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Georgia's reaction to Theodore Roosevelt's negro policy

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GEORGIA'S REACTION TO THEODORE ROOSEVELT'S NEGRO POLICY

A THESIS
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INTRODUCTION

Theodore Roosevelt's ascendency to the presidency from the "graveyard" of politics was to please him, but at the same time cause a great deal of alarm among his countrymen. His promise to continue the policies of his slain predecessor, William McKinley, did little to calm their fears. They were not surprised, but often dismayed over the obvious changes that Theodore Roosevelt started making quite early in his presidential career. The policies of a diplomatic and gentle personality like McKinley were to be enacted quite differently by the impulsive and strenuous new president.

For the Negro, Theodore Roosevelt presented a ray of hope that was to later be abandoned. The Negro was hopeful when he was made to feel a part of Roosevelt's "square deal," but saddened when he was excluded from it.

Roosevelt's relationship with Georgians, both Negro and white, varied with the occasion. When he was lauded by the Negro Georgians, the whites generally found cause for condemnation; and when the white Georgians were praising him, the Negroes could feel the "door of hope" being closed in their faces.

With skillful political manipulations, Roosevelt managed to serve as chief executive of these two opposing factions in Georgia. And depending upon his whims and the existing tide of events, he used both
their praises and condemnations to his advantage.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of Roosevelt's manipulation of policy it was necessary to study his Negro policy and Georgia's reaction to it. An analysis of the Letters of Theodore Roosevelt edited by Elting E. Morison and John Blum was made in an effort to understand this policy. The Atlanta Constitution, the Atlanta Journal, the Atlanta News, and two Negro newspapers, the Atlanta Independent and the Savannah Tribune, were also investigated in seeking to gain a knowledge of the attitude of the people of Georgia towards Roosevelt's Negro policy.

This study reveals evidence to support the conclusion that Roosevelt's belief in racial superiority dominated his Negro policy. It is also evidenced in this study that the President's actions in relation to the Negro were usually prompted by political necessity.
CHAPTER I

EARLY RELATIONS WITH THE NEGRO

Theodore Roosevelt made contact with the race issue early in his career. His first act in a Republican National Convention was to second the nomination of ex-Congressman John R. Lynch, a Negro from Mississippi, as temporary chairman of the convention in 1884. Serving as Civil Service Commissioner under Grover Cleveland he displayed a firm allegiance to the civil service principle. He thwarted efforts that were being made to fire all of the Negro employees at Washington by insisting that all applicants should be treated according to merit, to the utter disregard of race, color, or political allignment. Negroes heralded this act with favor and approval.

His career as governor of the state of New York was primarily ushered in by his association with a regiment of Negro soldiers. During the Spanish-American War, mixed with a variety of motives and deep intuitions, Roosevelt and Colonel Leonard Wood raised a volunteer regiment of "Rough Riders." The victory of these "Rough Riders" at San Juan Hill

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3The hill was later christened Kettle Hill because some sugar kettles were found there. Henry Pringle, Theodore Roosevelt: A
was the peak of Roosevelt's military career. Roosevelt sometimes had occasions to forget that this victory may never have come had it not been for the courageous and valiant Negro outfit that saved the lives of the "Rough Riders." His reaction to the performance of the Negro troops varied with the occasion. He gave them unequivocal praise in a farewell address to a group of Indians, ranchers, cowboys, college athletes, and Negroes that had served under him. Again when he was campaigning for governor of New York in 1898 the Negroes were verbally held in high esteem. However, the next year in an article in Scribner's Magazine, Roosevelt wounded the pride of Negro soldiers and civilians by alluding to the inferiority of the soldiers. 4

Thus, the "Rough Rider" with his glasses and sombrero charged not only on the Kettle Hills, but in effect, charged on the political heights to the governorship. Of course, the Negro vote of New York was behind him.

Theodore Roosevelt's term as governor was not brilliant or interesting. Through the short duration of his term as governor, he appointed one or two Negroes to unimportant positions and entertained a Negro artist at the gubernatorial mansion. At Rochester he delivered the dedication address at the unveiling of the Frederick Douglass monument. 5 He successfully lived up to his pledge to Boss Tom Platt to not disturb the

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5 Miller, Race Adjustment, p. 284.
state machine. Nevertheless, within two years he posed somewhat of a problem. When he discharged the Superintendent of Insurance for corruption he provided the public with evidence that he was not actually Boss Platt's puppet. Deeming Roosevelt as a threat to the state machine, Boss Platt made concerted efforts to rid the governorship of this troublesome element. Consequently, Roosevelt was nominated as the Republican choice for vice president in 1900.

On April 3, 1900, Roosevelt wrote Marcus Alonzo Hanna who opposed his nomination to the vice presidency. In this letter he substantiated the fact that he did not desire the nomination. Accepting the vice presidential nomination was the least promising path to the presidency in 1904 for Roosevelt. Realizing that he was being maneuvered, Roosevelt did not welcome the nomination, but "he accepted it philosophically and regarded it as marking an end to his political career." Roosevelt was clever enough to realize that the Negro Republican could add much to his own little "machine." He made part of his domestic diplomacy transparent as early as July 26, 1900, when he wrote William Henry Lewis, a Virginia born Negro graduate of Harvard Law School, expressing his desire to become acquainted with Booker T. Washington.

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7Pringle, Theodore Roosevelt, p. 216.

8Joseph Bucklin Bishop, Theodore Roosevelt and His Times Shown In His Own Letters (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), I, 139.

which, in essence, contained plans for him to visit the South. He spoke of intentions to visit Atlanta and stop off in Roswell, Georgia to visit the old home of his mother.\textsuperscript{10}

According to the letters, Booker T. Washington was entertained by Roosevelt before he became president. On September 1, 1901, Washington wrote that, "I was delighted to have the privilege of meeting Mrs. Roosevelt and the members of your family."\textsuperscript{11}

The dismay caused by Roosevelt's incumbency as vice president of the United States was soon removed. His dream of becoming president was realized as the result of a most shocking and unfortunate occurrence. President William McKinley was assassinated. Immediately after his death on September 14, 1901, Theodore Roosevelt took the oath; he promised to persist in the policies of his slain predecessor.

Whatever his intentions, Roosevelt could not have followed in the footsteps of McKinley for any length of time, for he was everything that McKinley was not. Not even the presidency could curb his impetuous nature.\textsuperscript{12}

On the very day that Theodore Roosevelt became president, he dispatched a handwritten letter to Booker T. Washington. This time he was

\footnotesize{364-65. (Hereinafter cited as Letters). Lewis was active in Republican politics in Boston. Roosevelt later appointed him to Assistant United States Attorney for New England.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., IV, 2096.}


explaining that his trip to the South would have to be postponed. And there was urgency in his request for Washington to visit him so that, "the question of possible future appointments in the South could be discussed." On two occasions Washington conferred with the President in Washington, D. C.

While staying at the home of a friend in Washington, Booker T. Washington received a written invitation from Roosevelt asking him to dine at the White House that evening. There appears a note in the Roosevelt letters in Booker T. Washington's hand dated October 16, 1901, which reads, "Dear Mr. President: I shall be very glad to accept your invitation for dinner this evening at 7:30."

