4-1-1971

Four women: across-sectional study of class structure among black women in America

Mary Juliette Cebrun
Interdenominational Theological Center

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/dissertations
Part of the Religion Commons

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in ETD Collection for AUC Robert W. Woodruff Library by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center. For more information, please contact cwiseman@aucr.edu.
SENIOR ESSAY

FOUR WOMEN:
A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY OF
CLASS STRUCTURE AMONG
BLACK WOMEN IN
AMERICA.

Submitted in Partial Requirement for
the Master of Divinity degree

By

Mary Juliette Gebrun,

April 15, 1971

Interdenominational Theological Center
Atlanta, Georgia

Approved: __________________________
Date: __________________________

Approved: __________________________
Date: __________________________
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people helped in many different ways to make this study possible. Mr. and Mrs. G.D. Cebrun, my parents, gave me their loving support in this and every venture. Mr. William G. Davis expressed the thrust of the study in poetry and allowed me to use the poem, Precious Jewels, as a preface. Rev. G.B. Thomas, Dr. William T. Osborne and Dr. Hugh M. Jansen have encouraged me, understood me, and given me many helpful insights and ideas. I am highly indebted to all of these.

I am also grateful for the man who taught me, at his own expense, that I could make it on the broken pieces.
PRECIOUS JEWELS

(To Mother and Mary and other Black women I know, whose Beauty has been enhanced by their Strength, Understanding, Devotion, Endurance and Love.)

In life's collection one does find
Jewels of various sorts and kind;
Precious jewels, no doubt refined,
To often abused, obscurely defined.

Black Pearl - within the shell of the Ghetto
On the sea-bed of Despondency - moving with the water flow.
Once invisible, just performing mere duty,
Her blackness now found to be rare beauty.

Sapphire - of the hard, grinding, polishing form;
She fights for equality while adjusting to the norm
Her transparent hue moves her in unlikely places
Unlike her Sister, life's scars have left less traces.

Ruby - as her Sister, she's of like matter;
Extracted, refined long before her Sister latter.
Her social preciousness thought the highest to be;
Black splendor reigns in her family tree.

Black Gems the Master Jeweler does see
That none so precious can be possessed with any fee.
Different origins, various forms, many colors - all three,
Always valuable, ever priceless, forever precious to me.

--William C. Davis
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION**                                                                                     1

Chapter

I. Black Pearl: The Woman in the Negro Underclass                                                  11

II. Sapphire: Situation of Uprootedness                                                              28

III. Ruby: The Company of Pharisees                                                                 42

IV. Diamond: The Morphogenesis of Class Structure Among Black Women in America                     50

Bibliography                                                                                         75
The white writer discussing the problem of American racial injustice generally, by aspersian or direct statement, will allude to the "Negro's culture." The writer takes great pains in describing the many facets of black life that are different from life in the larger society. The conclusion often drawn blames these differences for the fact that the black man has not been accepted as a full member of the larger society.

There is no difference in the culture of the American white and that of the American black. To make such an assumption is tantamount to viewing the black American as a foreigner who needs not be dealt with according to the laws that cover other natives. Ralph Ellison has grasped this situation and discovered the fact that America has developed a system by which the black man needs not be dealt with at all. America has devised a method by which it can place any person or group of people into the classification of "sub-culture" when that person or group of people fails to meet standards set for acceptance. One such group is the American woman.
Women in American society have been denied the opportunity of education or training. They have been led to believe that they are the weaker, inferior species whose only functions are to bear children, attend to the household drudgery, and serve as one of the many means through which the male of the species can achieve sexual gratification. As is common in any minority culture, women have generally accepted and internalized larger society's views of them no matter that the opinions are largely inaccurate. Like blacks, youth and the non-affluent, women have traditionally been exploited by society.

True of womankind in general, how much more true for the woman of the black race? For a number of factual reasons, the system of slavery not excluded, the woman has been forced into the position of head of the household. When she accepted the position that she was forced to take, white western society classified her as a matriarch, a deviant. Foremost in the latest group of academic assaulters is Daniel Patrick Moynihan 1.

Moynihan takes great effort to emphasize the one-fourth of urban Negro marriages that have failed;

---

the one-fourth of the Negro families from which the father is absent; and the one-fourth of the Negro births that are illegitimate. Using this minority of the minority, he stereotypes the race as a whole. Moynihan, like others before him, sees the problems of the black man and admits that they have been caused by deprivation of past centuries. But what Moynihan, his predecessors and contemporaries fail to admit is the fact that the deprivation continues. Rather than admit that the American society is still racist he prefers to suggest that the condition of the Negro is pathological. His entire program for assistance is built upon a suggested need for the black man to break the pattern and just move up and out of the situation that exists.

There is never an attempt to determine the extent to which the problem may not be the Negro's but may instead be the problem of the white's. The assumption is nearly automatic. The Negro is at fault in every unpleasant situation. For example, Negroes have more children than whites therefore, Negroes are responsible for overpopulation.

—-This, p. 75.
Seldom is it taken into consideration that the Negro has less money for prophylactic devices because he is more frequently denied a job by the white society. Seldom is it taken into consideration that the lack of money also rules out more expensive forms of recreation. Seldom is it taken into consideration that the annual number of Negro births is sharply cut by improper prenatal and post natal care. Nor is it considered that the annual rate of over-population and the annual Negro birth rate are not synonymous figures. This is not the only sphere in which one-sided facts are used by white America to prove that the Negro is a menace to American society.

