Dukes played a large role in the maintenance of a white philanthropic presence in Durham throughout the early twentieth century. As explained in Robert Durden's biographical account of the family, their relationship with Blacks in the region can be understood as "paternalistic and benevolent,"

in line with the common attitudes of the elite white class of Southerners (1987, 100). With their dollars, the Duke family fit into the larger tendency of elite whites to donate to Black causes under the assumption that a betterment of the race was necessary, as increasing equality would ultimately make interracial interaction inevitable. The community's initial financial contact with the family can be traced to the opening of Lincoln Hospital in 1901. Merrick's barbershop had Washington Duke as a daily client, allowing the two to develop a rapport that allowed Merrick, Aaron McDuffie Moore, and Stanford Warren to approach Duke about the dire medical situation within the Black community. Duke and his sons subsequently donated $8550 for the construction of Lincoln Hospital in what was the first of a series of philanthropic donations to the Black area of Durham (Vann 2017).

The family's regular support of Black business throughout the city garnered attention that extended beyond the Durham and North Carolina media. Booker T. Washington's 1903 visit to Duke University was marked by a speech that venerated white benevolence, with Washington explicitly naming members of the town's elite: "particularly Carr and Washington Duke, who by their generosity to Black endeavors—a hospital, churches, and schools—and their humane employment policies had tried to foster a harmonious interracial climate" (Anderson 2011, 219).

While the donations can be viewed as support of the development of Black business capacity, the political context behind these actions worked to complicate the relationship between Blacks and the Duke family. The family's members were noted Republicans during the post-emancipation period, a party affiliation similar to that of many Black Southerners, but distinctly different from the majority of southern whites (Durden 1987, 100). Given the creation of a new voting bloc of Black men following the passage of the 15th Amendment of the Constitution in 1870 (US National Archives n.d.), the lines between benevolence and payments for political cooperation became blurred. Further, considering the role that public white elite support had in forming Durham's "race-neutral" image, there should be acknowledgment of philanthropy's use as a bargaining tool instead of a means of endorsement. The adoption of this critical perspective serves to fundamentally disrupt themes of neutrality frequently associated with race relations in the city by framing white elite support of Hayti as an organizing strategy to protect self-interests.

Comparison of Hayti and the Greenwood District of Tulsa, Oklahoma

At its commercial peak, Hayti stood as one of a handful of Black Wall Streets across the country. Dotted throughout the East Coast were Black communities that had been able to create a space of self-efficiency, with social and financial environments that insulated them from white financial dependence. While these areas were able to sustain themselves for extended periods of time, a common theme of their existence was their demise at the hands of white violence. Through both physical and legislative actions, these areas were destroyed, leaving in their wake a scarcity of documentation concerning their historical presence. Durham was unique for reasons not limited to its longevity, with some sources not marking the true end of its Black Wall Street until 1970 (Pashankar 2022). This stands in stark contrast to its peers, which often saw their end within decades of their start. Tulsa, an Oklahoma city home to its own Black Wall Street, saw its Greenwood community decimated in a notorious act of racial violence.

For both Tulsa and Durham, the economic foundation of their Black communities can be attributed in part to professional-class Blacks who were able to invest in the first businesses in the area. Whereas Durham had NC Mutual and Moore's practice, Tulsa had the hospitality business launched by O.W. Gurley and medical practices run by educated Black people who had returned to the region after their schooling elsewhere (Gara 2021). The two cities also had

similar populations of around twenty thousand people. Further, there was a comparable percentage of Black residents in both areas, with Tulsa's ten thousand Black residents nearing Durham's twelve thousand in 1920. Nationally, the two cities had both been cited by Booker T. Washington as having "Black Wall Streets" and subsequently as exemplary cases of Black economic investment. With the aforementioned similarities held between them, an analysis of where the cities differed can provide insight into how one was able to continue into the later part of the century, while the other met a racially motivated demise.

A key point of divergence between the two communities of Hayti and Greenwood was the physical growth rate that accompanied the geographic expansion of the Black community in Tulsa. While there is evidence of Black businesses existing outside of Hayti in Durham, the economic growth did little to affect the demographic configuration of the city. The opposite was true in Tulsa, as Greenwood's peak coincided with the beginning of the Great Migration of Blacks from the South to more northern and western states. As noted in *The Destruction of Black Wall Street*, Tulsa's Black population had seen steady growth even as the number of Black people in Oklahoma began to decrease (Messer, Shriver, and Adams 2018, 791). While the proportion of Black Oklahomans had dropped from 8.3 percent to 7.3 percent between 1910 and 1920, the percentage of Black residents in Tulsa increased from 10.8 percent to 12.3 percent in the same time period (Messer, Shriver, and Adams 2018, 791). These numbers constituted a Black community of over ten thousand people immediately before the region's destruction.

The economic success of Greenwood was almost certainly a catalyst for movement, as the city presented opportunities not afforded to African Americans in most other areas of the country. This aspect of the community can be read as an exacerbating factor concerning existing white anxieties about the implications of an increase in Black economic stability. In contrast, it can be said that a factor that helped Durham's Black Wall Street avoid an end similar to Tulsa's was the relatively stable racial makeup of the city. Maintenance of the demographic status quo could have worked to mitigate existing hostilities, forestalling any outbreak of violence.

Contrasting Hayti with the Principles of Washington

In comparing the environment of Hayti to the theories of progress espoused by Washington, a few incongruities emerge between the leader's thinking and the reality of Durham. One of the most visible gaps concerns Washington's belief in economic success enabling a shift in white opinion toward racial equality. In the most optimistic analysis of Durham's social and racial dynamics, the lack of malleability of the city's race binary muddies Washington's argument, but does not disprove it entirely. The relatively "hands off" approach from the broader white society in Durham affirms one view Washington held of the South. In describing how ideal interactions between Blacks and whites in the South at the time should occur, Washington took a symbiotic view, citing a "solidarity of interests" in revitalizing the region after its wartime destruction (Spencer 1955, 92). This paradoxical relationship was predicated on the belief that an adjustment to post-war conditions required mutual progression, or simply, the belief in the "welfare of one being the welfare of another" (Spencer 1955, 92). Durham falls squarely in the group of southern cities whose histories began largely after the end of the Civil War. This aspect of newness typically creates an area more conducive to the type of white ambivalence present in Durham, one that, in the case of Durham, allowed two racial communities to exist with little disruption in comparison to similar cities.

A similarly positive reading of the monetary impact of the Duke family and other white philanthropists could characterize their actions as manifestations of white society's gradual

support of the rights of Blacks to pursue business equally. However, it is within this dynamic that cracks in Washington's argument begin to show. For all of their private acknowledgments of the achievements in Hayti, there was little to be said by these donors publicly on the presence of racial hostility in the area. Recent academics have worked to complicate the perceived neutrality in Durham by re-characterizing the racial dynamic in the city. As stated by Anderson, Durham's racial politics of the period can be classified as "superficially polite and calculated to allay fear and anger on both sides" (2011, 137). Under this understanding, Hayti's success can be seen as existing at the intersection of Black self-sufficiency and white comfort. Due to the generations-long head start that successful white businessmen had in terms of accruement of capital, none of the businesses that comprised Black Wall Street could pose a feasible threat to their profits. Further, the presence of a strict racial binary in the city that kept the two groups separate worked to ensure that little overlap existed in the target markets of Black and white business, doing even more to lessen the threat of competition. With this in mind, local white support could arguably be classified as less of a means to create equity and more as a method to ensure social and political segregation.

Further questioning of Washington's argument for a causal link between Black economic stability and white acceptance can be proposed by considering the reaction of working-class whites to the evolution of Black Wall Street. The most apparent display of this growing distaste is the 1902 arson by disgruntled whites at the NC Mutual Life headquarters. With the reasoning for the fire cited as the company "daring to have the tallest building downtown," it is apparent that the benevolence shown by the Dukes and other wealthy whites was not a universal sentiment (McKoy 2022). Such events work to complicate the view of Durham as racially harmonious; instead, they support the idea that white neutrality or helpfulness came mainly from the upper class, who had no fear of Black Wall Street as a threat to their class. In this paradox a correction can be seen, specifically in the prevailing image of whites as "hands-off" being cast on to the city, exposing a correlation between economic growth and equal treatment that was weak at best, and nonexistent at worst (Prieto, Phipps, and McKoy 2022, 2).

Identifying white reactions as separated into two distinct groups makes room for an analysis of class missing from Washington's theory. The symbiotic relationship he advocated for can only be achieved if both parties see the other's progression as helpful to their cause. The inability to view Black economic progress as a threat should be seen as a privilege only afforded to the wealthy, as working-class anxieties saw the creation of Black economic empowerment as directly causing a reduction in their own.

A final demonstration of the lack of Black political power can be seen in the demise of Hayti itself. If we held Washington's theory of economic progress leading to more political rights to be true, it would follow that the decades of financial success on the part of Black Durhamites would have enabled Blacks to stand as a significant force in local government. However, the city's construction of roadways that broke up the community seems to contradict the notion. During the mid-twentieth century, Durham sought to address increases in population and commerce with the construction of an interstate that stretched from one end of the county to the other. Completion of the now Durham Freeway effectively spliced Hayti in an action that seems antithetical to Washington's theory of economic growth resulting in increased political power. Though the Hayti community had amassed a solid foundation of capital gains and national acclaim by the time of the road's erection, it had not collected the political clout necessary to successfully combat urban renewal.

Regarding Washington's ideas on the prioritization of manual labor, the educational development of Black Durham and the founders behind it provide evidence that focusing on non-technical skills can serve to benefit the Black community equally if not more than an emphasis on manual labor can. Nearly all of the businessmen who had the funds to contribute toward the buildup of Black business in Durham had obtained money through non-technical skills-based means. The work of Moore as a physician and Shepard as a pharmacist was what enabled their ability to expand beyond their chosen professions and begin their forays into entrepreneurship. Only Merrick, whose money came initially from barbering, can be categorized as a skilled laborer. While there were plenty of Black residents who found work in the tobacco industry and other manual fields, the appeal of Hayti did not rest on their performance of these jobs. Rather, it was the more white-collar jobs in insurance and other non-manual labor areas that were cited as contributing to the allure of the neighborhood. The confluence of these factors confirms the notion that Durham's Black Wall Street and its success existed outside of the parameters of Washington's principles, exposing the theory as an unreliable plan for Black progress.

Conclusion

The early twentieth century can be viewed as a special period in the history of Black America. Situated between two periods of massive change, it was a time of challenging social conditions that would plant seeds that would grow during the large-scale movements to come in later decades. An analysis of the figures who drove discussions of Black life and of the communities that were markedly successful allows for direct parallels to be drawn between what was said to be helpful and what was genuinely so. Durham's status as a southern city, or an up-and-coming New South town that had come into being following the Civil War, enabled it to charter a unique path forward after Reconstruction.

Among the Black Wall Streets of America, Hayti's uniqueness lies in its longevity and the relative peacefulness of its existence. Hailed as a beacon of positive race relations, the city gained national attention due to the relatively low levels of racialized violence and the public financial support of Black businesses by white elites. Given the community's growth during a period where ideological titans like Booker T. Washington—who himself praised Durham—served as racial thought leaders, the investigation into the influence of his principles on successful Black areas conducted in this article is warranted. Understanding the forces that allowed Hayti to blossom in the early 1900s presents a challenge to the notions of Black progress presented by Booker T. Washington. In Durham, what is seen through Hayti's progression is a choice by leaders to conduct business as a means to promote intracommunal betterment, as opposed to using financial expansion to accrue political favor. While some aspects of Washington's platform can be seen in Durham, by and large, the city should be understood as an illustration of the necessity of development plans based on individual context over the evocation of broad generalizations concerning progress.