Roosevelt displayed an acute ignorance of Southern opinion when he invited Booker T. Washington to the famous October 16, 1901, dinner. This incident was the first one that involved the President in the question of the Negro and social equality, and placed the Negro issue in the spotlight of the nation. Many writers have attempted to oversimplify this meeting of the great educator and the President by referring to it as a coincidental luncheon. At times, in attempts to evade or blur the issue even Roosevelt appeared to forget exactly what it was and how it came about. Be that as it may, this study holds that it was a preplanned dinner.

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14 Spencer, Booker T. Washington, p. 16.

15 Pringle, Theodore Roosevelt, p. 248.
The reactions of Georgians to the dinner were mixed. It would appear that Negroes were temporarily satisfied with the belief that Roosevelt favored the equality of man. This possible belief angered the whites. The white population of Georgia was basically united in its display of outrage and disgust over the president's actions. Never before had Southern tradition been met with such utter disregard. The President had done an erroneous deed. To invite a Negro to a family dinner at the White House was unforgivable.

In the main, one of Atlanta's daily newspapers maintained a sober tone in its ensuing reports of the famous dinner. It refrained from throwing accusations and avoided sensationalism. In a release following the incident, this newspaper's position was given: "...The Constitution believes that the president made a mistake in running counter to a well nigh firmly established custom, which, view it as we may, is based on the approval of the overwhelming sentiment of the country, north as well as south."\(^\text{16}\)

The Constitution was criticized the next day by its bitter rival, the Journal, for treating the affair so mildly. In addition, the latter newspaper contended that to say that Roosevelt had the right to select his own dinner guest was giving an inadequate conclusion to a very complicated matter. Its editorials charged Roosevelt with giving sanction to the theory of social equality by practicing it. The effect of this incident was already being shown in the Negro newspapers.\(^\text{17}\)

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\(^{16}\)Atlanta Constitution, Oct. 20, 1901, p. 1.

\(^{17}\)Editorial, Atlanta Journal, Oct. 21, 1901, p. 6.
The Journal persisted in advocating that the dinner was a deplorable blunder that would lessen Roosevelt's influence for good and that Roosevelt's act had caused injury to the Negroes of the whole country by damaging the influence of the wisest and most influential Negroes in America. Fear of the Negro masses taking this incident was a hint to want social equality was termed as a consequence of the dinner. It argued that the color line was made by God, and Theodore Roosevelt had failed to recognize it.\(^\text{18}\)

Governor Allan D. Candler of Georgia was reported as having said that, "no self-respecting white man can ally himself with the President after what had occurred."\(^\text{19}\)

The views of L. A. Beatly appeared to have run counter to most white Georgians' views.

Roosevelt is the president of the United States, and there are 8,000,000 Negroes in the country he cannot ignore....As an act of a white individual I should condemn the president's entertainment of Washington; as the act of the President I consider it permissible.\(^\text{20}\)

The citizens and papers of Augusta, Georgia, condemned the visit in their expressions of surprise and disappointment.\(^\text{21}\) The Augusta Chronicle reported that the dinner was a mistake. "Although Booker T. Washington is a good Negro, he is not to be given social equality. This is more than southern prejudice, it is an ineradicable fact."\(^\text{22}\)


\(^{20}\)Atlanta Constitution, Oct. 19, 1901, p. 3.

\(^{21}\)Ibid.

\(^{22}\)Quoted in Atlanta Journal, Oct. 20, 1901, p. 6.
The Macon Telegraph warned that, "God set up the barriers between the races. No president of this or any country can break it down."23 When the "Rough Riders" were hissed in Savannah, it was interpreted as a rebuke against Theodore Roosevelt and his White House entertainment.24

Some Negroes in Georgia shared the sympathies of their white brethren. These Negroes were considered as sensible and thoughtful Negroes by the Journal. Their action for not endorsing the northern newspapers and politicians like Senator Joseph Foraker who had applauded Roosevelt for having Booker T. Washington as a dinner guest were held in high regard. S. P. Mitchell, president of the Negro Industrial School of Mississippi, accused Washington of making a mistake in accepting the invitation, and Roosevelt was criticized for extending the invitation.25

Mrs. Rebecca Felton appears to have given a summation to the general reaction of Georgians in a sequential letter:

...The feeling aroused by the action of Theodore Roosevelt in regard to Booker T. Washington, making him his social guest at the White House table would seem to show that social intimacy with Negroes is quite distasteful thirty six years after the Civil War as any time before that period; perhaps more so. It is barely possible that President Roosevelt was innocent of any intention to outrage precedent and custom in this open invitation to Booker T. Washington and we must give him the benefit of the doubt in discussing the act.

--Mrs. Rebecca Felton26

The President assumed the semblance of bewilderment and perplexity over the publicity that was given to the dinner. Despite the strong

26Letter to the Editor, Atlanta Constitution, Nov. 19, 1901, p. 6.
attacks that were made, he maintained that he had the right to invite
whomever to dinner that he pleased. His attempts to justify the dinner
were reflected in his correspondence. His insistence that the dinner
was an innocent affair is a theme that would be encountered by the reader
of his letters. Booker T. Washington was never invited to dinner again,
but he continued to serve as one of the President's chief counselors. 27

During what Theodore Roosevelt has chosen to call his "first adminis-
tration," a series of incidents followed the Booker T. Washington dinner
that involved the question of Negro rights. This study hopes to make it
clear that Roosevelt's Negro policy had its basic roots in his race
philosophy, and any efforts to uplift the Negro were secondary or coin-
cidental to his desire to become president in 1904.

In keeping with his philosophy of the separate destinies of blacks
and whites, Theodore Roosevelt actually did little in favor of the Negro
in America. It was the manner in which he administered his policies that
caused so much excitement. Not only did Roosevelt make fewer Negro
appointments than McKinley, but very few of the ones that he made were
original ones. His appointment policy was linked very closely to patron-
age, for his efforts were directed at winning Southern patronage that had
once belonged to Marcus Hanna. 28

Along such lines, Dr. William Demos Crum was appointed as Collector

27 T. R. to Lucius Nathan Littaner, October 24, 1904, Morison,
Letters, IV, 181, T. R. to Philip Batbell Stewart, October 25, 1901,
ibid., III, 182.

of Customs of Charleston, South Carolina. His appointment was very much akin to his close friendship with Booker T. Washington, and his devotion to the Republican party. Crum had served as party chairman of his county in excess of twenty years and from 1884-1904 he was a delegate to every Republican National Convention. 29 In 1892, President Benjamin Harrison appointed Crum to the postmastership of Charleston. However, Crum was withdrawn from the position when Hanna's "Lily White" faction of the Republican Party triumphed. 30 Crum was selected in 1894 as the Republican candidate for United States senator. His candidacy merely denoted victory for his faction of the Republican Party because he was trapped in a hopeless contest against Benjamin Tillman, the master of South Carolina's Democratic Party. Thereafter, Tillman was Crum's strongest antagonist in the Senate and opposed his procuring any federal appointments. 31 Consequently, the Southern Democrats embarked upon a long fight to defeat Crum's confirmation as Collector of Customs. Regardless of the fight, Roosevelt took his stand. Crum, unable to receive Senate approval until 1905, held his position through a series of interim appointments.