America is racist. Racism is a mental illness. This illness is so deeply engrained into whites that the unfair conclusions which they draw are drawn unconsciously and appear right and normal. The fact that black America is a by-product of white America keeps black Americans, in many cases from realizing that this is the case.

The poor, for example, have lived so long with the Horatio Algier myth that they have not only

come to believe the possibility of this method of upward mobility, they have come to blame themselves for their poverty. Scholars have for years attempted to measure the successes of the poor by the same standards that were used to measure the upper-classes. These scholars have stigmatized the lower-classes by crediting them with developing and maintaining ethical stances, economical security and emotional stability on the basis of survival ethics, alone. Life at this level has been called a day-to-day existence of immoral, economically foolish people whose hope for the future extends no further than their next pay check.

Those of the educated middle-classes and upper-classes have not escaped the briars of societal conditioning. The Black professional has been seduced by the white man into believing that he is better than his non-professional black brother. Over the years the black man clung tenaciously to education, "good clothes", big cars, and the "big houses" believing that he could be different from his brother. White western society nearly convinced the black middle-class that all it needed to be accepted was to be "qualified." White western society has never said to the black man that "qualified" and white were synonymous terms.
Now since the time when the black American was first divided into two kinds, slave and free, whites have tried to show that the black man in the better position was the one that fell under the protective wing of the white man. And since the time when slaves were divided into two groups, house nigger and quarter nigger, black men have tried to accept and live by the premise that proximity equals advantage. The black man has always been aware, however, that proximity was not equal. No matter how hard he tried, he could never become an integral part.

After interminable trying the Negro simply took the white man's culture back across the track. Negro society is a mere simulation of that which he had been taught to long for; that which he had been taught was the best. In the position of counter-culture, or sub-culture (depending upon your point of reference) lower-class blacks sought to become white by imitating the life style of the middle-class blacks. Middle-class blacks sought to become white by oppressing and avoiding the lower-class blacks. Calvin C. Hernton has stated that the woman is the strongest determinant of class in the black class structure above lower-class.4

The momentous events of the past decade have produced a new sense of identity among black people. The black woman, too, has become aware of the fact, through trial and error, that the class divisions that she has helped to maintain are divisive. While it is true that class divisions lend nothing to the liberation motif, the black woman has discovered that her class does not protect her from the slings and arrows of racism. Class status did not protect the middle-class from fire hoses, dogs, jail cells or bombs. Neither "fair skin" nor education, nor ability to trace one's ancestry back to Thomas Jefferson was sufficient justification for admission to the upper echelon of power, the Social Register or the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.), in that order.

The black woman is in the process of developing a classless society in the sense that the driving force is increasingly freedom for the masses rather than equality for certain classes. Black women are increasingly more prone to work together in the movement for black unity. The black woman is becoming aware of the fact that it is no more necessary for her to qualify in order to gain a place in American society than it is for her to "qualify" in order to gain a place in the human race. It is necessary for her
to redefine her social reality to include the fact that
the nature of power is groupal not individual. The position
of the black man is this society will not be helped by
individual initiative. Factually, there is very little in
this society or any other that will benefit from the
efforts of the individual. Self realization requires that
the interests of the individual be adjusted to the interests
of the society as a means of furtherance of the social
welfare. It is therefore more important to realize what
the interests of society are and work, as a group, to
change those interests.

The troubles of the national and local
society are the troubles of the individual
uncomfortably magnified.

The above belief is commonly held by members of the larger
society and of the black community. But, since in fact
there is no such thing as the individual the more logical
conclusion is that the problems of the individual are the

---

7 William T. Osborne, Interdenominational Theological Center. Class lectures on Social Ethics. This idea is basically
the same as that expressed by Comte but, Osborne denies the
suggestion of the individual as an abstraction.
manifestations of his responses to the structure of a technological, bureaucratic society and the institutions of the society are responsible for the shaping of his attitudes. John Hope Franklin systematically lists the legal and extra-legal steps that have been taken by the white society to dehumanize the black man.\(^8\) From the post Reconstruction years when society was declared a law unto itself with the ability to override written statues\(^9\) through *Brown vs the Board of Education*, 1954, white society has declared and convinced the black man of his inferiority. It is a very simple matter to see that the advantage of Capitalism was served in this endeavor. The real damage occurs at the point when the underlying reason, capitalism, was forgotten and the position to which the black man had been relegated was seen by white and black, as his "place".


\(^9\)Little Rock *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, October 19, 1883.
Few studies have been conducted on the role of black women in American society that have not been limited from the beginning by use of "the". Use of a descriptive such as "the" indicates that there is only one kind of black woman and sets the trap of oversimplification of thinking. "The" has the same end result of "all" and we are familiar with the common fallacy, "All Negroes are alike." In an attempt to avoid this fallacy we have chosen to investigate here the life style of black women at three distinct levels; lower-class, middle-class, and upper-class. This is not considered an ascending order but merely the most commonly used. A second consideration taken in examination of each class separately is that neither class level has proved adequate for the women who compose it. The concluding chapter will indicate a move toward an authentic pattern of existence. We are not suggesting that the function of class will change. We are suggesting that attitudes imposed by the larger society are becoming dysfunctional as a result of redefined social reality.