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Understanding the Complexities of the Black Press in Chicago during the Interwar Years: The Influence and History of the *Chicago Defender*

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ABSTRACT

The Black press in Chicago after World War I became a builder of community and a platform for social change. Led by the *Chicago Defender* in the 1920s, the Black press pushed for the advancement of Black rights, acted as a racial watchdog, and contributed to a Black cultural revival in Chicago. The *Chicago Defender* published Black news that white papers—which often only covered incidents of Black violence—wouldn't. These positive stories helped the *Chicago Defender* redefine what it meant to be Black, giving Black communities in Chicago, and beyond, a space of their own. However, issues of the *Chicago Defender* during the interwar period predominately featured sensationalized race-associated violence as their front-page stories—even if the paper covered positive news inside. I conducted an independent review of these issues to determine the extent of the front-page sensationalism and found the prevalence of yellow journalism tactics to appeal to readers. The paper also reflected the elitist views of its editors, and it published advertisements promoting white beauty standards in its women's pages. In analyzing the *Chicago Defender*'s influence on Chicago and its role in the formation of the Black press, it is important to holistically consider its history—good and bad.

Keywords: Black press, Chicago Defender, journalism, 1920s–1930s, Chicago, racial bias

Introduction

Since its birth with *Freedom's Journal* in the mid-nineteenth century, the Black press has grown and evolved through many different iterations. There is no singular, standardized form of Black journalism. This article seeks to investigate how the Black press emerged as an entity unique from white journalism and to what extent it held influence over social movements after World War I. Is the Black press primarily a medium for journalism that was created by and for Black people? Is it a platform of social change and advocacy*?* Is it a strengthener of Black communities? Is it white journalism in blackface created only for elites? Together these questions highlight the different schools of thought among researchers on how to analyze the Black press.

This article grapples with how to define the Black press in the context of the strong Black journalism scene in Chicago during the interwar years. Through an analysis of the *Chicago Defender*, I argue that the Black press in Chicago cannot be understood through a singular focus and instead emerges as a comprehensive, complex force that ultimately forged a platform for Black people that otherwise would not exist. The *Chicago Defender* in the interwar period was an instigator for social change, a builder of Black communities, a watchdog for racial injustices, and a creator of accessible stories about Black culture. However, it also featured sensationalized

stories of race violence, reflected the class biases of its editors, and peddled white beauty cultural norms through whitewashed advertisements, undermining its celebration of Black culture and likely influencing the self-images of its Black readers in negative ways. Understanding these characteristics holistically is necessary for analyzing the history of the *Chicago Defender* and grasping the complexity of Black journalism in the 1920s and 1930s. Because the *Chicago Defender* was one of the largest Black newspapers in that time period—rivaled only by the *Pittsburgh Courier*—this article focuses on the influences of Black journalism in Chicago.

The *Chicago Defender* and the Black Press in the 1920s and 1930s

The *Chicago Defender* ran its first issue in 1905. It was founded by Robert Abbott, who would go on to become one of America's first Black millionaires (Muhammad 2003, 14). During the first half of the interwar period, until about 1935, the *Chicago Defender* was the most circulated Black newspaper in the United States. At its peak in 1929, the paper was circulating about 200,000 copies weekly, but it experienced a large drop in numbers following the stock market crash (Black Press Research Collective 2014). After the Great Depression, the *Pittsburgh Courier* took off as the leading Black newspaper in the country in terms of circulation, but that didn't lessen the reach of the *Chicago Defender*. The *Chicago Defender* is still operating as of 2023, though it ended production of its print paper in 2019 (Davey and Eligon 2019).

It is not a surprise that Chicago—which became a prominent site for Black migration and community—housed one of the most influential Black newspapers. The Black population in Chicago increased steadily into the early twentieth century (Krieling 1977, 134), growing from 2 percent in 1910 to 7 percent by 1930, a 250 percent increase (Grossman, Keating, and Reiff 2004, 237). Chicago offered jobs and an escape from economic hardships (Grossman 1989, 14). Furthermore, the northern city offered the promise of community and an escape from the lynchings and racial violence of the South (Grossman 1989, 16).

Chicago was a node for Black journalism and the Black press during the interwar years. Not only was the *Chicago Defender* one of the strongest Black newspapers in the country, but there were other newspapers and organizations that made Chicago a very unique place for Black journalism. The first Black newspaper in Chicago was the *Aspirant*, which was founded in 1874 (Krieling 1977, 133). Though it lasted for less than a year, it paved the way for more Black newspapers to emerge. Only a few years later, Ferdinand Barnett helped establish the *Conservator* in 1878. The *Conservator* had a strong focus on politics and an emphasis on strengthening Black political consciousness (Krieling 1977, 133). It eventually, though, was not able to sustain itself monetarily, and it was skewed largely to advance the political ambitions of its editors (Ottley 1955, 86). As the *Chicago Defender* grew in influence, it also played a role in bringing more Black people, and news organizations, to the city. The Associated Negro Press (ANP), for example, was founded in 1919 in Chicago as the first national news service for African Americans. It was modeled after the Associated Press and helped spread Black news across the country (Horne 2017, 24). The establishment of the ANP gave a sense of permanence and legitimacy to the Black press, especially from the perspective of the white media establishment.

The interwar period was a unique time for the Black press. The original growth in Black periodicals and newspaper circulation occurred in the mid to late nineteenth century around the antebellum period. However, it was not until the 1920s that these papers were really able to take off. The 1920s and 1930s were the glory days of the Black press (Muhammad 2003, 14).

The Black press is often referred to as a collective instigator for social change (Mcfadden 1999; Muhammad 2003, 13; Washburn 2006, 141). This is not necessarily unique to Black journalism, but it is fair to say that Black newspapers have anticipated civil rights movements at a fairly unmatched level throughout the history of journalism. In its early years, the *Chicago Defender*, for example, encouraged and was in large part responsible for the mass movement of Black people from the South to the north (DeSantis 1998, 503; Grossman 1989, 83; Henri 1975, 92–93). This mass movement of Black people has since become known as the Great Migration (DeSantis 1998, 474). The power of this newspaper—housed in Chicago and seemingly distant from the problems Black Americans were facing in the deep South—was truly a marvel.

The *Chicago Defender* offered something that was lacking for many of its readers—a community and a dream. Even though it was seemingly impossible, the newspaper was able to reach far outside of the bustling Windy City to places as removed as Mississippi (DeSantis 1997, 65; Grossman 1989, 80). From its early years of publication, there was a strong demand for the *Chicago Defender* beyond Chicago, and that demand helped it serve the social movements it would later influence. The paper did start to lose some of its previous influence following 1930 due to the economic hit of the Great Depression, Abbott's personal health problems, and the rise in competition from the *Pittsburgh Courier* (Black Press Research Collective 2014; Washburn 2006, 126). After the Great Depression began, Abbott, the *Defender*'s founder, reversed his position on the movement of Black Americans north due to worsening economic conditions. He asked that Black people stay in the South, but his pleas were largely ignored due to his loss of influence (Washburn 2006, 125–26).

While the *Chicago Defender* started losing its influence after 1930, the decade prior was one of its most prosperous. This was concurrent with the success of Black newspapers across the country at that time. The 1920s was a time of true growth in the Black press's power and influence across the country (Washburn 2006, 112; Muhammad 2003, 14). But, as the Black press prospered during this time period, its success was not reflective of the experiences of Black people across the United States after World War I. There had been a lot of hope that conditions would be better for Black people following the war, but that was not the case. Black soldiers who had been on the battlefield among brothers who gave their lives fighting America's battles returned to widespread racism on the home front. For Black Americans at the time, there was a lot of unemployment, housing discrimination, and racial violence that threatened their livelihoods. In the midst of this, though, there was a mass call for change—a call that Black newspapers like the *Chicago Defender* answered.

The Role of the *Chicago Defender* in Diversifying the Coverage of Black America

The *Chicago Defender* became well renowned for its editorial page. Its editors were not afraid to publish controversial opinions that pushed the advancement of their race. The Black press did not concern itself over worries about bias in the news. It was proudly biased toward furthering and defending the rights of Black people (Ottley 1955, 104). In this sense, Black newspapers operated as a vessel for social movements to push for the change America so desperately needed (California Newsreel 1998).

As a weekly paper, the *Chicago Defender* became a "racial watchdog" over the injustices that occurred daily (Drake and Cayton 1945, 401). It did not shy away from covering lynchings and white mobs, often prominently featuring such stories on its front pages. "Nine Ex-Soldiers Lynched in South" was the main headline for the January 3, 1920 issue of the *Chicago Defender*, and the lack of press coverage and absence of arrests were featured near the lead of the piece.

White newspapers barely published articles about Black lynchings (California Newsreel 1998). When they did, unfounded accusations of Black men raping white women were often used to justify these lynchings (Krieling 1977, 134). All too often, stories of lynchings went untold, but the work of Black newspapers like the *Chicago Defender* helped to call attention to the horrors of racial violence against Black people. This in turn led to calls for justice and sparked grassroots protest movements among Black populations in the city to resist and to fight for racial equality.

Among all the lynchings and race riots, a different movement was brewing that would help define how Black papers approached news coverage. At the beginning of the interwar period, the Harlem Renaissance and a new self-definition of Blackness began to emerge. The end of World War I brought a rebirth in Black culture and the development of the "New Negro"—a progressive racial consciousness (Wilson 2005, 9). During the 1920s, there was a real push for a cultural revival, and this push was felt by the newspapers as well. At a time in which Black culture was truly reemerging and strengthening, Black newspapers offered not only a source of Black news, but also a source of Black community. This would prove critical to creating the reader demand that would bring these Black newspapers into their greatest era yet.

There was no dearth of white-led newspapers and journalists at the time. These newspapers, however, truly ignored the crux of Black experiences and thus did not have a strong Black readership. People read newspapers that cover news about them, and a lot of newspapers at the time left Black people off their pages. This meant that without Black newspapers, Black news would have just gone uncovered. Papers like the *Chicago Defender* were able to fulfill the need among Black populations for news that was about them. It was so rare for this to happen that the *Chicago Defender* was able to grow a strong readership across the nation. Black people in Mississippi should not have had to turn to a Chicago newspaper to get their weekly news, but that was practically all they had.

Furthermore, it would be wrong to say that white newspapers completely lacked any coverage of Black people. That is far from the truth. White newspapers did talk about Black people, but did so primarily through negative stories, though there were a few exceptions with sports coverage (Washburn 2006, 122–23). When negative stories were the only ones being circulated, that furthered the society-driven association between Blackness and violence. The Black press was essential in spreading positive stories that helped to decentralize those narratives within the white media (Robinson 2018, 8).

It was common practice in white newspapers during the same era that whenever race-based violence was written about, the articles would include the word "negro" in parentheses after the name to clarify the race of the person involved (California Newsreel 1998). Only Black people were identified by race, thereby setting white as the default. To push back against this, Abbott and the *Chicago Defender* started putting the word "white" in parentheses next to the names of any white people involved in the paper's violence-based headlines. For example, in the March 2, 1929 issue of the *Chicago Defender*, one of the articles on the front page was about a white night watchman who shot and killed a weaponless Black woman. "After deliberating all night, the jury last Saturday here, brought in a verdict of not guilty in the case of Douglass Davis (white), who was charged with the killing Jan. 15 of Lane Hale in Shuqualak," the article said. This editorial choice was a direct response to and reversal of the practices of white newspapers. It reset Blackness as the default and emphasized the connections between whiteness and mass racial violence. When the only things they were given by white newspapers were biased stories about violence in Black communities, Black people turned to the Black press for support—and they found it (Washburn 2006, 122).