The Negro press in Georgia rallied to Crum's defense. An editorial which appeared in one Negro newspaper said that, "Although a hard fight was made against Crum's appointment the President saw the justice of the


30 Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt, p. 166.

claim and gave him the appointment." This same editorial referred to the intentions of Senator Tillman to vigorously oppose the nomination.\(^{32}\)

After Crum did not receive Senate confirmation in 1904, the Negroes remained hopeful. The *Tribune* commented that, "Crum failed to be confirmed this session, but the president would not forsake him."\(^{33}\)

Negroes were apparently gratified when Roosevelt announced that he would not close the door of hope to any class of American citizens. To Charleston's mayor, James Adger Smyth, Theodore Roosevelt wrote that, "I do not intend to appoint any unfit man to office. So far as I legitimately can I shall always endeavor to pay regard to the wishes and feelings of the people of each locality; but I cannot consent to take the position that the door of hope--the door of opportunity--is to be shut upon any man..."\(^{34}\)

In response to the appointment, one Negro magazine stated that, "Roosevelt was heroically standing by a man who ought to be confirmed by the Senate."\(^{35}\)

It was indicated in the early part of 1905 that Crum's confirmation was assured because the Republican members of the Senate endorsed it.\(^{36}\)

After Crum's confirmation, the *Constitution* warned that, "southern


\(^{35}\)"President Stands by Crum," *Voice of the Negro* (Atlanta), I (January, 1904), 7.

\(^{36}\)Atlanta *Constitution*, Jan. 6, 1905, p. 1.
people should no longer view it as evidence of any animus to override the customs of the section.\textsuperscript{37}

In the midst of the disturbance over the Crum appointment, another incident involving Negro rights confronted the President. Mrs. Minnie M. Cox was forced to resign her position as postmistress in Indianola, Mississippi. Roosevelt's decision to close the Indianola post office January 2, 1903, was rendered after a series of violent outbreaks among the white citizentry.

It is probable that Indianola's sudden awareness of the facts that Mrs. Cox was a Negro as well as a Republican was linked with a realization that Roosevelt efforts to reorganize the Republican Party were out in the open. Prior to this time, under the Harrison and McKinley administrations, Mrs. Cox' administration of the duties of the post office had been more than satisfactory.

After Mrs. Cox tendered her resignation, Roosevelt refused to accept it and made arrangements for her salary to be continued throughout her appointed term. After receiving numerous threats on their lives, the Cox family left Indianola and took asylum in Birmingham, Alabama. Once the agitation over the post office had quieted, Mrs. Cox and her husband, Wayne W. Cox, returned to Indianola and soon established a savings bank that was patronized by the majority of the Indianola community.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., Jan. 16, 1905, p. 2.

The closing of the postal facilities in Indianola sparked quite an emotional reaction in Georgia. Negroes seemed to have endorsed the actions of the President. One of their papers reported that Roosevelt had made a stand for justice.\textsuperscript{39} "Colored people in general express regrets that the case ended as it did and yet they are glad that this lawless element in Indianola was made to suffer a little inconvenience and that Mrs. Cox practically dictated who would be her successor," related a Negro magazine in its account of the affair.\textsuperscript{40}

According to reports of white reaction in Georgia, they too, gained some satisfaction from the results of the Indianola case. The Savannah Morning News declared that it was not in keeping with the rule of the majority to make Mrs. Cox postmistress in a community that objected.\textsuperscript{41} Another Georgia paper attributed the cause of the trouble in Indianola to the assembly of Negroes gambling in the lobby where white women and children had to pass.\textsuperscript{42} The Atlanta Journal rejoiced over the white people winning their cause in Indianola when the post office was reopened and taken over by a white postmaster.\textsuperscript{43}

The President stood quite steadfast on his actions concerning the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{39} Editorial, Savannah Tribune, Jan. 10, 1903, p. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{40} "The Restoration of the Indianola Post-Office," Voice of the Negro (Atlanta), I (March, 1906), 82-3.
\item \textsuperscript{41} Quoted in Gatewood, "The Indianola Affair," p. 64.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Editorial, Atlanta News, Jan. 4, 1903, p. 4.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Editorial, Jan. 28, 1904, p. 6.
\end{itemize}
Indianola affair. He was consistent in his declaration that his actions were as right as could be expected. However, he admitted that he was plagued by misgivings over the Booker T. Washington Dinner and the Crum appointment.44

The state of Georgia had more Negroes appointed to federal office than any other Southern state. Of the three Negroes who maintained important and somewhat lucrative federal positions, none was original Roosevelt appointments. During the days of McKinley-Hanna, Judson W. Lyons, a national committeeman, was appointed as Register of the Treasury in Washington; Henry Rucker, the owner of an Atlanta barbershop and active in State Republican politics, received the appointment as Collector of Internal Revenue for Georgia; and John H. Deveaux served as Collector of Customs at the port of Savannah.45 Roosevelt explained why he kept each of these three men in office:

...In Georgia I found three most prominent offices held by colored men. I doubt whether as original appointments I should have appointed so many of the colored race in one state; but after carefully going over the matter I came to the conclusion that I would not be justified in failing to reappoint all three, because they were men whose personal and official record was such that if white(s) there would have been no opposition to their appointment; and under such conditions I felt that I would be untrue to my beliefs and principles if I failed to reappoint them merely because they were colored....46


Other McKinley-Hanna Negro appointments were changed in Georgia. Matt Davis was replaced by a white man as postmaster in Athens as were the Negroes who served as postmaster in Hogansville and Surveyor in Atlanta. Apparently, the action to replace these Negro officials with white men met with the approval of Booker T. Washington and Roosevelt's advisers in Georgia. Advising the President on matters concerning the Republican Party in Georgia were Major Hanson of Macon, Walter Johnson of Atlanta, and Harry Stillwell Edwards of Macon. Hanson and Johnson were ex-Confederates and Edwards was Postmaster of Macon.

In Georgia, as in other parts of the country, Roosevelt repeatedly filled his appointment policy with ingredients of Hanna discrimination. The President was trying to wrangle control from Hanna's stronghold.

Roosevelt's retention of Judson Lyons, an able lawyer and one of the most influential Negroes in Georgia, showed an example of his strategy. Lyons expected to lose his position as Register of the Treasury because it was public knowledge that he supported Hanna for president. Prompted by Roosevelt, Booker T. Washington sent for Lyons and asked him to state his position in regards to the 1904 election. Lyons made it clear that he wanted to maintain his position as register rather than resume his law practice in Augusta. Nevertheless, he admitted that Hanna would be his choice for president in 1904, not only because he considered him as an

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able politician, but because he was a personal friend. If Hanna would 
not be in the race, Lyons explained, Roosevelt would receive his support. 
Booker T. Washington reported Lyons' request to remain in office to the 
President. Roosevelt granted the request and said that Lyons' sincerity 
and independence were commendable qualities. So it was, too, that 
Roosevelt reappointed Rucker and Deveaux who were also pro-Hanna in 
spirit and deeds. The way Roosevelt conducted these appointments was 
tended to benefit his future political accelerations.49

Deveaux had previously served as Collector of Customs at Brunswick 
during the Harrison administration.50 However, his appointment to the 
Savannah post brought unenthusiastic and even critical reaction from 
several whites and a small segment of the Negroes in Georgia.