Black Pearl:
The Woman in the Negro Underclass

Women in some African cultures worked together with others in a communal society where as producers and procreators they were equally honored or were matriarchs. Matrilineal descent of kinship ties is common in West Africa and takes precedence over the patrilineal form in matters of transferable wealth.11

Among the Ashanti people, the father has no legal hold over his children. The children belong to the mother's family. Children are not possessed like other articles of property. The family's wealth, class, etc. are not taken into account. No children were over pampered or neglected. Illegitimacy, as it is known in white society, was both irrelevant and unknown.

No demands upon her are too extreme for the mother. Though she is loathe to punish, and never disowns a child. 12

12Ibid., p. 45. underlining mine.
West African society provides the girl with a constant feminine model in her mother. It is from her mother that she learns all the feminine skills and with her mother that she will form the strongest ties within the family. It is this socialization that prepares the girl to take her place as a woman because at an early age she has internalized the necessary traits. Since it is not necessary that a strong woman be domineering, the male is not necessarily left out.

Matriarchy in the ghetto of America is neither necessarily nor always to the exclusion of the male as an authority figure. Often, it is a position of adoration accorded to the woman by the children and the man. The home of which the mother is head is to be considered deviant only to the extent that it is incomparable with the family structure of the larger society. It must, too, be realized that the existence of this type of home is a response to one of the problems of the larger society, viz. racism. White society, in order to justify the chattel existence of the black man invented the myth of the bestial Negro male. In an attempt to add credence to their invention, he was excluded from jobs that pay a living wage and from his family by convincing the mother that Aid To Dependent Children (ADC) was more reliable than her husband or the father of her children.
The ghetto woman must be helped to see her image in the woman produced by the culture from which she comes originally. She must be made to see the fact that the social reality under which she lives in delusory. She must be helped to take the burden of proof off of herself and her man. Race is the white man's burden, not hers.

If she could dance
Naked,
Under palm trees
And see her image in the river
She would know.13

The term negritude was first used by the Haitian poet, Cesaire Aime and Leopold Senghor, a Sengolese scholar. In one dimension the term means that Negroes everywhere are possessed of certain impulses, traits, and conceptions of the world. This belief cannot be applied generally to the black race without admitting racist connotations apparent therein. However, there do appear to be certain impulses, traits, and conceptions of the world common within the various class divisions of the black society.

13 Waring Cuney, No Images, 1926.
Franz Fanon calls this the "Community of passions." Sterling Stuckey grants the possibility and describes it thusly:

Collective racial consciousness is possible because black people have been forced to live among themselves. This is not genetic but cultural. It has taken the form of oral transmission. 14

It is common throughout the black race to trace kinship through the mother. It would be most difficult to get admission of this fact from the affluent blacks who have internalized the traits of the larger society. It is fairly obvious in the lower classes, especially before sophistication sets in. From my personal visits to the country I can recall having my kinship cited by the old people in this way. "You remember Molly? Well, that's her baby's girl." No reference was made to Molly's husband, my grandfather, or to my father. In those rare instances when the man was mentioned at all, they would say, "That's Molly's girl by Louis." This never indicated that the man was absent or that the woman was domineering, simply, another way of dealing with the business of living.

In today's underclass society children who belong to the "illegitimate one-fourth" cited by Moynihan, most frequently belong to the mother's family. This is not because the father or his family would not accept the child. Personal knowledge as well as several cases cited by Frazier in *The Negro Family in the United States* will support this as fact. The child is kept by the mother because, like the Ashanti, the bond between the mother and child is regarded as the keystone to all social relations.

"Women teach their young sons to be men. The child can receive all his socialization from one parent." In homes where the father is absent, the mother has the responsibility of shaping a special kind of man. She must teach him to repress his natural masculine assertiveness in order to survive. This is not a carry over from the West African culture with which we have been making comparisons. This is instead, a carry over from slavery. Any aggressiveness during this era may have resulted in the boy being cast in the role of "bad nigger." In this role he could be hanged, beaten, or subsequently badgered in some other form.

---

This is the fear about which Claude Brown talked in Manchild in the Promised Land, and the fact that we can see today in the systematic removal of members of the Black Panther Party from the scene in Chicago and Los Angeles.

In the ghetto, the height of femininity is to have a child, in or out of wedlock. Even the girl who has a child at twelve or thirteen is considered a woman and granted all the rights and privileges pertinent to that state. The only exception to this rule is the case where the family continues to care for the girl and her child. 16 Though having a child out of wedlock is considered a "mistake", the ghetto mother, like the Ashanti mother, never disowns her daughter. The child simply becomes a member of the extended family. 17

Periodically, throughout history the myth of woman's inherent inferiority has been refuted. Woman's productive activities were a source of social power. Engles, Briffault, James Frazer, Otis Tufts Mason, all hold up a mirror of the past for the woman of the ghetto to "see her image." Though these authors are not relevant in every phase of their

17 Billingsley, loc. cit.
work to recapture of the human self-conception generally there are areas where they can be relevant to the black woman at this stage of her development.

She does not know her beauty
She thinks her brown body
Has no glory. 18

Beauty has been defined by the larger society in terms that are out of reach of the black woman. Large feet, dark skin, large breasts, protruding derriere, and short, kinky hair are a few of the features that have been called undesirable and with which some black women have to cope. The woman in the black underclass often finds the effort to hide dark skin under powder and greasy bleaching creams, cover short hair with wigs, and stuff big feet into shoes that are too small too much of a chore, and too expensive. At thirty, many women in this class "let themselves go". It is usually by this time that the ghetto black woman has had to face the hard facts of life, though often before. The problems that she faces in everyday living leave her so exhausted that the time for primping is limited. This is not true for all black women, many play the game as long as

---

18 Waring Guneay, loc.cit.
the white. But it is so common to "give up" that even in religion there is a place for criticizing women who continue to paint and powder. Indeed after a certain age she is subject to be looked upon as "whorish".