The stewardship of telling the Black stories largely ignored by its white counterparts was part of a prominent role played by the Black press, which acted as a parallel entity to white journalism. Both did essentially the same work, but the white press covered white stories and the Black press covered Black stories. In this sense, many Black newspapers viewed themselves as tools for reconceptualizing Blackness in a positive way (Robinson 2018, 8). So, for many Black newspaper publishers, that was the niche they sought to fill.

Vernon Jarrett, who once was a reporter for the *Chicago Defender*, said in 1999, "We didn't exist in other papers. We were neither born, we didn't get married, we didn't die, we didn't fight in any wars, we never participated in anything of scientific achievement. We were truly invisible unless we committed a crime" (as quoted in Washburn 2006, 123). So often throughout history white America has dehumanized Black people. If Black people are not real people with a full range of emotions and experiences, then it is easier for white Americans to justify cruelty and heinous acts of racial violence. In deciding to portray a narrative of Black violence, white newspapers in the interwar period further contributed to that messaging. Those stories that Jarrett talked about—of birth and marriage and death—are incredibly important to tell, no matter how trivial each one may seem.

It was the cumulative effect of smaller stories on Black accomplishment and culture that truly helped combat the racist imagery of Black violence that white mass media publications propagated. Each individual story may not have seemed significant, but together they played an important role in crafting a narrative of what Blackness was. Bias in journalism is not only introduced in the words reporters use within stories; it is also introduced in the stories that newspapers choose to tell. In making it their goal to tell the stories of Black people, Black newspapers like the *Chicago Defender* were instrumental in combatting biases far too prevalent in white journalism.

The goal of elevating stories of Black culture and minimizing the extent to which it discussed Black violence was a challenge for the *Chicago Defender*. A newspaper's job is to cover the news, so editors must make difficult decisions in terms of how to balance staying true to their mission while also producing solid journalism. The *Chicago Defender* received some pushback for the way it covered the Chicago race riots of 1919, for example. Critics called the paper out for "yellow journalism," or using sensationalized and exaggerated headlines to catch the eye of readers to boost sales. Afterwards, Abbott committed to his readers that the paper would publish fewer articles on violence and focus instead on Black achievement (Washburn 2006, 125). It is tricky for Black newspapers to balance these conflicting demands and find ways to tell the stories of violence in Black communities without homogenizing the Black experience. Part of how the *Chicago Defender* attempted to strike this balance was by diversifying positive stories within the paper, but it still kept the eye-catching violence-related stories on its front pages. That tension of ensuring balanced content that does right by the communities it covers without ignoring stories of violence is something that the *Chicago Defender* struggled to overcome. In the next section, I conduct an independent review of front-page headlines in the *Chicago Defender* in order to better analyze how the paper balanced stories of violence with stories of Black achievement.

Analyzing the Prevalence of Violence in the *Chicago Defender*'s Headlines

In order to analyze the prominence of violence-associated headlines in the *Chicago Defender*, I conducted a review that found that the paper's front page largely featured stories of racial violence. There was a stark difference between the sensationalized stories of violence on its front

pages and the more balanced community news stories told on the inside pages of the newspaper. This review analyzes the selection and diversity of front-page stories—notably, where readers get their first impressions.

To conduct this research, I reviewed microfiche issues of the *Chicago Defender* from January to June of 1920 and from January to June of 1929. These two years were chosen because 1920 was right after the Chicago race riots, and 1929 was right before the Great Depression. In selecting these dates, I found that news from those two major historical events did not heavily influence or take precedence on the front pages in the issues studied. I recorded the headlines for each above-the-fold story published in issues of the paper during the chosen time periods and coded each headline to reflect whether it was about violence or community-related news. Then, I compared the ratio of violent stories to community news in 1920 to the same ratio in 1929 to understand whether the paper had tried to diversify its front-page coverage over the ten-year period. There were 145 above-the-fold headlines from January to June in 1920, and 129 above-the-fold headlines from January to June of 1929. It is important to note that the *Chicago Defender* liked to use a lot of subheadings, or multiple headlines, for each story. Different headings for the same story were counted as the same headline for the purposes of this study.

Overall, the front pages of the *Chicago Defender* relied on sensational headlines and heavily emphasized stories of crime and violence both in 1920 and 1929. There was a small increase in non-violent stories published in 1929, but the change was minimal. This reflects that while Abbott did increase community-driven coverage within the paper over those ten years, minimizing the extent to which Black-associated violence appeared on its front pages was not a priority for the paper. Regardless of the good stories published on the inside, the front page is still where first impressions are made. The *Chicago Defender* therefore chose sales—driven up by sensationalism—over diversifying what it established as the "big news" headlines for each week.

From January to June 1920, only 5.6 percent of the headlines promoted positive stories of Black achievement or community growth. Those headlines included stories about how Mrs. Jack Johnson broke out as a movie actress, how a Black man was promoted to colonel of the ninth cavalry beating out a white major, and how new bishops were elected to the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Comparatively, from January to June in 1929, 8.5 percent of the *Chicago Defender*'s headlines promoted positive stories about Blackness. This is a small increase, but not terribly substantial. Still, in 1929 more of the featured headlines were politically driven or editorialized, as opposed to just focusing on sensationalized stories of deaths, murders, and suicides. For example, there was an increase in politician/policy-driven headlines. In the March 23, 1929 issue, one of the main headlines read, "DuBois Shatters Stoddard's Cultural Theories in Debate." The article is about how thousands crowded around to hear W.E.B. Du Bois speak on cultural equality. Black newspapers were, in part, a space for Black leaders and theorists to promote their work, so in publishing a story on the debate and prominently featuring Du Bois, the *Chicago Defender* helped spread awareness of his work.

Building this type of cultural awareness and foundational knowledge is critical. Though the article on Du Bois stood out among the violence-based headlines that the *Chicago Defender* tended to publish, over time more and more race leaders were featured in lead stories. From 1933 to 1938, six of the ten most prominent people featured on the front pages were race heroes and race leaders (Drake and Cayton 1945, 403). These people included Joe Louis, who held a world heavyweight title, Haile Selassie, an Ethiopian leader, Oscar DePriest, a Black congressman,

Jesse Binga, whose home was bombed by white people, Arthur Mitchell, who replaced Republican Oscar DePriest and who was the first African American Democrat to be elected to Congress, and Colonel John C. Robinson, who served in the Italo-Ethiopian war (Drake and Cayton 1945, 403).

Gaining awareness of these race leaders through 10-cent weekly newspapers offered a new possibility for Black people to learn about their communities and history, knowledge that was largely denied to them by the white establishment in media and education. To further this education and make the newspapers more accessible to communities, the *Chicago Defender* advertised a policy of "passing it along" that encouraged readers to hand their copy of the newspaper off to a neighbor once they were finished reading it (California Newsreel 1998). Readers also overcame literacy barriers by sharing the news via word of mouth. It became common for discussions of the news to take place in homes, barber shops, churches, and other community gathering places (Grossman 1989, 68). Educating and spreading the words of Black leaders was critical to building a base of Black Americans prepared to enter into the Civil Rights Movement and lead protests demanding freedoms.

There were also four obituaries of prominent African Americans featured above the fold during the January to June 1929 timeline studied. This is significant because the comparative white newspapers simply were not publishing non-violence-associated obituaries in their issues, least of all on their front pages. One of those obituaries was published in the June 1, 1929 edition of the *Chicago Defender* with a headline that read, "Mrs. Julius Rosenwald, Wife of Philanthropist, Dies: Death Takes Wife of Noted Friend of Men." The article is an obituary for Augusta Nusbaum Rosenwald, who died due to an illness. Her death was not well covered in similar-sized white newspapers, and it definitely was not on their front pages. However, in the *Chicago Defender*, her death was the second most dominant headline on the page. This people-focused journalism, though it was more prominent on the inside pages of the *Chicago Defender*, truly set the paper apart.

While the few scattered articles that did promote Black livelihoods and achievements on the front page are significant, it is important to note that the majority of the headlines run by the *Chicago Defender* on its front pages were sensationalist and focused on violence or scandal. The paper published sensationalized headlines in red print, giving it a very signature look (Ottley 1955, 106). This was likely because sensationalism sells. Newspapers are a tricky business, and a lot of the earlier Black newspapers were not able to economically support themselves. A Black newspaper that goes bankrupt cannot serve the Black community, so the emphasis on sales was important to the survival of Black journalism.

Balancing Sensationalism: Coverage of the Black Community

Though most of the front-page headlines were sensationalized stories about Black violence, Abbott did a good job balancing that violence out with stories of achievements within the newspaper itself. T. Ella Strother (1997) conducted a study on the Black image in the *Chicago Defender* from 1905 to 1975. She analyzed the distribution of different types of articles on the inside pages of newspapers during that time period. From 1920 to 1930, politics was the focus of 13 percent of the stories, while 23 percent were on sports, 11 percent concentrated on fine arts, and 8 percent focused on crime. From 1933 to 1939, politics was the topic of 15 percent of the stories, and 24 percent concentrated on sports, while the subject of fine arts jumped to 26 percent and crime dropped to 6 percent (Strother 1977, 139). Thus, according to Strother's (1977) findings, even though stories about crime made up a significant percentage of the front-page

headlines, they were only a minor percentage of the total stories covered. Additionally, there was a large jump in arts-centered stories in the 1930s, which corresponds with the expansion of the children's, theater, and society sections in the paper during that period.

In 1920, all of the papers from January to June included an "All Around the Town" section, which featured personality-focused stories and included coverage of movie stars, new directors, award winners, and so forth. This section was not prominent in the 1929 papers from January to June. Instead, the "All Around the Town" section, which had often been only one or two pages each issue, was replaced by more sports, theater, and children's pages. Additionally, the pages devoted to African American achievements in sports have always been quite significant in number. The theater pages featured Black entertainers and accomplishments, and the children's pages offered a unique space as well. The children's pages were a place of advertisement for the Bud Billiken Club, a Chicago social club for Black youth, but more importantly they expanded the accessibility of the newspaper to the youth. Prior to the expansion of these pages, Black children were not represented in newspapers. The children's sections helped expand the interest in literacy to younger children early on in their development.

The Society pages, which were mainly women's pages, also expanded in 1929 to take up more space than they had in 1920. These pages gave women authors a place to be featured, and though the stories were mainly "soft" news, they were important to share. The 1929 Society pages published several human interest pieces on different women each week. These featured women all bore unique labels such as "educator," "worker," "hostess," "president," and "politician." In the February 9, 1929 issue of the *Chicago Defender*, for example, some of the main stories on the Society pages included: "Miss Elise Evans Held a Bridal Shower"; "Mrs. Grover Rutherford Hosted a Pre-Valentine Party at Her House"; "Mrs. Daisy E. Lampkin Worked On a Presidential Campaign"; and "Mrs. Lulu E. Lawson Was Honored for Her Service as Executive Secretary of the YWCA." This array of news stories was fairly consistent across the different Society pages, with each featuring different women and their respective accomplishments. Dedicating the space to honoring these accomplishments was very influential for readers of the paper and those who were featured.