His appointment occasioned much adverse criticism from the Savannah 
Cotton Exchange. Its members made their resentment of having to deal 
with a Negro quite obvious.51

Negroes in Georgia were censured for supporting the Atlanta Journal 
which had publically disapproved of Deveaux's appointment.52 When it was 
learned that Professor Richard R. Wight, president of Georgia State 
Industrial College for Negroes, was contesting Deveaux for the post as 
collector, the Atlanta Constitution said that, 'Wright was all wrong.'53

49Ibid., Mar. 18, 1902, p. 6; John M. Blum, The Republican 
Roosevelt (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 46; Editorial, 
Savannah Tribune, Mar. 15, 1902, p. 2.


51Note in Morison, Letters, III, 206.


According to the Washington (D.C.) Star, white Democrats indirectly supported Deveaux. It blamed the "lily-white" Republicans for the fight against Deveaux.\(^4\)

Ironically, the most powerful opposition came from Negro editor Benjamin Davis and the staff of the Atlanta Independent. This Negro newspaper was extremely adverse in its criticism of the appointments of Lyons, Deveaux, and Rucker. Because of its continuous negative views towards the three Negro appointees, it was attacked editorially by the Savannah Tribune. The Washington (D.C.) Bee and the New York Age joined the Savannah Tribune in denouncing the Atlanta Independent's position in reference to the harshness of its criticism of Rucker.\(^5\)

Despite the differences of opinion, Lyons, Deveaux, and Rucker were restored to their various federal positions. Without impunity it may be inferred that Roosevelt's decision to reappoint them was part of his endeavors to please the Negro in the South and to keep him in the Republican Party in the South.

\(^4\)Quoted in Savannah Tribune, Mar. 22, 1902, p. 2.

\(^5\)Editorials, ibid., Dec. 17, 24, 30, 1904, p. 2.
CHAPTER II

GEORGIANS WITNESS CHANGES IN PRESIDENT'S NEGRO POLICY

The hope of becoming president in his own right in 1904 was especially keen for Theordore Roosevelt. Prompted by encouragement from his constituents and the reaction of his party to his elevation to the presidency, he continued to execute his plans for the election. To be certain, his bid for the Republican Party's nomination became apparent long before the convention. In fact, his previous policies and politics had been basically motivated by his aspiration to be nominated and elected in 1904.1 Hence, he had already shown his mettle as a political strategist with a flair for the attack.

He realized that he would have to struggle to win the nomination. Considering Senator Marcus Hanna as his strongest opposition, Roosevelt sought to win the Southern patronage that belonged to Hanna. Roosevelt also knew that it would be imperative for him to control the national convention that Hanna had formerly controlled. Since this was true, his efforts to gain real ascendancy over his party were pushed homeward by discreet wielding of the patronage power.

Hanna had successfully concentrated his power in the South by building up the influence of the "lily-whites" Republicans in some Southern states and increasing the potency of the mixed delegation in others. If Roosevelt was to win the nomination for president he had to seize this control from Hanna. To accomplish this feat, Henry Clay Payne, chairman of the Wisconsin Republican National Committee and Postmaster General since 1901, and James S. Clarkson were summoned to serve as political advisors to the President. Clarkson was appointed Surveyor of Customs in New York and assigned the duty of securing Negro fealty. He was a veteran of post-bellum Dixie politics. Because of his friendship with Negro Republicans he was often able to convert the "lily-white" organizations of Hanna to the "black and tan" of the carpetbag tradition. Roosevelt, of course, profited from these changes. Booker T. Washington was recruited to assist Payne and Clarkson.

Roosevelt's actions were mainly directed towards the pacification of Negroes and the disruption of Hanna's organization in the South. Simultaneously, or by turns, he wooed the mutually hostile "black and tans," "lily-whites," and white supremacy Democrats. As the campaign

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2 The "lily-whites" were Southern Republicans who tried to build their party in the South by repudiating Republican support for the protection of the Negro. Spencer, Booker T. Washington, p. 136. The term had its origin in a factional fight among a group of Texas Republicans. Seth M. Scheiner, "President Roosevelt and the Negro 1901-1908," Journal of Negro History, XLVII (July, 1962), 172.


4 Ibid., p. 463.

5 Blum, The Republican Roosevelt, p. 44.

gained momentum, Roosevelt was to prove that he was willing to use any means necessary to be elected president in 1904.

Deeming a pro-Negro course as an expedient one to follow, Clarkson, and Payne advised Roosevelt to do so and to oppose the "lily-whites." However, such a policy was to be short-lived because of strong disapproval from the "lily-whites." By the fall of 1902, the "lily-white" Republicans of the South had begun to move against the Negro. Many Southern states were examining the feasibility of disfranchising the few Negroes who had suffrage rights, Roosevelt's policies at the time of the conflict caused him to become involved. By March, 1903, one would witness Roosevelt's repudiation of Clarkson's and Payne's advice.8

An event occurred in February, 1904, that was of greatest consequence to Roosevelt's securing the Republican Party's nomination. Hanna had died suddenly, and with his death Roosevelt dispelled his fear of Hanna's political power.9

As the election approached Roosevelt felt the pulse of Southern reactionaries and decided to yield to the "lily-whites" in some Southern states. He explained his surrender to one of his most trusted and foremost advisors. To him he wrote:

...The safety for the colored man in Louisiana is to have a white man's party which shall be responsible and honest, in which the colored man shall have representation but in which

7Ibid.

8Scheiner, "President Roosevelt," pp. 172-74.

9Bishop, Theodore Roosevelt and His Time, I, 132.
he shall not be the dominate force—a party in which, as is now the case in the Federal service under me, he shall hold a percentage of the offices but in which a majority of the offices shall be given to white men of high character who will protect the Negro before the law.10

The editor of The Outlook received a letter which contained expression of similar sentiments. In this letter, Roosevelt said that he was writing quite frankly in the midst of the campaign and confessed that, "...I have nothing to gain and everything to lose by any agitation of the race question."11

So it was that Roosevelt displayed his worth as an able politician who was willing to compromise, taking a half a loaf when he felt that the whole loaf could not be had. In spite of many of his antagonizing ideas and perhaps due to his popularity and statesmanship, he was chosen by acclamation at the Republican National Convention.12

Georgia's reaction to Roosevelt's becoming President in 1904 was divided. The whites had primarily endorsed Judge Alton B. Parker's candidacy. During the campaign, Hoke Smith of Georgia made a series of addresses for the Democratic ticket. On one occasion he scorned Roosevelt for his "restless egotism, for sowing the seed of sectional hatred, and for an audacious usurpation of executive authority."13

Henry McNeal Turner, a distinguished Negro African Methodist Episcopal Bishop who lived in Atlanta, Georgia, was apparently one of the

11T. R. To Lyman Abbott, July 26, 1904, ibid., 867.
12Sullivan, Pre-War America, III, 145.
few voting Negroes in Georgia who was hostile to electing Roosevelt.\textsuperscript{14} For the most part, however, Negroes in Georgia supported Roosevelt. The \textit{Voice of the Negro} admitted that Parker was a kind and amicable man with a personal character that was spotless. Nevertheless, this review contended that it would be a risk for the country to elect him.\textsuperscript{15}

The praise that a Negro newspaper in Atlanta voiced for Roosevelt was overwhelming. The editors claimed that, "If the Atlanta \textit{Independent} was called upon to write the platform of the party for the fall election, we would write two words: 'Theodore Roosevelt.' "...Theodore, with all thy faults, we love thee still," exclaimed this press.\textsuperscript{16}

With the Republican nomination won by their choice, the \textit{Voice of the Negro} published an article which expressed favorable remarks concerning Roosevelt's acceptance speech. This article recalled Roosevelt's days as a "Rough Rider," mentioned his utter disregard for race; and most important of all, asserted that he was the capable man to be entrusted with the task of safeguarding the Negro from the conflicts and oppressions of the time.\textsuperscript{17}

The majority of white Georgians who had rallied their support in favor of Judge Alton B. Parker of New York were perhaps disappointed when

\textsuperscript{14}Editorial, Atlanta \textit{Independent}, Oct. 8, 1904, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., \textit{Voice of the Negro} (Atlanta), I (September, 1904), 368-69.