A high popular compliment for the woman over thirty has, for years been, "She's a very nice lady and a fine cook." The underlining is to show the emphasis on the word fine as it relates to the greatly admired ability to cook. This, too, is a carry over from slavery when it was the highest calling to be the cook in the "big house."

Another reason for giving up youth and attempts at it so soon has to do with the fact that a good looking black woman has always, at least since slavery, been thought of as the exclusive property of white men. Grier and Cobbs note the fact that youth and beauty were the bearers of certain trouble and strife.\(^1^9\) The attention of the oppressor was immediately turned to the black girl who grew into a beauty according to their standards. She received none of the desired personal satisfaction that she might have from being both loved and sexually desired. She simply became an anonymous sexual object.

Grier and Cobbs further state that "...femininity is only imperfectly grasped by most black women." Whether this is true or not, the black woman of the underclass has narrowed her feminine role to that of nurturing children and making home for them as comfortable as possible. Negro women are not a homogeneous mass in any class division. The underclass is no exception. There are many roles but we will only examine three; the mother, the grandmother and the teenager. The grandmother falls into the category of the comforter and protector of the family. Her femininity is that of 'fine cook', and 'mammy'. As of old, her authority is based on the fact that she is the oldest in the house of the mother.20

Since the life style of the black person has undergone few changes in the sojourn on this continent, the worldwide belief that wisdom comes from age is probably more nearly correct in the case of the Negro grandmother than in any other. The white man has changed very little in his thought and action since 1860. Physical enslavement has been replaced by an attempt at mental enslavement and the Negro is still expected to stay in his place.

Some of these grandmothers tell you of their courting days and it sounds little different from that which their grandchildren are facing today. If courting days end for the granddaughters as they did for some of the grandmothers and the lack of finances faces the family today as it did when grandmother was a girl, the grandmother has had some experience at midwifing.

Often the grandmother's role in black society is not different from that of the wife in other society. The mother goes out and works, the grandmother is responsible for the care of the house and the children. The suffering described by the social worker which can be caused by the fact that the children are not cared for after school is alleviated in some cases, by the presence of the grandmother in the home. It has always been common for three generations of women of the same family to share residence, but now, due to advances in medical science, it is nearly as common for four or five generations to share the home.

Another reason for this sharing of the home is the tendency of the black race to care for its own. It is thought by some that the reasoning behind this lay more in the fact that black people had no money to support old people
in homes. Even if they had, there were no such homes for black people until recently. I believe that this tendency can be traced back to the extended family concept discussed earlier. The oldest one in the community, in the home, was considered the head of the family in West Africa.

The degree of decadence found in a home of this type is not amazing. According to the standards of those who adjudged them decadent, it is amazing that this home has survived at all. This life style represents stability rather than disorganization. The grandmother rules here, in the best sense. She is there and her presence is strength. Grandmother is the constant reminder of "who we are," "Sasa," "Vizuri sana."

Divorce hits the Negro woman hard at all levels. In the lowest income group many women can't even afford the cost of $300.00. They also know that their husbands wouldn't sign for a divorce even if they could scrape up the money. 21

For this, and other reasons, the Negro male is often conspicuously absent from the family. This leaves the mother totally responsible for the welfare of the children and herself. Sometimes she handles this by going on public

welfare. Most frequently, especially when the grandmother is in the home, she gets a job. Because, even if she has had the opportunity to go to school her education has not been adequate, she works long hours in the laundry, or a cafeteria, or most commonly as a domestic.

In the underclass there are names and descriptions, not at all pleasant to the ear or the modesty, for the woman who turns her back on her children. Nearly as suspect is the woman who refuses to have children. As previously stated, the height of femininity is to give birth. The woman who never has children is thought to have missed her rite de passage, at least, and probably her chances for all future happiness. The nature, function and role of the husband is thought to be temporary under any circumstances. Since husbands are not considered to be the best source for sustained love, procreation is thought to be the best way to love and be loved over a sustained period of time.22

Because she has been taught disdain for the "shiftless" male of her race, and ingested the values of the larger society concerning herself, she may soon tire of the person who has been denied the opportunity to get a good education and who can therefore not find a suitable job. In order to prevent the same kind of experience for their daughters

22Kenneth B. Clark, Dark Ghetto (New York: 1965) p. 70.
mothers focus much of their attention and a great deal of their substance of their girls. The greater majority of mothers have attitudes about their sons that incorporate fear, deep love, and resignation. She will often say that he is strong willed, wild, and not interested in working. What she really means, though she may not be able to bring herself to verbalize it, is that from the beginning he has had little chance. Parental expectations, like the expectations of the classroom teacher, will affect a child's performance. Though the low expectations are not verbalized, ghetto children are more sensitive than others to non-verbal communication. The male child, therefore learns early to be aware of his own shortcomings. Along with non-verbal communication the mother, too often will say, "He'll be no good, just like his father."