Advertising and the Promotion of a White Beauty Ideal

Though the *Chicago Defender* stands out in terms of its progressive content, it did run some problematic, white-washed advertisements on its pages. There were several advertisements in each issue for skin whitening from January to June of 1929. There were also several ads for straightening hair. Often, these beauty-based ads were featured more prominently on the Society pages, catering to women who already had a lot of societal beauty pressures on them. The ads also often framed women's beauty from the perspective of the male gaze. For example, the Society pages in the March 9, 1929 issue of the *Chicago Defender* featured an advertisement with the headline "Light Skin that Men Cannot Resist!" These pressures around beauty were present in the white newspapers and on pages aimed at white women as well, but it is important to note that no matter how effectively the *Chicago Defender* pushed against racial inequalities, other inequalities were present. It was rather hypocritical for a newspaper that prided itself on elevating the stories of Black culture and life to run ads that promoted a white beauty ideal. It was damaging for this newspaper—that had become a safe space for so many Black people—to include such anti-Black messaging on its pages. What does it say to readers if even the Black-owned newspaper endorses the spread of skin whitening advertisements? It is disheartening that a newspaper that accomplished so much good by uplifting Black culture would allow pockets of

its pages to include such harmful content. The good work of the *Chicago Defender* far outweighed the harm from these advertisements, but it is important to acknowledge the paper's shortcomings in this regard.

The *Chicago Defender* and the Strengthening of Black Community

Another role the Black press has served is as the creator of community. This role went beyond being just a newspaper. The *Chicago Defender*'s leaders also hosted community events, sponsored charities, and helped create common forums for discourse. During the interwar period, a unique phenomenon occurred: journalists suddenly became celebrities. They were viewed as community stars, and journalism grew into a very glamorous profession (California Newsreel 1998). With its glamorization came admiration from Black communities in Chicago for the newspapers and the journalists working on the ground. That admiration extended as well to the multitude of community events that were sponsored by Black newspapers during the period.

The community event the *Chicago Defender* is perhaps best known for is sponsoring the Bud Billiken Parade. Beyond the annual parade, the newspaper also was the lead contributor to the Bud Billiken Club. The Bud Billiken Club is an African American children's group that was started in 1921, with different foundations popping up across the country wherever the *Chicago Defender* was published (Higuchi 2005, 154). Additionally, Abbott spearheaded other charities through his newspaper business. From 1928 to 1944, he worked with Regal Theaters to give aid to Black families who were hurting from economic hardship during the Great Depression (Semmes 2011, 976). These charitable efforts are fairly unique to the *Chicago Defender* and are telling of Abbott's interpretation of what the Black press should be.

Abbott's charitable work would seemingly counter the claim that the Black press in the interwar years was merely white journalism in blackface. The Black press was more than just a body of journalism, but instead sought to tackle and address the needs of the whole of Black communities. Much of the community service work that the *Chicago Defender* did went unpraised. There is very little scholarship on the charity work Abbott did in collaboration with Regal Theaters, and it is likely that there are other projects that have gone entirely unreported.

Many white newspapers would have ethical problems with the work that Abbott did with these different charities. In building community organizations and doing charitable work, the *Chicago Defender* would have overstepped the bounds to an impartial eye. But modern-day journalism it would seem is finally warming to the notion that no journalism is impartial, and some of the best journalism projects out there are ones in which the writer inserts themselves into the narrative. The *Chicago Defender* did not lose journalistic integrity in building those community partnerships, at least not by the ethical standards of Black journalism.

An overemphasis on impartial reporting, I would argue, is something that has held the white press back and prevented it from producing some of the emotionally charged reporting work that has come from some of the best journalists in the field. This is something that even from its founding the Black press never seemed to engrain in its mandate. Concerns over "fake news" or biased reporting—while of course prevalent in every publication—did not seem to make up the main reviews of Black readers of the *Chicago Defender*. Instead, the paper was simply a space to share and celebrate Black accomplishments and lift up Black voices to the masses.

The *Chicago Defender* and Class Issues

Now, that is not to say that the *Chicago Defender* is a paper of the community that has been worshiped by all who have stumbled across it. The paper shared in the problems that many other Black newspapers across the country combatted during the interwar period. One main problem with the way that the Black press is structured is the issue of class. Abbott was not a poor man—in fact, he was a millionaire. He accumulated a lot of wealth through operating the *Chicago Defender*, and that kept him and his paper out of touch with the majority of Black America, which was at or under the poverty line. A newspaper run by elites cannot hope to appeal to and reach all audiences.

In some ways, the Black press reflects W.E.B. Du Bois's (1903) Talented Tenth theory. The Talented Tenth theory argues that in order to help Black people everywhere, an elite, top 10 percent of the Black population should be uplifted and elected to lead the rest (Du Bois 1903, 75). There are many problems with this theory. It assumes the unintelligence of the other 90 percent of Black people, and there is also no true way to ensure that that top 10 percent is really using their education and upper-class status to help everyone else. Abbott and the *Chicago Defender* in many ways do resemble the concept of the Talented Tenth. Abbott was a rich man who used his money to fund the newspaper, and that inherently made his newspaper out of touch in some ways with large portions of the Black population. However, it is tricky because without that money, the *Chicago Defender* would not have been able to print weekly issues and reach the truly impressive masses of Black people that it reached with its publication. The founding of almost every press has this inherent conflict between economics and the quality of its news. This is something that even today the journalism industry is struggling to grapple with.

Conclusion: The Complicated Legacy of the *Chicago Defender*

There are many different ways the Black press in Chicago during the interwar years can be interpreted. It was journalism for elites, but it also helped increase education for diverse Black populations. It was a center for building culture and community, but also for breaking down racism and advocating for social change. It expanded coverage of positive community news stories, but still published sensationalized front-page stories featuring violence. It was able to build a mass circulation across the country, but to do so it relied on advertisements that promoted white beauty ideals. It does Black journalism a disservice to try and understand the complexities of the Black press system through solely one lens or one purpose.

Chicago has always stood out as a central hub of organization for Black social movements across history. It is no coincidence that one of history's most prominent Black newspapers was born there. Chicago's centrality as a place of Black culture and community played out alongside the rise in influence of the *Chicago Defender*.

The *Chicago Defender* was a marvel of its time. No other paper was publishing its type of journalism. With its strong editorials and diversified coverage, the *Chicago Defender* gave Black people in Chicago and across the United States a paper that was truly their own. The community, autonomy, and seeds of demand for social justice spread by the Black press were a critical forerunner to the unprecedented change to come in the Civil Rights Movement.

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Nkrumaism: Ideological Syncretism in the Anti-Colonial Political Imaginary

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I explore the role of varied educational, environmental, and political forces in Kwame Nkrumah's ideological orientation. I argue against a popular impulse to portray African colonial elites as ideologically passive, merely supplanting Western thought systems into the postcolony—often unsuccessfully. Though various historical cases provide evidence for such a position, here I argue against analyses that characterize Nkrumah as non-agential in his intellectual and political development. Rather, I demonstrate that he drew inspiration from diverse educational environments, from the colonial Gold Coast, to the Ivy League and historically Black colleges of the American Northeast, to student-activist spheres in London. Armed with expertise in philosophy and theology, Nkrumah engaged with his contemporaries in the Pan-African liberation struggle to birth visions of novel political forms and ideals. In particular, I focus on the development and deployment of consciencism—a hybrid political philosophy that aimed to illustrate the multiplicity of the African condition. This article employs some comparative methods in assessing the ideological divergences between American-educated colonial elites (such as Nkrumah) and their British-educated counterparts. However, the overall methodology is a global one, emphasizing the manner in which ideas traveled anti-colonial circuits and adapted to suit particular conditions.

Keywords: Nkrumaism, consciencism, syncretism, hybridization, Pan-Africanism

Introduction

When Kwame Nkrumah took to the national stage in March 1957 to officially announce Ghana's political independence from the British Empire, he stepped into the forefront of a global movement seeking social, economic, and political emancipation for oppressed peoples. Although Nkrumah would become a shining star in the eyes of many anti-imperialist progressives and a national treasure to his Ghanaian constituents, his ensuing visibility as an intellectual, national independence leader, and eminent participant in Third World internationalism has also made him subject to much scrutiny. This article will address a prominent criticism of Nkrumah and other "native elites" of the decolonization era that suggests they merely appropriated and reproduced Western ideological and political models. This interpretation was advanced in the 1960s by the likes of Oxford philosopher John Plamenatz, Harvard political scientist Rupert Emerson, and historian Elie Kedourie, all claiming that self-government aspirations among the colonized resulted from the "Westernization of the world" (Getachew 2020, 26). This premise has largely informed a standard account of decolonization, wherein anti-colonialists are thought to have mimicked existing institutional forms and principles of the Western political tradition (e.g., self-determination, democracy, and freedom). As such, the anti-colonial nationalist's aspiration was

not to disrupt or reject the international system but to extend it, reifying its universality and inherent legitimacy.

A holistic reading of Nkrumaism's origin and development, however, does not give in to this oversimplification. Despite attempts to characterize anti-colonial political philosophy as a mere transplant of various "Western" ideologies into an incompatible African landscape, Nkrumaism in fact constitutes an intellectually and politically syncretic ideology—one contingent on Nkrumah's own eclectic inspirations and temporal circumstances. Further, Nkrumaism must be assessed as part of a larger anti-colonial moment—a moment characterized by a broader political imaginary that sought to create new formulations of a post-colonial self and community.

The Early Years: Nkrumah's Global Education

A member of what historian Eric Williams called the "1930s University generation" (1969, 54), Kwame Nkrumah, as an academic, philosopher, and political leader, existed at the nexus of various intellectual traditions. Moreover, it takes a deep assessment of his interactions with global thought through his higher education to see true intellectual synthesis and sublimation at play. Nkrumah's twelve years of post-secondary education, employment, and community involvement in the United States and England acted as a crucial backdrop to his ideological and methodological development. Nkrumah's decision to pursue his higher education in the United States was no accident, but rather a combination of deliberate impulses—namely, his perception of British culture as distastefully sanctimonious, the direct influence of nationalist pioneers such as future Nigerian president Nnamdi Azikiwe, and the apt assessment that those at the vanguard of Black liberation movements were overwhelmingly recipients of American education (Zack-Williams 2006, 187). Nkrumah credited Azikiwe with encouraging him to attend Lincoln University, the historically Black college Azikiwe had attended and from which he had returned to Africa a staunch nationalist. Having internalized Azikiwe's tales of the emancipatory intellectual discourses emerging from within Black America, Nkrumah arrived in Philadelphia in 1935 eager to begin his undergraduate studies at Lincoln.

After successfully completing his bachelor's degree in economics and sociology, Nkrumah was admitted to Lincoln's Theological Seminary, where he pursued a second degree in sacred theology. However, the ever-curious young scholar was in constant search of knowledge, and he began concurrent enrollment at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education. As he would recall in his autobiography, "Life would have been so much easier if I could have devoted all my time to study. As things were, however, I was always in need of money" (1959, 35). A combination of scholarships, grants, and seasonal employment in Philadelphia's shipyards allowed Nkrumah to support himself as he pursued multiple advanced degrees and embedded himself in Black American political scenes. When he was not studying or working, he made it his mission to visit vibrant Black neighborhoods, such as Harlem and others in Washington D.C., where he would proselytize his anti-colonial positions at rallies and churches, on sidewalks, and anywhere else he could find people to listen. It was during this time that he developed first-hand relationships with many of the activists at the vanguard of the global Black liberation movement, including sociologist and future Ghana resident W.E.B. Du Bois, Black nationalist Marcus Garvey, and Trinidadian historian C.L.R. James (Zack-Williams 2006, 188). Nkrumah had engaged with their revolutionary works as a student teacher at Accra's Achimota School, considering them hugely inspirational in the conception of his own Pan-Africanist vision. The global African network for which he would later fight mirrored the diasporic nature of his communities during these years.