\textsuperscript{16}Editorial, Atlanta \textit{Independent}, June 24, 1904, Aug. 20, 1904, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{17}W. S. Scarborough, "Roosevelt, The Man, The Patriot, The Statesman," \textit{Voice of the Negro} (Atlanta), I (September, 1904), 391-93.
the results of the election were announced. Roosevelt won a resounding victory at the polls—336 electoral votes to 140 for his Democratic opponent.\textsuperscript{18} Georgians and other parts of the Solid South were the only states that Roosevelt did not capture in the election. He even won Missouri which had not voted for a Republican president since 1868.\textsuperscript{19}

The Atlanta \textit{Independent} did not leave any room for questioning its total commitment to Roosevelt. Its edition that was printed following the election was filled with news of pleasure over their candidate having won the election.\textsuperscript{20}

Roosevelt's second term did not bring any significant changes in his Negro policy, but the administration of this policy changed. His public statements became more and more anti-Negro.\textsuperscript{21} At a Lincoln Day Banquet in New York where Roosevelt was guest of honor, he delivered the main address that was applauded throughout the South. Before thousands of guests at the Waldorf Astoria he continually beseeched his audience to use moderation; saying that he had always adhered to such a policy and the whole country should follow. He said that, "The relations between the races must be adjusted so that the backward race be trained...that it may enter into the possessions of true freedom while the forward race is

\textsuperscript{18}These results indicate that quite favorable comparisons can be made with the returns from the 1900 election. In this election William McKinley polled 292 electoral votes against his Democratic opponent's, William Jennings Bryan, 155 electoral votes.

\textsuperscript{19}Sullivan, \textit{Pre-War America}, III, 145.

\textsuperscript{20}Editorial, Atlanta \textit{Independent}, Nov. 12, 1904, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{21}Scheiner, "President Roosevelt," p. 180.
enabled to preserve unharmed its high civilization...." "The prime requisite of the Negro race is moral and industrial uplifting;" continued the President. He closed his address with a vociferation that many Southerners were to echo for years to come: "Race purity must be maintained."22

John Temple Graves, editor of The Atlanta News, devoted a double column editorial to the President's Lincoln Day Address. In it he said, "President Roosevelt has given to the world in his Lincoln Day speech of last night a broad statesmanlike and kindly utterance."23 The reaction of the Negro press seemed to be favorable. The Atlanta Independent said that his words were well chosen and timely; and that his remarks would strengthen relations between Negroes and whites.24 Still another Negro paper, the Savannah Tribune, included favorable comments on the message.25 The Voice of the Negro reasoned that the Negro was willing to abide by the lines laid down in the speech if the South was willing.26

Be that as it may, careful analysis of Roosevelt's Lincoln Day address showed that it contained a radical departure from his former public speeches. Far from dynamic public changes were to be witnessed, however, when Roosevelt visited the South.

Many Southern cities had extended warm invitations to Roosevelt to visit. When the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce invited him to visit Atlanta

during the National Manufacturers Associations, it passed a resolution which contained assurance that Theodore Roosevelt would be met with a cordial and hearty welcome if he accepted the invitation. The mayor reminded the group that Roosevelt's parents were married not more than fifteen miles outside of Atlanta.27

Without realizing exactly what such a visit would portend for the future in the South, it was speculated that the President was being invited so that he could listen to the white man's side of the race problem and, in turn, change his attitude toward the Negro. It was doubted that Roosevelt would sacrifice right and duty for the friendship of the South.28

Regarding Roosevelt's plans to visit the South as bad news, two reputable Republican newspapers, the New York Sun and the Indianapolis News, charged him with compromising his policy to placate Southern prejudice.29 The Atlanta Independent expressed views that were against the President assuming any policy that was not enunciated in the campaign. Roosevelt's Southern popularity according to the Independent would be assured if he would conciliate the South by shutting the "door of hope" in the Negroes' faces. To do this, however, the Negro would be discriminated against and denied his constitutional rights.30


29 Quoted in Atlanta Independent, Mar. 25, 1905, p. 4.

30 Ibid.
In the autumn of 1905, Roosevelt accepted numerous invitations and visited the South. His Southern tour was to be regarded as much more than a sentimental pilgrimage. In a determined effort to have the South understand him, he went into the section and spread a spirit of moderation. While in the South, he sought to test its public opinion towards the National Government, towards the policies of his administration, and towards himself.

Undoubtedly, Roosevelt remembered the Southern people's disposition towards him when he succeeded McKinley. Once in the South he attempted to reverse the South's intense resentment of certain of his acts and moods. That is to say, Roosevelt made no concealment of his concern over the many manifestations of the Southerners' swift changes of heart the instant he touched the race issue. He approached the South in the most open-hearted manner, and the South received him with frank expressions of good will and delight. Audiences were repeatedly reminded of his mother's Southern birth. That he had two uncles to serve in the Confederate Navy fitted his praise of the valor of the Southern men in the Civil War. The President by his speeches, or by what he left out of them, may be said to have taken a new attitude on the Southern question.

The breadth and depth of the impression which Roosevelt made upon the South seemed amazing, considering how he had previously been regarded

31 William Garrott Brown, "President Roosevelt and the South," The Independent, LIX (November 9, 1905), 1086.
32 "The President's Southern Tour," ibid., October 26, 1905, p. 996.
33 Brown, "President Roosevelt and the South," p. 1087.
by the South. After leaving throngs of enthusiastic crowds in Roswell, Georgia, the home of his mother, Roosevelt arrived in Atlanta, where he was received by the largest audience he had encountered during the tour. When Roosevelt arrived in Atlanta on October 20, he was met at the Terminal Station by a large delegation of citizens. The delegation was headed by Governor Joseph Meriweather Terrell, the mayor, and many other municipal officials. At the State Fair Grounds to which he was driven, addresses of welcome were delivered.\(^{34}\)

Austin T. Walden, a student at Atlanta University and editor of the University student newspaper, The Scroll, was among those present in the audience that day. In his article covering the event, he reported that, "There was a distinct feeling of disappointment on the part of the majority of the audience, both white and black, in that the President did not utter a single word in relation to the Southern race problem." His report also included expressions of dismay over the fact that not one of Atlanta's 50,000 Negroes was chosen to welcome the President in an official capacity.\(^{35}\)

When the President had returned to Washington, one Negro newspaper reported that Southern Democrats had changed their curses to praises of Theodore Roosevelt.\(^{36}\) The Voice of the Negro made it quite clear that it

\(^{34}\)"The President In The South," Harper's Weekly, November 4, 1905, p. 1588.