Yet, these mothers continue to hope against hope that at least one of their children will make it. If one should, she does not then feel her work done. She will continue to push them all until she reaches the stage of resignation. At this point, she adopts the same attitude

she is likely to have adopted concerning the miscarriages of her child bearing experience. Somehow she finds the strength, usually through her church, to just live and work to feed her children.

The Church to which this woman belongs is designed to help her with her struggles. It is emotional thereby allowing her to give vent to her feelings in the company of those most empathetic. This church does not encourage participation in the system at the level of politics because it is fundamentalist. During a study recently conducted in Columbus, Georgia we noted the nature of the songs, not usually hymns, that were used in the service.

I'll be alright
I'll be alright
I'll be alright, someday
'troubles will be over, I'll be home at last
I'll be alright, someday

A similar hymn, or song with equal pathos, was as popular:

Long as I know I got a seat in the kingdom,
It's alright.

I've been buked, I've been scorned
I've been talked about, she's you born

Long as I know I got a seat in the kingdom,
It's alright.

Once either song was raised, emotions would run so high that stopping the song was nearly an impossibility. Neither the songs nor the theology later to be expoused in the sermon dealt with the problem of daily life in any way except to assure the parishoners, "It will be alright, after 'while."

Most of the homes of people in the underclass have record players. On the record player or near it, are stacks and stacks of Rock and Roll singles. The stars who have made it in this field easily become the idols of the ghetto children because most of these stars come from the same area of town in another city. They "just got lucky."

At this stage there will usually be a spark of hope left that they too, will escape the ghetto. The hope is not grounded, however in individual achievement; it is grounded in "luck."

These youth hope to acquire those things which public education, in the schools and through mass media, has placed most value upon. Always, these are material things. The youth of the ghetto are not as tightly bound by the "afterwhile-theology" of the church as his parents were. Seventy-four per cent of the girls in the two predominately black high schools in Columbus, Georgia are sure that they
can get a "fair shake in life." The girls in the school
adjudged by the community to be lower-class are 52\% more
willing to fight for that chance, in the streets if
necessary, than the girls in the middle-class school.
This is because the ghetto youth has a higher level
of personal aggression\(^25\) and a different outlook on life.
The teen years are seen by most youth as an interlude be-
tween adulthood and childhood. For the ghetto youth it
is the hiatus between awareness of entrapment and the onset
of compliance.\(^26\) In other words, if all he has to look
forward to is what he has seen, he might as well fight.
If he dies now, he won't prolong the agony. "The psychological
functions of the movement would be to provide a 'legitimate'
outlet for aggression and promote loss of self..."\(^27\)

\(^{25}\)Hylan G. Lewis, Blackways of Kent (Chapel Hill:

\(^{26}\)Ruth Searles and J. Allen Williams, Jr., "Determinants
of Negro College Students Participation in Sit-ins" (Unpublished
working paper Institute for Research in Social Science,
University of North Carolina, April 2, 1961. quoted in
Joseph S. Himes, "Negro Teenage Culture"

\(^{27}\)Ibid. Himes sees the demonstration as ineffective
against the system but refers to the demonstration as an
imaginative way to sublimate the aggressions of black youth.
Himes classes the demonstration and the Peace Corps under
the same heading. This hypothesis was formulated in reference
to the Greensboro, North Carolina lunch-counter sit-in. This
writer cannot agree that this label would fit more current
student unrest and non-student aggression.
Most of the studies on black teenagers were conducted prior to the present move for black awareness. The conclusion that we are drawing here is, in effect, that the earlier conclusions of scholars no longer fit. It has been suggested by Rainwater and others that the girls of the ghetto engage in premarital sex at an early age. I attempt to make no case for or against this fact. Because of the present tendency to emulate African society, we suggest that less premarital sex occurs. The African society is moral beyond that of the white Western society. In an attempt to find their roots in the Mother land, these girls are more prone to "see their image" in the moral proclivities of the sisters they previously failed to own.

Factually, the ghetto girl defines her role at an earlier age than any other in society. She incorporates the character of her mother and the values of the extended family. But perhaps it will not be necessary for the girl now growing up in the ghetto to "give up" on herself as early as her mother did. Beauty now requires that one be natural and the Black Pearl is naturally beautiful.
Sapphire:
Situation Of Uprootedness

Culture and land are conjunctive terms in the sense that one can neither maintain nor develop a culture without land. The black man in America was separated from his culture at the same time that he was separated from his Motherland, Africa. The land into which he was transplanted was America. The land into which he was transplanted is racist, capitalist and white owned. The whites own the means of production, the means for violence and destruction, and the whites own the institutions which support the system by developing supportive attitudes in those subject to the government.

The only choice the black man was given was between adaptation and death. He chose, at least the greater majority chose, to adapt. The means of adaptation were culturally defined institutions such as law, education, politics, industry, etc. Culturally defined institutions serve the culture which defines them by socializing the
subjects who fall under their influence. The "good" of this capitalistic society was served by developing a working-class convinced of their right to be so relegated. In order to prevent lethargy and apathy among those relegated to the status of working class, it was necessary to offer incentive for release from that state. Hence, the invention of the myth of social mobility as a reward for hard work.

The middle-class was born of these myths and sustained by the creation of status-identity symbols. We have previously seen the lower class girl find her identity symbol in her mother, the extended family and the community. The structure of the lower-class also forces the girl of this class to seek the status symbols presented to her by education and mass media. In her case they are not the same nor, because of lack of funds, can they be the things with which she identifies. The status symbol or rather its attainment, is grounded in luck, not likelihood.