Having arrived in the United States in 1935, Nkrumah had stepped directly into the aftermath of the 1920s "New Negro" transformation. Following World War I, after supposedly "fighting for democracy" abroad, thousands of African American troops returned home only to meet continued second-class treatment. Disillusioned and determined to claim a fuller humanity, many Black Americans moved away from the "accommodationist" Booker T. Washington-esque approach to political equality and self-actualization, and they instead took on a more Du Boisian tone. Staunchly opposed to protest and social unrest, Washington had proposed industrial education, enterprise, and self-investment as the keys to Black social and political advancement (DocSouth n.d.). Meanwhile, to W.E.B. Du Bois, an incrementalist model of progress was unworkable, as Black Americans existed within a system that actively worked against their political emancipation. Instead, he contended that liberation could come about only through agitative and transgressive means. As such, the New Negro movement that ensued was a convening of various objectives, including economic independence, renewed racial pride, and cultural and aesthetic self-expression (Library of Congress 2009). With Du Bois and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People at its helm and Harlem as its cultural mecca, the New Negro movement ushered in a new paradigm of what it meant to be Black, to be human, and to be powerful. Nkrumah, through his time in these spaces, with interlocutors of that same tradition, breathed in the essence of the New Negro, and he carried this ethos—against static colonial subjectivity—to his next landing place: Great Britain.

In May 1945, with the Second World War having come to a close, Nkrumah left New York and headed for London, where he would briefly attend the London School of Economics before enrolling at University College London in pursuit of a philosophy doctorate. Here, he encountered the likes of George Padmore, a Trinidadian journalist with whom C.L.R. James had connected him, and T. Ras Makonnen, a Guyanese-born publisher and Pan-African activist (Zack-Williams 2006, 188). Although his sojourn in London was brief, Nkrumah made a mighty impact on the city's small Black community, and this force would reverberate on an international scale. Continuing the legacy of student activism he had engaged in at Lincoln, Nkrumah served London's young Black expatriates as an executive member of the West African Students' Union. He also spearheaded the formation of a secret group named The Circle—an outgrowth of the West African National Secretariat's Manchester Congress that designed policies geared toward decolonizing West Africa and fostering regional unity (Zack-Williams 2006, 187).

Nkrumah's zealous involvement in many of the radical liberation discourses of the 1940s demonstrates the power of eclectic political ideation. Having grown up in the British-colonized Gold Coast, Nkrumah received his primary education in English missionary institutions, as did the majority of Ghana's elite, educated post-independence leaders. Yet, one can observe some noticeable differences between the political philosophies of Nkrumah and those of his fellow Western-educated countrymen. Namely, Nkrumah's early interest in the United States and extensive time spent in American institutions made him ideologically distinct from many of his compatriots who had studied in England (Rahman 2007, 88). While his British-educated peers tended to have gradualist and conciliatory sensibilities regarding colonial-native relations, Nkrumah was zealous in his commitment to immediate Black self-government. A major explanation for this was the presence and nature of historically Black institutions in the United States, which created spaces for radical dialogue and intellectual synthesis. Black American institutions, such as Lincoln, allowed for the unbridled proliferation of Black thought, and through dialectical collaboration, Africans and African Americans collectively built tools for visualizing a post-colonial world. Meanwhile, England, with its lack of communal spaces for

Black students and educators, was noticeably stagnant when it came to contributions to Black liberation thought. Anti-colonialist and first president of Tanzania Julius Nyerere (1999) took notice of the dissimilarities that formed across different Black spatialities, stating:

> Nkrumah and I differed on how to achieve a United States of Africa. But we both agreed on a United States of Africa as necessary. Kwame went to Lincoln University, a black college in the US. He perceived things from the perspective of US history…Africans who studied in the US like Nkrumah and [Nigerian independence leader] Azikiwe were more aware of the Diaspora and the global African community than those of us who studied in Britain. They were therefore aware of a wider Pan-Africanism. Theirs was the aggressive Pan-Africanism of W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey. The colonialists were against this and frightened of it.

As Nyerere noted, there was something different about Nkrumah. Despite his extensive time spent abroad, Nkrumah had managed to bypass the primary identity of the "Western-educated African elite"—unlike many of his contemporaries, whose education had turned them into apparatuses of the British colonial government. In an effort to protect economic and political interests across their many colonies, the British had implemented a form of governance known as indirect rule, which made use of indigenous political organization and existing power structures. It was a bureaucratic operation that enabled British district commissioners and civil servants to play a dominant role in local administration—all through the proxy of an established indigenous authority. Despite indirect rule's coercive nature, some African elites were conscious proponents of the system, believing it to confer substantial benefits on the indigenous population.

Oxford-educated Kofi Abrefa Busia (who would become Ghana's second prime minister, after Nkrumah) serves as one particularly salient example, and we can look to his own casting of indirect rule in his book *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti* to see this in action. Drawing from British anthropological research on "primitive" governance, Busia uncritically defines indirect rule as "the progressive adaptation of native conditions to modern conditions" (1951, 105). What's more, he was not ashamed to be a facilitator of this colonial process. He was a self-described, unabashed product of the West. "I'm a Westerner," he proclaimed in a 1953 interview with American writer Richard Wright, "I was educated in the West" (Wright 1954, 228). In this light, it is then unsurprising that Busia and much of Nkrumah's initial base, who had spent formative years in English institutions, would go on to oppose Nkrumah's prime ministership and political administration. These divergent trajectories in political ideologies and attitudes elucidate the significance of Black colonial spatiality: it was not only the education one received that would shape one's political imaginary, but also where and among whom one received said education. As Ahmad Rahman notes in his comprehensive treatise on Nkrumaism, "Where the Ghanaian patriot studied and developed into manhood in the English or the American part of the diaspora was an important determinant of his future attitude toward Ghana and Africa's kind of independence" (2007, 88).

Nkrumah was just one in a rich lineage of nationalists and Pan-Africanists who had studied in American institutions and lived in African American communities before returning to their African homelands—radicalized, imaginative, and ideologically militant. The differences between those who had exchanged ideas with Black Americans and their British-educated counterparts, as Nyerere corroborated, were palpable. British educational institutions required that their African students and patrons internalize British cultural patrimony, such that the racialized, hierarchical power structures embedded in colonial locales could be self-sustaining.

Education was a powerful tool of oppression. Moreover, in the British case, the paradoxical nature of liberal education came to light: it espoused a philosophical tradition that simultaneously valorized personal liberties and justified the expropriation of colonized people's political freedom.

While many of Nkrumah's compatriots who had received a primarily British education inherited such neocolonial attitudes, Nkrumah "came of age" in an era of re-creation and renewal of the Black American self-image. Perhaps because of its specificity in the American socio-historical context, the term "New Negro" was one that Nkrumah never explicitly claimed. Instead, he adapted its same underlying principles for the terrain and culture he knew best. In its place, Nkrumah coined the "African personality"—essentially, a construction parallel to the New Negro (Rahman 2007, 89). Just as the "New Negro" was awakened to appreciate his own value, the "African personality" similarly valorized the African's inherent cultural gifts. Unlike his fellow elites, who appeared to feel a sense of pride in their colonial identity, Nkrumah did not simply inherit and supplant an extrinsic worldview into the African landscape. Rather, he adapted it, synthesizing uniquely American motifs with diasporic Africanity to create his own novel ontology.

While in London, Nkrumah received word about a new political party launching in the Gold Coast: the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC). The sheer potential of a mobilized anti-imperial party was enough to compel him to return, and he did so in November 1947. After a fall-out with the leaders of the UGCC and the subsequent formation of his own party—the Convention People's Party (CPP)—Nkrumah embarked on a journey to political liberation from colonialism (Gbadegesin 2018, 15). In 1957, Ghana officially became an independent nation, with Nkrumah as its inaugural leader. Nkrumah's time as prime minister allowed him the chance to actualize his various philosophies and political positions. This was Nkrumaism—a dynamic political imaginary and platform as conceptualized and delivered by Kwame Nkrumah.

The Nkrumaist Intellectual Paradigm

Nkrumaism, as both the political philosophy and the political platform of Nkrumah and his government, must be examined holistically and contextually, lest it be misunderstood. As evidenced by his extensive interactions with members of the Black Atlantic, as well as his participation in transcontinental anti-colonial discourses, Nkrumah was a true believer in the dialectical method. Well-versed in the readings of European philosophers such as Hegel, Marx, and Engels from his time at Lincoln, Nkrumah understood social evolution and progress to be a dialectical process (Boadi 2000, 479). Further, if a revolution was to result in a tangible, qualitative change in the oppressive conditions of a people, then a revolutionary must adopt a materialist posture. In this regard, dialectical and historical materialism were at the root of anti-colonial resistance. However, by combining materialism with dialectics, Marx's position prescribed that "social phenomena should be understood as a process of continued change, which stemmed from material causes and *not* from otherworldly, metaphysical causes" (Rahman 2007, 98). Thus, dialectical and historical materialism were the bases of Marxian *atheism*. Nkrumah, as a philosopher and economist, understood this Marxist prescription—and yet, he felt that the metaphysical restrictions of traditional materialism did not apply in the African context. Instead, there was something spiritual in the African—the African conscience—that necessitated a rejection of Marxian atheism. This complexity was characterized in Nkrumaism's central philosophy: "consciencism." Nkrumah dissects the contents of consciencism in his 1964 book of the same name:

> The philosophy that must stand behind this social revolution is that which I have once referred to as philosophical consciencism; consciencism is the map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African society to digest the Western and the Islamic and the Euro-Christian elements in Africa, and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality. The African personality is itself defined by the cluster of humanist principles which underlie the traditional African society. Philosophical consciencism is that philosophical standpoint which, taking its start from the present content of the African conscience, indicates the way in which progress is forged out of the conflict in that conscience. Its basis is in materialism (78).

By hybridizing various metaphysics, politics, and ethics, consciencism presented a syncretic yet Afrocentric methodology for a total revolution. Nkrumah presented it as a philosophy and cultural ideology (perhaps even a personal identity) that subsumed all the elements necessary for Africa's human and continental emancipation—and it was uniquely suited for the African personality that he had synthesized alongside the New Negro. Traditional African society (and, by extension, the African personality) was fundamentally egalitarian, humanist, and communalist—and, as such, capitalist colonialism was unworkable in the African context (Nkrumah 1964, 78). Meanwhile, "Africans" constituted an highly eclectic group, with their coexisting indigenous spiritualities, Islamic heritage, and Euro-Christian traditions. However, as Nkrumah's consciencism suggested, these features of African society were not at odds with one another, as one might initially presume. Rather, they culminated in the African's heightened conscience. On the one hand, spirituality alone would not bring about a change in oppressed peoples' poor conditions. On the other hand, a strictly materialist worldview did not account for the spiritual and moral guiding forces of pre-colonial African traditions. Thus, consciencism was Nkrumaism's revolutionary "Third Way" (Zack-Williams 2006, 189).