\(^{35}\)Austin T. Walden, "President Roosevelt's Visit to Atlanta," The Scroll, X (November, 1905), 6-7. Walden graduated from Atlanta University in 1907 and received his law degree from the University of Michigan in 1912. He later became one of the most distinguished lawyers in Atlanta, Georgia, and a powerful figure in Democratic circles. Clarence A. Bacote, The Story of Atlanta University: A Century of Service, 1865-1965 (Atlanta: Atlanta University, 1969), p. 150.

\(^{36}\)Editorial, Savannah Tribune, Nov. 11, 1905, p. 2.
had gained a new impression of Theodore Roosevelt since his Southern trip. It asserted that it was unthinkable for the Negro to feel proud of the Confederate soldier. In commenting on the speeches that Roosevelt delivered before Negro audiences at Tuskegee Institute and Florida Baptist Academy, this account deemed them good as perfunctory platitudes. His advice in his speeches at these two Negro schools for Negroes to enter only mechanical and agricultural arts was termed preposterous.  

In an effort to ascertain what Negroes thought of the President's visit a survey was made among Negro representatives and newspapers. The majority of the Negroes questioned were not in favor of his Southern course. Booker T. Washington, straying away from the general Negro opinion, said in an interview that he thought that the trip was directed at helping to attain a better understanding between North and South, as well as Negroes and whites. Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, professor at Atlanta University, said:

...President Roosevelt while in the South gave the Negro-American good and needed advice in regard to thrift, industry and self-help. He spoke a brave true word on lynching. But he neglected a great and sacred opportunity of giving an honest and plain warning on the subject of Negro disfranchisement. This is too bad. No greater problem faces democratic government in this land today and if men like Theodore Roosevelt dare not speak the truth, who shall?  

According to the survey most of the Negro newspapers were critical of the President. He was charged with the "sin of omission" by the New York Age. The Boston Guardian, the Washington Bee, and the Chicago Conservator.

37 "The New Impressions of the President," Voice of the Negro (Atlanta) II (December, 1905), 825.
were also devoid of any praise of Roosevelt in their editorials relating to the President's trip to the South. 39

Whites, on the other hand, seemed to be satisfied that the Negro would be sacrificed. The Atlanta Constitution said that, "Roosevelt had the heart of a brave man who was proud of his American ancestry, which whether in New York or Georgia, maintained its high character; he had accepted the policy of his lamented predecessor. 40 The Atlanta Journal did not show any hesitancy in editorializing its blatant approval. It was announced that, "Roosevelt appeared to have been pleased with his reception in the South, and the people of the South showed him that they were glad to have him." "It is safe to say," continued the editorial, "that many impressions which had been formed of the President were changed by his bearing and demeanor while in the South. When he took occasion, in the course of his speeches, to pay tribute to the Southern people, he did it in such a manner that it carried convictions of his sincerity. He made a good impression." 41

It would appear that Roosevelt felt that he had cast down a heavy burden after leaving the South. In a letter to a friend he spoke of his trip:

...I have just finished a fortnight's trip to the Southern States, where I was received with the utmost enthusiasm. As far as I know I did not flinch from my principles; but I did do my best to show the southern people not only that I was earnestly desirous of doing what was best for them,

39 Ibid.
but that I felt a profound sympathy and admiration for them; and they met me half way. This does not mean any political change in the attitude of the southerners; but I think it does mean this slight permanent change, and it marks one more step toward what I believe will come about—the complete reunion of the two sections.42

Thus it was that Roosevelt sought to have the South see him in a different vein. When he visited in the South he relented to the wishes of the section. Inasmuch as white Georgians apparently had no intentions of being converted on the subject of the race question, they managed to have Roosevelt see a new light. Roosevelt did not seize the South, but was instead captured by the South and its traditional thinking in regards to race. While whites were feeling that they had conquered a one time foe, Negroes in Georgia were becoming deeply aware of the prospect of a future anti-Negro administration. Much disillusionment was felt by Negroes over such a future.

CHAPTER III

THE BROWNSVILLE INCIDENT

Negroes had begun to show skepticism towards the apparent changes in Roosevelt's attitude. His handling of the Brownsville case crystalized their anti-Roosevelt sentiments and convinced them that appeal to him in their existing plight was to no avail.

The Brownsville incident occurred on the night of August 13, 1906, in Brownsville, Texas, when a group of Negro soldiers from nearby Fort Brown allegedly "shot up the town." That night the chief of police, Joseph Dominge, was injured, another citizen was wounded, and a bar-keeper was killed.\footnote{Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, p. 442.} It was never proven that any of the Negro soldiers participated in the raid on the town.

The mere presence of the Negro soldiers in Brownsville had caused resentment. Citizens of the town had made their objection to the occupation of Fort Brown by Negro soldiers quite clear. Several incidents of lesser consequence had taken place between the whites of Brownsville and the soldiers prior to the raid which had impaired relations between local whites and the soldiers. An inspector of customs had struck one of
the Negro troopers on the head with a revolver for not moving out of his path. Another official had knocked two Negro soldiers in a ditch for unspecified reasons. And on the day of the raid, a certain Mrs. Evans accused one Negro soldier for attempting to attack her. Aware of these previous incidents, Major Charles W. Penrose, Commander of Fort Brown, took the precaution of restricting his men to their quarters at night.²

When first received, Penrose's reaction to the report that some of his men had staged a raid on Brownsville was one of disbelief. All of his men had been present when the roll was checked excepting two who were on leave. The morning after the raid all rifles were inspected and found to be clean. That day Dr. Fred J. Combe, mayor of Brownsville, selected a Citizens Committee comprised of fifteen men to make inquiries into the situation. Their investigations resulted in the presentation of reports of scores of eyewitnesses who were willing to testify that the Negro soldiers had fired on the town. The validity of these reports was questionable because the witnesses did not testify under oath and because of an obvious predetermination of guilt by the committeemen.³ After hearing the evidence, Penrose forwarded a report to Washington stating that some of the men were apparently guilty.⁴

The local grand jury was unable to find sufficient regular evidence to indict any members of the accused B, C, and D Companies of the Twenty-


Fifth Infantry. The War Department, then under the direction of Secretary William Howard Taft, launched an exhaustive investigation to ferret out the guilty. Major Augustus P. Blockson of the Inspector General's Office who had an indisputable reputation for hating Negroes was sent to Brownsville to make the first official investigation. He swiftly started proceedings that would result in the removal of the accused from Brownsville. Upon his recommendation the soldiers were transferred to Fort Reno, Oklahoma Territory. With preconceived notions of guilt, he acted the role of prosecutor. He accused all of the soldiers that had been implicated in the shooting affray of participating in a conspiracy of silence when no one soldier would incriminate another.

The reaction shown by the press in Georgia at this point was vehement. Without waiting for any proof of guilt some papers took it upon themselves to assume the guilt of the battalion of Negro soldiers in Brownsville. Roosevelt's order to withdraw the troops from Brownsville was questioned by the Savannah Tribune. It claimed that the Negro troops were brave soldiers who had a right to resent insults and defend themselves when assaulted. The Negro troops did not start the trouble and should not be removed from their post.