---

28 This term is frequently used and was defined by James A. Tillman, Jr., past director of several antipoverty and urban affairs programs and independent consultant on urban affairs and social planning in Syracuse, New York.
White western society has convinced the "achieved" black man that he is what he possesses. Advertising, a society defined institution, has helped society to convince the middle-class man, of any color, that if he owns the "best" he is the "best". For example when it comes to refrigerators, "You can be sure if its THIS BRAND". When it comes to cars, "Ask the man who owns one." Even in the case of medicines, "THIS BRAND, the best money can buy." The automatic response of the lower-class person is, "Sure, but I don't have that kind of money."

But, the middle-class has been convinced in the process that good credit is as necessary as a good name; factually, the two are synonyms. The middle-class man acquires good credit which places him in no position to fight the system because he is so overloaded he can't afford to lose his job. Lost job equals lost credit. Lost credit equals loss of "good" name. Loss of "good name is essentially, for this class, loss of self identity. Hence, status-identity symbols. The symbols were used to keep the black man grasping for white western society. The black man was convinced of the fact that as soon as he acquired the things that "every American family" had, he
would be qualified for American society. In order to qualify, he also had to divorce himself from all of the things that were vestiges of the black way of life. Watermelons, kinky hair, barefeet, dialectal speech, dark skin, sleeping until noon, were all strictly prohibited in this new club. He was able to divest himself of watermelon by acquiring "taste". He could divest himself of the dialectal speech by getting an acceptable education. He could divest himself of barefeet and sleeping until noon by getting a respectable job. But what could he do about the vestiges of dark skin that were left after carefully contracting marriages that were supposed to "improve" the race?

There was only one bad thing about this club. As soon as one requirement was met and conquered, another always cropped up that was not in the original initiation service. The black man who composed this class was at odds with himself and with the society that he was trying so desperately to attain. He had gone too far to turn around, but he still had so far to go. He couldn't admit that the society that he was striving for wasn't worth it, but, he could never go home again. He was uprooted. He decided to make the best of this uncomfortable state.
Because of the previously examined oppression of the black race as a whole and the peculiar, somewhat painless entrapment of the middle-classes of both races, we have determined the educated black woman of the middle-class to be the more exploited individual of the American society. She is the most avid supporter of the middle-class value system because she realizes that she has been separated, and to some extent has separated herself from other blacks. She has taken the attitude that blacks who do not hang their identity of their status symbols, as she does, are "low and boisterous." She has adopted "uplifting" the race as the only means by which she and others can be admitted to the white world. The middle-class black woman takes upon herself all the problems of other blacks. It is not uncommon to hear the statement, after some black has offended society, "That's why we can't get anywhere. They (referring to the white race) think we're all like 'that'.

In order to test this theory, we conducted a study of the middle-class women of three geographic areas by use of the questionnaire. The population of Los Angeles, California is partly composed of migrants from the South.
Many black people believe that the opportunities are better in this megalopolis than any place in the United States. Houston Texas, the second area surveyed, is considered by most to be a sprawling "country town."
Houston has all of the characteristics of a municipality and tends in the direction of a metropolis. The population which composes the black middle-class are generally natives that have returned to Houston after being educated elsewhere. The third, New York, New York is a cosmopolitan area with a relatively fluid black population in terms of high mobility. There is enough stability to count it for reasons of need to diversify. We have chosen to highlight some of the interesting discrepancies of subjective social classification.

The black middle-class, we discovered, is a strange mixture of both those who are prescribed, the solid middle-class and those who are ascribed, the precarious or attributed middle-class. In other words, the attitudes that one has developed and the life style he has adopted are more the determinants of status than economics income or education. For example, the salary range of the 141 women who responded began with $6,500 and ended with
the designation $32,000+. Yet with all of this diversion we found that there was no real difference in the types of responses received. The great majority of the respondents were still residents of the South or they had migrated North or West from the South. Most had attended small to medium colleges and had two children. There were usually two cars in the family and these were purchased as a joint effort after the women were married. The mean value of the homes in which they resided was $25,000 but ranged in price to $100,000.

The responses of the women indicated that their attitudes were synonymous with those that we have previously discussed. On the subject of men, generally and their husbands specifically, these women have definite feelings of superiority. Seventy per cent of the total respondents felt that they had relinquished the natural aggressiveness of the male for the comfort and stability of a good father, when they married their present husbands.

We have seen earlier that the process of socialization results in the replacement of masculine assertiveness with compliance. Indeed, it is more respectable to be a quiet, upstanding citizen with the responsibilities of husband and father than to risk the final shame of being eliminated
physically for some offense against society. It does not really matter that the only offense you commit is blackness. Therefore, especially for the middle-class, blackness is better hidden. Thirty percent of the women indicated that they did not get all of the characteristics for which they had hoped. When asked why they married these men without everything they had hoped for, the usual answer was a resigned, "I'm satisfied."

Seven-eighths of the women polled indicated that they had originally planned not to marry. When they changed their minds and decided to marry, it was never because the man that they married was persuasive enough to change their minds. Most probably the marriages were the result of societal pressure upon women to get married by the time that they have attained a certain age. The decision not to marry was probably the result of the conditioning which convinced them that black men were not worthy of them since they had managed to escape the lower-classes.