As it did not adhere to any pre-established philosophical frameworks and was far from universally applicable, many people struggled to fully understand the inner workings of Nkrumah's philosophy. To some, it was simply too complex, rendering it unintelligible. To the Western intellectual purist, it deviated too heavily from materialist philosophy's strict rules regarding metaphysical consciousness. Meanwhile, to stringent anti-Westerners, it was an unfortunate introjection of Western philosophical frameworks, and incompatible with the anti-colonial transformation effort. "Consciencism" has come to be used interchangeably with "Nkrumaism," but it is, in fact, just one of the vital features that Nkrumaism subsumes; it is the guiding ontology of the Nkrumaist school of socio-political philosophy. Consciencism was transgressive in that its ontology—its non-atheistic materialism—offered a defensible Afrocentric counterpoise to Western liberal ideology (Boadi 2000, 476). Consciencism was not a vernacular or subaltern philosophy; rather, it was something uniquely particular that did not adhere to rigid Eurocentric parameters. Further, it was not a mere abstraction, lofty and detached from the very people whom it sought to liberate. In the battle to attain African restitution and restore an egalitarian human society, consciencism was a tangible weapon, as its "intellectual content" was derived from and remained grounded in "the environment and living conditions" of Africa itself (Nkrumah 1964, 78). As Kofi Baako, the Minister of Presidential Affairs under Nkrumah's CPP government, succinctly characterized it, Nkrumaism was a "non-atheistic scientific socialism modeled on African conditions" (as quoted in Asamoah 2014, 57).

The Politics of Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism

A prominent feature of Nkrumaism was its continental dimension, which was meant to take Pan-Africanism from its diasporic origins as an intellectual movement and territorialize it on the continent, transforming it into an institutional political movement. As early as 1900, with the meeting of the first Pan-African Congress, Black activists had been advocating unity and integration as the only means of bringing about true self-determination on the continent. The Pan-African framework of the early twentieth century had valorized mutual support and assistance as necessary defenses against colonial intrusion (which was highly likely), and later activists internalized this messaging (Franke 2007, 33). This vision reverberated in Nkrumah's thinking and writing, and he firmly believed that the independence of Ghana, or any other African nation, would be meaningless without the complete liberation of the African continent (Nkrumah 1957).

Though not all African anti-colonial movements necessarily subscribed to the notion of centralized continental unity, the rhetoric of Pan-Africanism was resounding enough to establish inter-African cooperation as an essential political standard in the pursuit of non-domination. Decades of activism across the Black Atlantic had culminated in the age of decolonization in Africa, with Nkrumah leading the charge. After Ghana's independence in 1957, Nkrumah and his associate Padmore hosted the Conference of Independent African States and the All-African People's Conference, the inaugural Pan-African gatherings on the continent (Franke 2007, 36). As these newly independent African states and anti-colonial nationalists convened, they collaborated on visions of their unified political future—namely, the regional federation (a political project that Padmore had originally pursued in the West Indies) (Getachew 2020, 11). With incentives for African cooperation abounding, the decolonization era witnessed a proliferation of intergovernmental organizations, unions, federations, and communities. During this period, Africa witnessed the birth and development of a wide range of institutional schemes for economic and political cooperation.

The First Conference of Independent African States marked the beginning of an expanding political imaginary on the continent, with Nkrumah and his contemporaries putting the conference forward as an attempt at an African supra-national institution—an African United Nations of sorts (Getachew 2020, 33). The seed was now planted. As African nations achieved independence in higher numbers and frequency, more and more regionalist takes on the Pan-Africanist movement cropped up. These included but were not limited to the Pan-African Freedom Movement of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (1958), the Conseil de l'Entente (1959), the Union of African States (1960), the African States of the Casablanca Charter (1961), the African and Malagasy Union (1961), and the Organization of Inter-African and Malagasy States (1962).

Despite the fact that these nationalist activists were seeking unity and political alliances, their respective institutions soon descended into bitter ideological clashes. The valorization of national independence and simultaneous pursuit of continental unity was beginning to seem like a potentially incompatible pairing (Franke 2007, 34). The most contentious areas of disagreement were those regarding the "bigger picture" questions of independence: why should unity be sought in the first place, which objectives and interests should inter-African cooperation serve, and how should it be institutionalized? Ultimately, there were many competing visions within nationalist groups regarding the nature of post-colonial Africa's relationship with its former imperial overlords (Franke 2007, 53). Activists and movements viciously turned against one another as a result of these conflicting viewpoints. On the more pragmatic and moderate end,

some nationalists sought to maintain "collaborative" economic and political relationships between Africa and imperial metropoles and to encourage the flow of resources and aid. At the more radical end, nationalists were committed to true isolationist independence through economic self-sufficiency and limited trade (Van Walraven 1999, 112). Nkrumah, to be sure, was an outspoken and unapologetic member of the latter group.

Per Nkrumah's assessment, aid was "merely a revolving credit, paid by the neo-colonial master, passing through the neo-colonial state and returning to the neo-colonial master in the form of increased profits" (Lagan 2018). Neocolonialism, to Nkrumah, was the ultimate impediment to Africans' pursuit of long-term liberation, as it sought to use new African nations as puppets through which Western influence could continue to be extended over states. As Nkrumah described in his seminal treatise *Africa Must Unite* (1963), European colonists had deliberately carved up the continent into arbitrary, fictitious zones, with the goal of dividing resources and territorial entities. By virtue of this "Balkanization," the Europeans had created many weak, unstable states and, in doing so, ensured Africans' continued dependence on former colonial powers. Nkrumah warned against this scheme, proclaiming that African statesmen were misguided if they "[thought] associations with non-African powers [would] foster their true interests" (1963, 184). Instead, he prescribed, independence could only come to be through the close economic association of African states themselves. He rationalized the economic basis of this mission in his book *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*:

> The foreign firms who exploit our resources long ago saw the strength to be gained by acting on a Pan-African scale. By means of interlocking directorships, cross-share holdings and other devices, groups of apparently different companies have formed, in fact, one enormous capitalist monopoly. The only effective way to challenge this economic empire and to recover possession of our heritage is for us to act on a Pan-African basis through a Union Government (1970, 259).

Although Pan-Africanism, as an ideology, emerged from Black anti-imperial thought, Nkrumah creatively conceived of it as a feature of Western economics as well. In their generations-long capture of African resources and wealth, Western imperial powers often collaborated with one another to suppress nationalist activities, sustain European presence in every corner of Africa, and ensure their mutual advantage and profits (Rahman 2007, 134). Ironically, by joining forces to ensure continental hegemony, imperial powers reified a continental entity; the colonies, as an object of Western imperial capitalism, were, in fact, a Pan-African entity. The "Concert of Europe"—the consensus among the great powers of the nineteenth century to maintain the balance of power, political boundaries, and spheres of influence—was clear evidence of this. Ahmad Rahman characterizes Nkrumah's subversion succinctly: "Nkrumah campaigned for a socialist Pan-Africanism as the natural counter to the West's capitalist Pan-Africanism" (2007, 134).

In Nkrumah's materialist understanding, economic cooperation presupposed political cooperation, and the final frontier of African political unification would be continental in scale. Although he had engaged with various political unity schemes, Nkrumah came to consider the formation of sub-regional entities as a distraction and hindrance to the task of creating a unified African front; as such, he directed his energy toward calling upon Africans to truly unite. He actualized this vision through the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The OAU, which Nkrumah positioned as Africa's main continental body, was inaugurated in Addis

Ababa in 1963, and its leadership presented it as an unprecedented opportunity for continental cooperation (Zack-Williams 2006, 190).

Nkrumah's Union of African States (UAS) was one of many African political organizations and movements that were discontinued with the founding of the OAU, in the spirit of promoting "the unity and solidarity of the African States" (OAU 1963, 3). As Nkrumah and his fellow brand of Pan-Africanists construed it, continental unity trumped regional alliances, and Africans had a duty to seize this political momentum. However, while the OAU intended to uproot and diminish regionalism in Africa, in reality the opposite turned out to be the case. Tensions between the OAU and various competing sub-regional organizations made it such that, in the OAU's first ten years of existence, regionalism actually saw overall growth across the continent (Franke 2007, 37).

There are myriad reasons as to why this seemingly paradoxical uptick in regionalism took place, but we can look to Jon Woronoff's (1975) assessment for a summary of the principal factors and contexts that contributed to the OAU's downfall. First, the African continent was immensely vast, and, as a result, regional cooperation was often the most conducive means to ensuring social, economic, and political cohesion (Woronoff 1975, 68). Cooperation across such an expansive landmass, at a practical level, was a difficult feat—especially without true centralization of resources or administrative control. The OAU succumbed to this insufficiency. The second major reason for the rise of regionalism during this era, Woronoff identifies, was the OAU's proven "failure to provide a true continental framework for cooperative ventures" (1975, 75). As was often the case in global anti-colonial programming, political leaders pedaled visionary, game-changing platforms for liberation, but unfortunately did not offer concrete agendas indicating how such goals would ultimately be achieved.

Third, Nkrumah and his administration may have, at times, essentialized continental African politics in their quest to locate the "essence" of Africanity. In reality, Africa was composed of many layered socio-cultural structures, and the effort to impose a single institutional structure upon inherently non-unified peoples may have been overly reductive. Across the Atlantic, in the United States, the institution of slavery had de-cultured and assimilated descendants of African slaves, such that they came to have one common language, religion, and "culture." Heavily inspired by the oneness of the Black communities he had witnessed during his student years, Nkrumah sought to emulate Black America in Africa's post-colonial form. In this vein, Nkrumah's projection of Pan-Africanist possibilities onto Africans based upon uniquely African American socio-cultural dynamics may have been an inapplicable arrangement (Franke 2007, 37).

Although urbanized African elites had studied in a common language and become well-versed in common cultures (whether or not they accepted these as their own), Africa remained one of the world's most diverse regions, in many domains. Even after generations of colonial domination across the continent, traditional religions and indigenous languages still reigned in non-urban locales (Rahman 2007, 114). As we have seen, the philosophy of consciencism saw no contradiction between African mysticism and Marxist materialism, and Nkrumah claimed to hold indigenous African culture and spirituality in high regard. However, perhaps it was this very notion of some distinct, identifiable "African culture" that marked a pitfall of Nkrumah's approach to Pan-Africanism.

Conclusion

As readers of anti-colonial history and witnesses to its present-day ramifications and legacies, we must treat Nkrumaism critically. Essential to conducting a critical reading of Nkrumah's political philosophy is that we historicize Nkrumah himself and understand his ideas as historically contingent. Though we can reasonably pin Nkrumah as a—if not *the*—key figure in the proliferation of anti-colonial, nationalist, Pan-Africanist thought in the mid-twentieth century, he had the legacy of various early-twentieth-century movements, intellectuals, and activists before him to thank.

At its simplest, Nkrumaism was a philosophy of decolonization that Nkrumah developed syncretically, through a blending of the ideologies of global anti-imperialism, African socialism, and the promises of Pan-Africanism (Ahlman 2017, 5). However, it offers us more than just that. Nkrumaism does not have a final form; Ghana's independence does not mark the moment when Nkrumaism suddenly materialized as a legitimate or fully formed philosophy. Rather, it was a dynamic school of thought that was both historically contingent and subject to the shifting national, international, and global circumstances within which it existed. Nkrumah's political discourses developed in a time of heightened global anti-colonial consciousness—an experimental age during which anti-colonialists of all political flavors synthesized and activated various liberation schemes. At times, they did so successfully, seizing on their intellectual and political virility; at other times, internal and external hindrances thwarted their movements. We should resist the impulse to characterize Nkrumaism as incoherent, or as the result of unsuccessfully transmuted Western ideals. Ultimately, in its creative syncretisms and its pitfalls alike, the most valuable thing Nkrumaism offers us is a pertinent case study in the anti-colonial moment's reclamation of agency.