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9 Editorial, Sept. 1, 1906, p. 4.
Another inspection was made into the Brownsville episode by Inspector General Ernest A. Garlington. With the President's authority, Garlington told the troops that if the guilty were not discovered, all would be discharged. When no trooper would admit any knowledge of the shooting, Garlington reported that, "the men appear to stand together in a determination to resist the detection of guilt; therefore they should stand together when the penalty falls." 10

Avoiding the possibility of alienating the Negro vote in the November elections, Roosevelt issued the penalty when they were over. On November 5, 1906, Roosevelt ordered that the men of the three companies involved in the raid on Brownsville be discharged without honor and forever disqualified as members from service either in military or civil service of the United States. This penalty affected approximately 160 men, six of whom were medal-of-honor recipients. 11

Although the dismissal order was given on November 5, it was held over four days to avoid negative repercussions in the Congressional and state elections held on November 9. 12 It was reported by many politicians and editors that several Republican Congressmen could attribute their election to the fact that the discharge was not revealed until after their

10Tinsley, "Brownsville," p. 46.


12Tinsley, "Brownsville," p. 47.
The President's son-in-law, Nicholas Longworth, was among these Republicans. Inasmuch as he ran so far behind his ticket in Ohio, he may have been defeated by an alteration of one-half of the Negro votes in Cincinnati. 14

Booker T. Washington had advance knowledge of Roosevelt's decision to discharge the troops, but was unsuccessful in his efforts to persuade the President to reconsider. In response to Washington's request for reconsideration, Roosevelt wrote that: "I could not possibly refrain from acting as regards those colored soldiers. You cannot have any information to give me privately, to which I could pay heed, my dear Mr. Washington because the information on which I act is that which came out of the investigation itself." 15

Taft, yielding to protests against the dismissal of the three Negro companies, had suspended the President's order pending further evidence. Learning of the suspension of his order, Roosevelt dispatched a letter to Taft explaining that he cared nothing for the yielding of the politicians or sentimentalists and that his order should be executed without further delay. 16

The announcement of the severe penalty was to quickly spark a wave of reaction in Georgia. The white press applauded the action. The Atlanta Journal termed the discharge of the entire battalion as most

commendable because the innocent had tried to shield the guilty. The Atlanta Constitution said that the Negroes were understandably displeased, but the punishment of the soldiers was vigorous and well merited. At a convention of the Southern Cotton Association in Birmingham, Alabama, a resolution was passed which endorsed the President's actions. Hoke Smith, a noted Georgia politician, was present at this convention.

Negroes in Georgia were completely astounded over the President's order. The Savannah Tribune printed that the action of Roosevelt was unprecedented in the history of the United States Army; it was an injustice to the innocent men and it was significant that the order was not published until after the election. The Atlanta Independent labeled the actions of the President as strange and declared that he must feel cheap.

Reporting on the reaction of the Negroes in Georgia, the Atlanta Constitution stated that, "the chief executive has estranged ten million of his most ardent admirers and supporters." It later reported that attorneys had been employed to take steps to ascertain their legal rights; that Negroes and whites expressed a willingness to give financially in support of the suit.

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17 Atlanta Journal, Nov. 8, 1906, p. 2.
20 Ibid., Nov. 10, 1906, p. 4.
21 Editorials, Nov. 10, 17, 1906, p. 2.
22 Atlanta Constitution, Nov. 16, 18, 1906, pp. 1 and 2.
The Horizon, a Negro monthly that was edited, owned, and published by W. E. B. Du Bois, F. H. M. Murray, and L. M. Hershaw, a graduate of Atlanta University and prominent lawyer in Boston, Massachusetts, remarked on the President's actions: "The colored men that Roosevelt knows are or have been politicians or men who have humored his whims. Consequently, he feels in no way drawn to the black population of the United States, as he is drawn toward the South. He reaped chagrin and criticism of the South some years ago. Immediately he let the Negro go. He dealt the Negro a blow at Brownsville and simultaneously favored the South."23

William Monroe Trotter wrote in his paper, the Boston Guardian, that, "it was an act of meanness, injustice, and unwarranted cruelty and a monstrous breach of equity...."24 On the other hand, Clark Howell, editor of the Atlanta Constitution was castigated for his continuous efforts to justify Roosevelt's decision, and for condoning his disgracing innocent men for the crimes of the guilty.25

Even Senator Benjamin Tillman of South Carolina, doubtless in order to embarrass the President, spoke out against the President's order. In an address to the United States Senate he equated Roosevelt's actions with lynching. He charged him with reviving the race issue and creating conditions that were much more threatening than those connected with the Civil War. Tillman cried that, "it is contrary to the principles of


25Editorial; ibid., Nov. 24, 1906, p. 4.
liberty and of English and American law that the innocent should suffer because of the sins of the guilty.\textsuperscript{26}

Added persecution of the decision came from the Atlanta \textit{Independent}, a heretofore staunchly Republican newspaper. It printed that Bryan would suit the Negro as well as Roosevelt; all the Negro wanted was a square deal. It was later expected that Senator Foraker was favored over Taft.\textsuperscript{27}

Du Bois accused the administration of simply letting the public know the punishment with a hazy statement of what had actually happened. He explained how his estimation of Roosevelt had changed:

...The country already knows how ready Mr. Roosevelt has been to defend the uniform of the United States when it is simply a matter of skating rinks. It is surprising, therefore, that something has not been done to punish the disgrace put upon the uniform in the matter of ordinary civil and personal rights. Certainly it would look as though the United States uniform would protect a man even though he were colored.... My impression of Theodore Roosevelt first when he came to the presidential chair was that of an honest man determined to do his duty in spite of all opposition. I have striven to hold this estimate—but I must say that as things go on I find it more and more difficult. I find myself coming more and more to look upon the man as impulsive; not only in bravery but also in cowardice; as a man who will stand up for a thing when he is right and will stand just as stubbornly when he is wrong. Moreover, so far as my own people are concerned, I am asking myself what after all have we to thank Theodore Roosevelt for? So far as I see we have to thank him for three things; for asking a man to dine with him, for appointing another man, quite worthy of the position, as collector of the port of Charleston, and for saying publically that the door of opportunity ought to be held open to colored men. On the other hand we have growing and serious charges against him. The door once declared open, Mr. Roosevelt by his

\textsuperscript{26}Savannah \textit{Tribune}, Jan. 26, 1907, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{27}Editorials, Apr. 27, Dec. 28, 1907, p. 4.
word and deed since, has slammed most emphatically in the
black man's face...Under such injustice, we as black men
have but one duty; to insist continually upon the doing of
justice to the soldiers.28

Roosevelt was amazed and indignant over the negative attitudes
that were being expressed. This feeling was expressed in a letter in
which he declared:

...I have been amazed and indignant at the attitude of the
negroes and of the shortsighted white sentimentalists as to
my action...As you know I believe in practical politics,
and, where possible, I always weigh well any action which
may cost votes before I consent to take it; but in a case
like this, where the issue is not merely one of naked right
and wrong but of vital concern to the whole country, I not
for one moment consider the political effect.29

Another letter reveals a continuing disturbance on the part of Roosevelt
over the matter:

...I have been really deprest over this Brownsville (Texas)
business—not so much by the colored troops themselves, aitho
that was sufficiently ominous, but by the attitude taken by
the enormous majority of the colored people in regard to the
matter....With a few noted exceptions the colored people have
made a fetish of the innocence of the troops and have been
supporting in every way the political demagogues and visionary
enthusiastics who have struck hands in the matter of their
defense.30

At the heights of the controversy over the decision which had
reached outstanding proportions, many Negro ministers, editors, and other
so-called spokesmen for the race were making their denunciation of the
President known.31 On the other hand, some Negro leaders who were close

28 W. E. B. Du Bois, "The President and the Soldiers," December,
1906, MS, Negro Collection, Trevor Arnett Library, Atlanta University,
(Typecript).


to the administration realized the future consequences involved in an
outward break with Roosevelt and acted more cautiously. The silence of
Booker T. Washington, the best-known and most influential Negro in
America was observed. Washington could not do anything to alter the
decision of the President. However, in an attempt to hold the loyalty
of the Negroes to himself as well as to the administration, he engineered
several appointments. As the result of his influence, Roosevelt named
two Negro lawyers, William H. Lewis of Boston and S. Laing Williams of
Chicago, as special attorneys for naturalization in their respective
cities. Numerous lesser appointments were also arranged by Washington.