These women had not given up on their standards, however. Though 36% married men who did not have either the first degree or the second, that same 36% sent their husbands to school. The other 29% waited until they found educated men but felt that they had settled for less than
they initially hoped for.

When asked to list their husband's most attractive features, these women invariably discussed physical characteristics and these were not those features common to the black race. One woman who held the Ph.D in Mathematics had sacrificed the educational and prestige qualities for features as close to white as possible in an uneducated man. In fact, this particular woman added an additional sheet to her questionnaire to list such things as, small feet, curly hair, light brown eyes, thin lips, "can't stand heat", very fair skin, etc., etc., etc.

This group of women have sacrificed so much and worked so hard to acquire the status which they had attained, they had to find something that would make it all worth it. So, they adjusted their interests to those of the larger society in order to further the social welfare of their group.29 In other words, they developed a kind of racism. Because racism requires that he who has it also have the power to enforce it, and they did not, the black middle-class joined forces with the white middle-class-liberals and helped to suppress the black lower-class.

29 Dewey, op.cit. pp. 266ff.
These middle-class women worked very hard during the day at their jobs in social work and education and nursing for they had to maintain the class level to which they had aspired. But, their evenings were free for volunteer work and their weekends were spent in "projects" designed to make the oppression of the lower-classes more bearable. They said and felt that they were helping the lower-classes to attain "something in life." But, in the process of carrying Thanksgiving Baskets and carrying the youth of the ghetto to the opera or the ballet in order to instill some "culture" into them they succeeded in further depressing them with their own state. Familiarity with "La Bohemme" and the oratoria, Handel's "Messiah" did nothing for stomachs that were empty because the black middle-class and the white-liberal defeated the lower-class black man's efforts to get a job. These groups were the one's who always acted as messengers between the upper echelon of power and the lower-classes. It was these people who relayed the message to those who could have done something which always said, "They're not ready yet, I know. I was in their position just two years ago."
The study on church affiliation conducted at Columbus, Georgia\textsuperscript{30} indicated that the middle-classes had little contact with the lower-classes except to do things "for" them. The middle-class women, especially had a fear of guilt by association. This guilt by association could result in the loss of their identity in that their identity is based upon the things that they own. Those who do not own those things could cause the middle-class to deny their identity. This same study revealed the fact that the middle-class did not involve itself in the black man's struggle for identity because they had already found their identity in property. Not at all surprising is the fact that this intra-race-racism extended into the realm of the church.

The desire for respectability has made the mode of church life in a state that simulates that of the high church in liturgy and carefully restrained emotions. The lineage of the middle-class family in Columbus can be traced through four to six generations of membership in one church. There are several facets in this tendency which need be regarded to understand why it is an important tenent

\textsuperscript{30}Cebrun and Smith, \textit{op.cit.} pp. iii, 19-20.
for membership in the middle-class. First, the middle-class value system is based, in part, upon recognition. Whether black or white, the parent feels obligated to give his children those things which he never had. It really does not matter whether the child wants them or not. If the family is one of the pillars of a certain church the children will have a better chance to be in the "limelight" than they would have in a church where the family was considered to be "newcomers." Second, the nature of the black middle-class is so precariously balanced the people who identify with it always feel a great need for something for which to exist; i.e. something to which to "cling".

This desire is responsible for the fact that middle-class churches in the black community have so many church services on Sunday. The middle-class black woman spends the day in church to insure herself and those who authenticate her selfhood that she is doing nothing unrespectable. This desire for something to which to cling is also responsible for the fact that middle-class people will own their own homes at all costs. These homes are usually located in some simulation of white suburbia, or the now well known "transitional neighborhood."
The transitional neighborhood is usually the past residence of the white-middle-class-liberal with whom the achieved black has aligned himself. But, to admit that those whom he thinks are his peers are moving away from him would be to admit that he is no better than the "low, boisterous, common" black man from whom he is trying to escape. Indeed, it is often said, "One of my friends sold me this house because he needed a caudal neighbors to placate his business clientele."

During the 1940's and 1950's the white value system saw the Harlem ghetto as one of the most humors places in America. In an attempt to indicate the degree of emasculation faced by the black man and the extent to which the black woman was domineering and by right, due to her greater intelligence, the Amos and Andy show was invented and aired.

We laughed from pure exasperation at the portrayal of how "some of our people" acted without today's realization that black is one boat, if it sinks, we all drown. Sapphire was the wife of George "Kingfish" Stevens. At the slightest provocation, Sapphire would return to her mother. "Mamma's" constant line, in every show, was, "He ain't no good," followed by a long discourse on the lack of qualities of
any kind in the black man, generally. Sapphire was 

thoroughly in-the-middle between her desire to stand 
by her man and her desire to behave according to standards 

which were acceptable and white.

Sapphire represents to me the middle class 
black woman of today who has been taught that the black 
community, black men included, is the epitome of irrespon-
sibility most to be despised, yet when she strives to 
attain the white best she is excluded. To the lady, 
"Sapphire", who knew not what she was doing...
Ruby: The Company of Pharisees

Historical Pharisaism began during the Exile. Because of the Exile, the Israelites were deprived of the temple and its cultus and therefore, had to be content with a dream. In this dream-like state the desired object became present in the form of a memory image, wish-fulfillment. In this case the desired object was the restoration of the legalistic, supreme authority of the high priest in matters of national life.

...the Pharisees, who are considered the most accurate interpreters of the law... attribute everything to Fate or to God; they hold that to act rightly or otherwise rests, indeed for the most part, with men....