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Politicizing Healthcare: A Review of *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* by Alondra Nelson

Jerry Charleston

In her book *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination*, historian Alondra Nelson addresses the social and political context that influenced the rise of health activism in the African American community, and the role of the Black Panther Party in this movement. *Body and Soul* reveals ways in which access to healthcare becomes politicized, and through that becomes racialized. Primarily, Nelson draws upon the firsthand accounts of former members or supporters of the Black Panthers as well as official government documents and public media to thoroughly illustrate the significance of the health activism of the Black Panther Party throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Using these sources, Nelson describes the evolution of the Black Panther Party from an organization that simply stood for self-defense to one that also advocated for sociopolitical reform and improvements in African American healthcare.

The Black Panther Party (originally named Black Panther Party for Self-Defense) was initially founded in 1966 with the goal of protecting the African American community from police brutality, which has contributed to their misinterpreted image of being an aggressive group (Nelson 2013, 5–6). Due to the longstanding history of African Americans having inadequate access to quality healthcare and doctors, the Black Panthers moved to expand their support services to include the provision of medical supplies and various forms of treatment and prevention programs within African American communities. The health activism of the Black Panthers would later come to also encompass the realm of politics, as the group began to argue that health rights were important components of civil rights. These efforts would become crucial for the African American community during the peaceful push for a change in governmental health policies in the mid-twentieth century.

The first chapter of the book, "African American Responses to Medical Discrimination Before 1966," addresses various ways that the African American community promoted health activism prior to the actions of the Black Panther Party. Nelson focuses on the ways early activists were involved in projects of institution building, "integrationism," and the "politics of knowledge" (2013, 24). Institution building refers to the organization of an alternative resource that can be used to access consultations and treatments outside of public healthcare providers such as hospitals and clinics. An example of institution building that Nelson draws upon is the history of Marcus Garvey and the Black Cross Nurses (BCN) of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), who spearheaded the movement to allow African American health practitioners to work in clinical settings (Nelson 2013, 30–31). The concept of "integrationism," or inclusion, was utilized to target issues of segregation and discrimination within the American healthcare community. Nelson references the activist movements that were led by members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Medical Association (NMA), which had the goal of breaking down the racial barriers within the healthcare system, in order to give the African American community the same accessibility to quality healthcare providers as all other US citizens. Finally, Nelson discusses

activism that focused on the "politics of knowledge," which sought to counter the common biomedical ideology originating from the Jim Crow era that Black bodies were physiologically different than white bodies. This ideology was the framework for what Nelson terms "sociomedical racialism," or the misuse of scientific theory to justify racism within the healthcare establishment (2013, 42–43). Nelson uses these historical references to describe how earlier African American responses to healthcare oppression provided an effective transition to the activism efforts of the Black Panther Party.

The second chapter, "Origins of Black Panther Party Health Activism," provides an in-depth account of how the Black Panthers emerged as leaders of the healthcare activism movement in the 1970s. Drawing on the work of an earlier generation of African American healthcare activists, the Black Panthers initially focused on institution building, in particular the promotion of "serve the people" campaigns directed toward the poor and African Americans, encouraging communities to seek out educational opportunities and to promote anti-poverty projects (Nelson 2013, 52). The Black Panthers also directed the opening of various health clinics for oppressed people of color and the poor. Although these efforts were led by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in Oakland, the ideology for the founding of the clinics was supported by members of the Black Panther Party in other states, such as Fred Hampton in Chicago (Bassett 2019, 353–54). Nelson provides various perspectives on the founding of these clinics and how they were influenced by the theorists Mao (1964), Guevara (1996), and Fanon (1963), who are all known for being revolutionaries who pushed for social reform through politics. With these references, Nelson describes the progression of healthcare activism toward politics by addressing the ways in which the Black Panthers evolved from a self-defense group into a well-rounded, peaceful organization that prioritized the establishment of improved healthcare for the poor and oppressed people of color.

The third chapter, "The People's Free Medical Clinics," provides a powerful opening to continue the discussion on the medical clinics founded by the Black Panther Party. Throughout this chapter, Nelson reveals the idea that there was a systemic oppression of African Americans in the healthcare field and unequal access to quality treatment. Denying proper access to care was a political tactic that would leave African Americans vulnerable to caregivers of a different race, a result of the high number of Caucasian physicians at the time. In response to these issues, the Black Panther clinics became an efficient way to reduce such patient-physician interactions within the mainstream healthcare system and increase the number of Black physicians treating Black patients. The utilization of media formats to promote the free health clinics reveals a form of politics expressed by the Black Panther Party. Following the creation of the clinics, the Black Panthers posted flyers that provided information on the clinics, while also addressing the ways in which healthcare could be exploited to act as a form of genocide on a group of people (Nelson 2013, 91). Nelson includes information such as this to represent ways in which the Black Panthers sought to challenge the government structure in America by exposing the systemic flaws that disadvantaged African Americans.

Chapter 4, "Spin Doctors: The Politics of Sickle Cell Anemia," covers the activism of the Black Panthers in the promotion of sickle cell anemia awareness. Sickle cell anemia is a genetic condition that can appear in individuals of African descent, resulting in deformations in red blood cells that make oxygen transport difficult. The Black Panthers promoted an increase in awareness of the condition as well as education for those within the community who would be likely to encounter the illness. In its sickle cell education efforts, the movement would use the history of slavery in America as a method of furthering the discussion on how unequal healthcare

access can become a form of genocide (Nelson 2013, 134). The US government pushed to shut down the sickle cell campaigns of the Black Panthers on many occasions, but due to the opposition of the African American community, President Nixon would go on to pass the National Sickle Cell Anemia Control Act (1972), which allocated millions of dollars to researching sickle cell anemia.

In the fifth chapter, "As American as Cherry Pie: Contesting the Biologization of Violence," Nelson ties together all of the previously discussed instances of healthcare oppression in the African American community. Nelson focuses primarily on the ways in which the African American community has been harmed by a fragile US social structure that portrays them as "others" due to unfounded beliefs about their biological composition. She writes about those underserved and mistreated by healthcare providers, and the response by the Black Panthers to separate their community from the "healthcare state," which is in reference to the wealthy white majority that has access to quality healthcare (2013, 153). Nelson refers to a variety of organizations and groups who were supportive of reforms to the way of thinking pertaining to African Americans. However, Nelson also mentions the formation of the "violence center" at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), by a group that would use their public status to argue that Black and Latino individuals are more prone than others to violent pathological tendencies (2013, 160–62). Groups such as these led to significant targeting of minority groups in public policy. In response to "racist geneticists" such as these, the Black Panthers would publish articles that were meant to debunk the claims that African Americans were physiologically inferior to other races. Other efforts of the Black Panthers would extend to college campuses such as UCLA, where they would combat the teachings of the violence center by challenging them in court. These efforts would promote changes in research methods pertaining to African American subjects that would support ethically sound practices backed by accurate scientific findings.

Nelson's book provides a very comprehensive overview of how the Black Panther Party was involved in social reforms within the US healthcare system. The organization helped pave the way for African Americans to have a voice in healthcare provision as well as government policy (Nelson 2013, 181). Their mobilization of support programs and conflicts with other organizations created significant changes within the government healthcare infrastructure. Nelson challenges the dominant view that the Black Panthers were simply aggressive protestors by providing an abundance of historical context that reveals the group as being invested in projects that sought the betterment of the poor and the African American community. Although they dropped the "for Self-Defense" aspect of their name, the Black Panthers showed that they were more than capable of providing change and safety for the community (Kamish 2021, 517), and through Nelson's writing, this is illuminated.

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It's Not Race—It's Racism: A Review of *Under the Skin: The Hidden Toll of Racism on American Lives and on the Health of Our Nation* by Linda Villarosa

Abigail Ladd

In her third book, *Under the Skin: The Hidden Toll of Racism on American Lives and on the Health of Our Nation*, Linda Villarosa provides a comprehensive introduction to the complex relationship between race and health in the United States. Her goal is to educate her readers on how racism operates through a variety of mechanisms—including social policy, scientific racism, and health provider bias—to negatively impact the health of Black Americans.

In order to achieve this overview, Villarosa systematically builds her arguments from the ground up. First, she establishes that racial health disparities are prevalent and harming all Black Americans. Then, she dissects these disparities using extensive research and testimonies, while also providing explanations that disprove common misconceptions. In each chapter, Villarosa examines the relationship between race and health through a different lens, focusing on the main mechanisms that drive health inequality, and ultimately focusing on the prevalence of racial biases within the healthcare system and societal structures. After proving there are broad consequences of racism on health, she concludes by presenting solutions for improving the nation's endemic racial health disparities with innovations that target the roots of these inequities.

In her introductory chapter, Villarosa establishes her credibility as an advocate for health equity in the United States. As a professor of journalism and recurring contributor to the *New York Times Magazine*, Villarosa has engaged critically with these theories throughout her career. Since the beginning of her career, as a writer for *Essence*, Villarosa's work has focused on empowering Black women and communicating the relationship between race and health. *Under the Skin* highlights the breadth of knowledge and expertise Villarosa has gained from her long career as a communicator and advocate of public health and race theories.

Villarosa begins *Under the Skin* by describing her own lived experiences as the only Black woman growing up in a predominantly white community. Eventually, her story climaxes when the adversity she faced throughout her life impacted the birth of her child. Despite her good health, extensive education, and high socioeconomic status, she gave birth to a pre-term, low-birth-weight baby. The reality that she had done everything right, yet still suffered adverse birth outcomes led her to believe that something else was negatively impacting the health of Black mothers and babies.

Prior to her own experience, Villarosa also believed the common misconception that racial health disparities are the result of individual choices and poverty. There is an indisputable divide in the quality of life and health outcomes of Americans, and it is mainly a "Black-white" divide. For instance, Black Americans have a lower life expectancy, a higher rate of infant mortality, and higher rates of chronic disease compared with whites and many other ethnic groups. However, this divide isn't created by poverty, nor is it perpetuated by individual health behaviors; it is created and sustained by racism. Racism is the principal inequality that impacts the health outcomes of Black Americans through a variety of different mechanisms. After

making this point clearly, Villarosa uses the rest of her book to dissect how racism is the cause of the health crisis among Black Americans.

Racism operates through a multitude of mechanisms to negatively impact health. However, its consequences are most apparent through the theory of weathering. Weathering is an integral part of Villarosa's first theme of living as a Black American in a society built to foster the success of whites. Introduced in "The Weathering Hypothesis and the Health of African American Women and Infants: Evidence and Speculations" (Geronimus 1992), weathering describes how racism deteriorates the body through chronic stress. Functionally, weathering is a result of having to work twice as hard to do half as much. The increased effort needed to succeed in the presence of racial discrimination and bias is referred to as "high-effort coping" (Villarosa 2022, 80). Weathering, in conjunction with high-effort coping, results in a predisposition to a myriad of chronic health conditions, premature aging, and worse health outcomes overall. Moreover, weathering articulates how lived experiences can influence internal biology and have pervasive physical and emotional effects.