Despite the fact that Washington chose to work discretely at his
drive to restrain denunciation of the President, other groups and indi-
viduals evidently chose not to remain dormant about the issues involved
in the Brownsville's decision. Among these groups was the Constitutional
League which in addition to sponsoring a protest meeting employed Gilchrist
Stewart, a Negro lawyer who was active in New York politics to conduct an
investigation into the case. The actions of the League were mainly sup-
ported by John E. Milholland who was denouncing Booker T. Washington.
The Afro-American Council was another organization that hired a lawyer
to protect the legal rights of the soldiers who had been discharged.

Senator Joseph B. Foraker of Ohio was perhaps the man who was more

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33 Thornbrough, "Brownsville Episode," p. 480.
34 Ibid., pp. 476-77; Tinsley, pp. 50-51.
responsible than anyone else for keeping coals sparking in the fire of
the controversy. The Brownsville incident led him and Roosevelt into an
impasse of hostility and left a wreckage on the shores of the Republican
Party. Honestly indignant at what seemed to him to be an unjust order
based on insufficient and spurious information, Foraker remained for
months on the subject of successive inconclusive investigations. His
zeal on behalf of the Negroes may have been motivated by his ambition to
win the Republican nomination in 1908. In his quest he welcomed any
opportunity to discredit Roosevelt or Taft. Persons interested in
politics concluded that Foraker's presidential ambitions probably caused
him to use the case to win the support of Negroes.

William Howard Taft's analysis of the situation was revealed in a
letter to his brother, Charles P. Taft. In it he wrote: "Foraker is
determined to make the President as uncomfortable as possible, and
incidently eliminate me from the Ohio situation." In one of his letters, Roosevelt expounded upon a belief that Foraker
was politically motivated in his attempts to defend the Negro soldiers:

...Whether he, as I am personally inclined to believe, championed the cause of the colored troops merely as an
incident to his campaign against me because of our funda-
mental disagreement over the control of corporations, or
whether, as is possible, he did it simply as a move to
secure the Negro vote—for it is impossible to admit that
he could be sincere in any belief in the troops' innocence—
the fact remains that the overwhelming majority of the

37 Henry F. Pringle, The Life and Times of William Howard Taft
colored people have stood by him heartily and have been inclined to lose sight of every real movement for the betterment of their race.38

Roosevelt, quite upset over Foraker's actions, employed all the means within his power to counteract any findings of Foraker. Roosevelt spent $15,000 in government funds to prove that his actions were justifiable.39 The reports produced by Herbert J. Browne, a Washington journalist and William Baldwin, head of a Negro detective agency in Richmond, Virginia, who were hired to make further investigations among the dismissed soldiers were not substantiated. The incriminating statements and confessions of guilt that they reported to have secured from Boyd Conyers of Monroe, Georgia were proven invalid by Foraker.40

Although beset by many pitfalls, Foraker succeeded in obtaining a special military court hearing to hear those accused who denied any implication of guilt in the incident. Fourteen of the eighty-four soldiers who testified were finally declared eligible for reinstatement. Each of the fourteen re-enlisted.41

For the most part, Negroes remained loyal to the Republican Party by rationalizing that more could be gained by staying. Nevertheless, a few well-known Negroes switched to the Democratic ticket in the 1908 election. Among these Negroes were Bishop Alexander Walters of the


39 Cong. Record, 60 Cong., 2 Sess., 800 (January 12, 1909).

40 Ibid.

41 Chessman, Politics of Power, p. 146; Sullivan, Our Times, III, 453.
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and president of the Afro-American Council; William Monroe Trotter, editor of the Boston Guardian and president of the New England Constitutional and Suffrage League; and William H. Scott, president of the Boston Suffrage League.42 W. E. B. Du Bois, a distinguished intellectual, exclaimed, "It is high noon, brethren--the clock has struck twelve. What are we going to do? I have made up my mind. You can do as you please--you are free, sane and twenty-one. If between two parties who stand on identically the same platform you can prefer the party who perpetuated Brownsville, well and good. But I shall vote for Bryan."43

As the campaign for the 1908 election progressed, it was feared that Negroes would not vote for Taft since he was Roosevelt's personal choice and because as Secretary of War he was held partly responsible for the outcome of the Brownsville affray. Even Roosevelt appeared to be somewhat pessimistic about the election.44

In spite of the deep concern, Taft won the election quite easily. He polled 321 electoral votes to Bryan's 162. Neither Taft's popular vote or his electoral vote was as large as Roosevelt's in 1904, however. Be that as it may, Democrats' losses were considerable in 1908. Control

42Thornbrough, "Brownsville Episode," p. 489.


44T. R. to Kermit Roosevelt, October 20, 1908, Morison, Letters, VI, 1303-1304.
of both houses of Congress was retained by the Republicans. The failure of Democrats to use the opportunity to win Negroes away from their Republican allegiance was a factor that influenced Taft's victory. Also Booker T. Washington's subtle, but powerful influence along with the two year interval between the affray and the election were important factors.

In spite of all of the previous conciliatory moves of the President, the South demonstrated an unwillingness to forgive and forget. Taft won the election without the votes of the South.

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Thornbrough, "Brownsville Episode," p. 492.
CONCLUSION

Constant inconsistencies are revealed in Roosevelt's Negro policy. It appeared to have varied with the particular political environment. Early in his career, his policy was administered so as to have Negroes believe that he was actually willing to fight for their rights. This policy was continued as long as it was deemed necessary to foster the perpetuation of his political career.

The South was outraged over Roosevelt's association with Negroes. Therefore, he found it expedient to reshape his policy to meet this negative reaction displayed by his white adversaries. After winning the 1904 election he felt that Negroes were of no significant political use. Soon after his inauguration he visited the South and sought to gain its favor.

This study further theorized that Roosevelt bore a belief in the innate inferiority of the races. He admitted that there was a rare possibility that one would encounter a good and intelligent Negro of the Booker T. Washington calibre. However, he believed that Negroes as a group were quite the contrary.

Negroes in Georgia were ultimately able to realize that Roosevelt's policy was aimed at political gains and that his friendship was neither systematic nor sustained. His action in relation to the Brownsville incident erased all questions in the Negroes' minds of his hypocrisy.

White Georgians were unwilling to ever completely forgive Roosevelt
even after he attempted to atone for having offended them with his super-

ficial displays of friendship toward the Negro.

Thus, Roosevelt had his ups and downs with all Georgians. His

vacillation of good and evil will for the Negro resulted in his not

attaining the approval of Georgians.
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