Following this analysis, Villarosa highlights the dangerous legacy of the misconception that Black bodies are inherently different and inferior to white bodies. In the medical establishment there is a long history of physicians searching for evidence of genetic differences between Black and white bodies that would justify unequal health outcomes (see chapter 2). Racism, not patient care, was the motivation for such efforts, as scientists were enlisted in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to justify slavery and acts of medical violence with scientific evidence. However, there are no race-based genetic differences between Black and white bodies. Therefore, race is not predictive of disease risk. Despite the lack of evidence supporting genetic differences, many practices in modern medicine arise from this harmful misconception. Delusions such as Black immunity to pain and weakened lung function are still taught in medical programs throughout the nation. The persistence of these myths has led to the continued use of a "race correction" for breathing measurements, leading to the increased suffering of Black patients and the minimization of their pain (Villarosa 2022, 40).

Villarosa also details how the biases of healthcare professionals themselves contribute to unequal care for Black patients. Drawing on evidence from the 2003 National Academy of Sciences report *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care* by Smedley and Stith, Villarosa supports her claims that racial bias can affect who receives proper care and treatment. This collection of studies has demonstrated that there is a link between the biases of healthcare professionals and racial health disparities. Notably, they prove that doctors are human, and just as prone to unconscious racism as the rest of society. The persistence of such biases amongst medical professionals compounds to decrease Black Americans' life expectancy and disease survival rates, while the life expectancy and survival rates of white Americans continue to grow.

Structural racism is a prominent theme in Villarosa's later chapters. Her focus shifts from healthcare settings to local environments and communities, using substantial statistics, testimonies, and even poetry to illustrate how the various social determinants of health impact the lives of Black Americans. Notably, Villarosa dedicates an entire chapter to the impacts of the social and physical environment on health. In particular, Black and poor communities are located disproportionately close to pollution and waste sites. Moreover, although they face the consequences of proximity to pollution, they are far less likely than whites to consume the goods and services that produce the toxins that are poisoning them.

Focusing on another social determinant of health, Villarosa contextualizes the impact of education on health outcomes. Recent research has disproven the widely accepted idea that education and socioeconomic status equalizes health disparities across different races. She cites a study from Gaydosh, Schorpp, Chen, Miller, and Harris (2018) that has shown that college completion can actually be correlated to worse physical health outcomes among African Americans from disadvantaged backgrounds. Thus, their research shows that upward mobility has been found to come with its own physical health deficits. Likewise, the Black-white gap in life expectancy is greater at higher levels of educational attainment (Gaydosh et al. 2018). This study in particular combines all of Villarosa's overarching themes, showing how the combined effects of weathering and structural racism negate the health benefits of higher education and socioeconomic status.

In the final chapter of *Under the Skin*, Villarosa turns her attention to the future of health in the United States. There is no simple solution to these adverse health outcomes, as there is no simple cause for them. The structural inequalities inundating Black communities will take years to undo. With these challenges in mind, Villarosa poses possible avenues for lessening racial health disparities. One of these interventions takes an upstream focus, implementing implicit bias training as part of healthcare providers' required certification. However, Villarosa argues that the "anti-bias" training of the past is largely inadequate when it comes to fostering real change. Instead, implicit bias training, she asserts, should take a more holistic approach, utilizing the "Undoing Racism" model (Villarosa 2022, 184). The "Undoing Racism" model evaluates racism in individuals and in broader structures of an organization in order to address the roots of injustices. Villarosa also elaborates on downstream health interventions. One that has proven successful in other countries involves the implementation of community health workers (CHWs). Typically, CHWs are trusted members of the community who provide healthcare support to marginalized communities. In this way, CHWs help to expand access to preventative medicine and social support, two components critical to the health of the nation as a whole.

Under the Skin is an accessible and comprehensive guide to the "hidden toll of racism" on the broader health of the nation. Readers of *Under the Skin* are likely trying to deepen their understanding of racism's impacts on health and are open to supporting Villarosa's arguments. But it is those who deny the importance of this issue, or even deny its existence, who need to engage with *Under the Skin* the most. The question is, how do we get them to engage with *Under the Skin* and keep an open mind about Villarosa's messages? Although there has been recent movement toward decreasing bias and discrimination in medicine, as well as a broad acceptance that these are substantial issues plaguing the United States, lasting change is slow and many resist it. Villarosa's *Under the Skin* can serve as a catalyst for informing individuals about the roots of racial health disparities, as it has the power to change minds, inspire action, and improve lives.

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Explaining the Unexplainable: A Review of *Partial Stories: Maternal Death from Six Angles* by Claire L. Wendland

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Obstetrician and anthropologist Claire L. Wendland's *Partial Stories: Maternal Death from Six Angles* is the culmination of decades of ethnographic research and medical practice in Malawi. Wendland's work seeks to better understand the multifaceted causes of maternal morbidity, considering six main contributors to maternal death and understanding each as a possible explanation for this phenomenon. Drawing on her ample experience and research in Malawi, Wendland uses medical case studies, interviews, and contextual evidence to explain why women in Malawi perish from giving birth, while also recognizing the ambiguity inherent in any single explanation for maternal death. She highlights this ambiguity by examining competing explanations for high rates of maternal death from researchers and caregivers worldwide. Each chapter of the book is focused on one of the main explanations that circulate to explain maternal death, discussing what each explanation contributes and leaves out. As such, Wendland ultimately concludes that no one reason can fully explain what drives high maternal mortality rates. Rather, she finds that the complex reasons for maternal death depend on multiple factors and actors.

The first explanation concerns what Wendland calls "Dangerous Modernities." This chapter details the cultural shifts often correlated with the recent increase in maternal mortality in Malawi. She draws on extensive evidence from Malawians who reminisce about former times and generations when significantly fewer women died of pregnancy complications. Her discussions with caregivers demonstrate a marked difference in how traditional healers and biomedical physicians at the local hospitals view the increase in maternal deaths. Many nurses and doctors blame maternal death on the widespread practice of traditional customs, citing a lack of modernity as a central cause of pregnancy complications (Wendland 2022, 28). However, traditional healers are more likely to blame the advent of modern ideas about sexuality and female liberation, which they argue lead to unsafe reproductive health practices (Wendland 2022, 27). Although both are likely contributors, Wendland argues that the disconnect between these explanations is central to the issue. In an effort to focus on culture and behavior, both groups of caregivers fail to recognize the negative impact of systemic factors such as lack of supplies and health infrastructure, malnutrition, and restrictive economic policies following the end of the colonial period in Malawi.

The second chapter, "Knowing Bodies," dives further into the biophysical factors contributing to maternal death, walking through specific medical cases and the methods used to explain death after the fact. Although she considers sepsis, anemia, pollution, and a variety of important contributors to health that can complicate a woman's experience with pregnancy, the most prominent factor that Wendland discusses is sexual networks. In an economy shattered by colonialism, sex became a means of socioeconomic survival for women, leading to increased rates of untreated sexually transmitted infections, which had a widespread impact on health. These health issues, coupled with a post-colonial health infrastructure unable to address them, are a major contributor to maternal death. The chapter concludes with a moving narrative of a

nurse who treats patients in her own home, leading into Wendland's discussion of a third factor contributing to maternal death, "Ambivalent Technologies." In this chapter, Wendland looks at the ways health professionals in Malawi make decisions about using medical tools, and how this impacts maternal death. The decision to use or withhold medical technology depends on numerous factors, including available staffing and appropriate substitute technologies. Deaths are most often caused by "unused tools, misused tools, or absent tools" (Wendland 2022, 111). Wendland analyzes these possibilities, using the situation of obstructed labor as an example that demonstrates the variable access to and use of healthcare tools such as pelvimetry and partographs. Medical case studies and excerpts of letters from her time in Malawi further support her argument that these medical technologies are ambivalent in their power to "save or kill," as a "cure or poison" (Wendland 2022, 135). It all depends on whether facilities are equipped to use the tools they have for their intended purpose.

A fourth factor Wendland discusses is the idea of "Abundant Scarcity," that healthcare workers are constantly making do with less. A lack of medical equipment and staffing have been so normalized for caregivers that "absences, uncertainties, and substitutions" are commonly part of patient care (Wendland 2022, 152). Water and blood banks were the most prominent scarcities mentioned by caregivers, and their wide-ranging impacts are tied into other barriers to healthcare provision. Wendland analyzes these scarcities by using an anthropological lens, with references to the work of James Ferguson (2013) and other researchers. She also discusses the issue of access to care and the ethical implications of providing care by referencing Western research studies. Such studies can be an important resource for providing care in low-income countries; nevertheless, their contributions do little to address systemic inequality in healthcare access within these communities. One of the final points discussed in this chapter concerns the lists of medical equipment, such as sterile string to tie the baby's umbilical cord, that expecting mothers are required to bring to the hospital. Even now, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) sends emergency birth kits consisting of items like gloves, razors, and soap, promoting these kits as a solution to dangerous birthing environments (Kirkegaard 2022). Pushing for birth kits is reactionary; it reduces the problem to simply a lack of supplies and steers attention away from the underlying root causes of maternal death. As such, Wendland concludes that maternal mortality is often "produced passively" as a "product of actions not taken" (2022, 182). Many components of health infrastructure are lacking, from hospital staffing to abortion access. The accumulation of scarcity and actions not taken to address these issues is, Wendland argues, a major cause of maternal mortality.

The final two chapters, "Countless Accounting" and "Fragile Authority," discuss the study of health through quantitative lenses such as epidemiology and the role that politics and government institutions play in maternal death. Wendland argues that the use of statistics to present one authoritative narrative helps to create a partial understanding of maternal death. She describes two key methods for tracking maternal death—the use of verbal autopsies and the UN's population equations—to demonstrate how important information is left out of maternal health data and to illustrate the lack of accountability in reporting quantitative data about health. In her conclusion, Wendland finishes telling the story of Faith Chisoni, who died after delivering twins by Cesarean section. Many uncertainties contributed to diagnosing the causes of her death, yet her story is almost nondescript, as many women in Malawi face the same fate. Her story is partial, both "true and incomplete" (Wendland 2022, 278). However, Wendland ends her disquieting, deeply thought-provoking work with a final story about a woman who did not make it inside the hospital in time, but gave birth outside the doors with a crowd of women supporting

her, delivering a healthy child. Wendland and her medical partner saw that "there was no need" for their assistance, and so they "walked away," leaving readers with a final reminder that healthy, joyful births are still happening, despite it all (2022, 297).

Wendland's perspective as both an anthropologist and an obstetrician allows her to communicate these complex issues with a high level of nuance and expertise. Her use of specific interviews and quotations makes her points particularly compelling. As the title indicates, every story told in this book is partial, both in their incompleteness and in their lack of impartiality; both storytellers and listeners have a true stake in each story. As Chimamanda Adichie (2009) has warned, there is danger in a single story, and Wendland ensures that no one story takes precedence in this book. She spins together these partial stories and potential explanations for maternal death in a way that does not assume any singular explanation overrides another, nor presents any of them as all-encompassing. Central themes of the narrative include competing opinions about Western biomedicine and modernity, especially given the ways that modern medicine fails women in Malawi. Additionally, the narrative recognizes how maternal health is often positioned as the responsibility of women themselves, with the message that they are in charge of making their pregnancy safe, even when they are not equipped with the means to do so. The nature of this book, with its combination of authentic narratives, real patient cases, anthropological understanding, biomedical interpretations, and public health assessments, creates an insightful and compelling look into the contours of maternal death, recognizing the partiality of each contributor and making clear that no one explanation will serve to address the scope of the issue at hand. There is no single explanation for the unexplainable nature of maternal death.

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