We have referred to Ruby, the woman of the Negro upper-class as a Pharisee because her behavior, and that of the upper-class, generally, is similar to the dream-like state attributed to the Pharisees, above. Haziah Williams, President

of the Alamo Black Clergy of the San Francisco area, discussed his views on the Black class structure in a lecture on power at the Interdenominational Theological Center in December, 1970. He said at that time that he felt that class distinctions in any group are based upon economics. "Any class distinction above lower-middle-class in the black community are psychological." That is, the people behave as though they were upper-middle-class because they think they are.

In this dream-like state the desired object for the upper-classes is acceptance by and membership in the system. Like the Pharisees of the exilic and post exilic period, they, too, have become the most accurate interpreters of the law of this land. They are aware of the fact that wealth, education and breeding are necessary to be considered upper-class in America and they have acquired the three of these. The Negro "society woman" has fostered Negro art, literature and music and to a certain extent has allowed herself to be engaged in the work of "uplifting the race."

Unlike the woman of the Negro middle-class, however she had the money and the dignity(?) to insure her aloofness from those who did not fit into her class. In other words, she became the philanthropist of the black race. There
are two other determinants of upper-class that she was able to capture that the middle-class could not attain. The first was leisure time in abundance. She, the woman of the upper-class did not need to confine her charity work to after work on weekdays and weekends. Because of the wealth she had attained, she could be free at any time of the day. In fact, most of the planning of philanthropic ventures was done at the bridge party held in the home of friends in the forenoon. The second thing that money allowed her to do was remain distant. In fact, the closest she ever came to the masses was at the point when she in her "...ritualistic and deliberative..." way decided to attend church services.

During the interviews in Columbus, Georgia, we discovered that "church going is not important for this class." When they do decide to attend church the upper-classes are part of the Episcopalian, Catholic or other unemotional, highly liturgical churches. Because the middle-classes are aware of this fact, they will generally attempt to be in their company. Hence, the middle-classes are as far "down" as the upper-classes

---

had to go. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the middle-class was as close as the upper-class would allow the masses to come, until recently.

Prior to the development of what is now being referred to as "the new upper-class", the people who composed the upper-class were of "aristocratic" lineage. Their families could be traced, in a few cases, as far back as Napolean Bonaparte as in the case of Mrs. O. Hodge Fisher who is better known as Marion Anderson. At the turn of the century these socialites spent their time in a world of exclusive status. If she were in Harlem, the lady of the upper-class occupied a town house. In Irvington, her home was a villa after the fashion of A'lelia Walker, heiress to the Madame C.J. Walker, millions. Society, black and white felt that these people were extraordinary persons who had managed to pull themselves "up by their own bootstraps". Andrew Billingsley has stated that this isn't the case. Billingsley points to Edward Brooke, Robert Weaver and Thurgood Marshall as examples of truly remarkable men but makes it clear however, that these men had a head start in life.35

34 Billingsley, op.cit. p. 128.
Charles S. Johnson has discovered that there is still another division of the upper-class. "Education was the most frequently mentioned criteria for upper-class status" following ancestry.36 But the pursuit of an education does not always, for this group, follow the same lines as for those of the middle-class. The upper-class frequently disrupts education for travel, social life or "rest". There is no competition in this class for the job market because most of the members of the upper classes own their own businesses. These are usually small, service oriented establishments such as barbershops or funeral homes or the like but if all else should fail, the son or daughter can be taken into the business. This class of people does not strive for recognition as does the middle-class so, unlike the middle-class, there is no great embarrassment if the child does not finish with his class.

But there are those whose superior intellect or knowledge of people have catapulted them into the status of upper-class. The college president, let us say or, the mayor of Cleveland who arrived upon securing a certain position has the finance and public reverence of the masses and middle-classes to make him upper-class but is without

background and breeding. These are not considered as
totally unacceptable as those who compose the "new upper-
class".

The "new upper-class" is composed of many people
who have managed, in a sense, to lift themselves by their
own bootstraps. The men and women who have gained their
wealth in the fields of entertainment and sports and those
who have been involved in rackets of various types and kinds
and those who have made it by sheer luck or windfall are
those who represent its members. These are generally
excluded for they have neither the breeding, nor withstanding
the amount of "culture" they may have managed to "pick up",
nor the education of those who were born into this elite
group.

The social life is all the rage. Parties, balls,
cotillions, anywhere in the country are within their realm.
A very recent novel shows the extent of time and effort
expended upon the social gathering. The grand occasion in
the life of a black girl was the cotillion, her debut to
society. Like black society as a whole, the cotillion was

37 Billingsley, op.cit. p. 128.
38 John Oliver Killens, The Cotillion or One Good Bull
is Half the Herd (Trident Press, 1971)
a mere imitation of the white society on the other side of the tracks. The only facet missing in this transplantation was power in the political structure. Because this was an integrated society in the sense that the White House the art galleries and operas were open to them when they were closed to other blacks, the upper-class black woman never noticed that she was not free (or pretended not to notice) until the death of Martin Luther King, Jr.

The King family had a traceable lineage, through matrilineal lines, that was of good repute.39 They were educated and had been for as long as anybody could or cared to remember. He was a part of the system but had noticed that there were a few discrepancies that needed to be cleared up in the minds of his white and black brethren. He had not intended to get as involved in the problems of the poor as he did.40 The more involved he became, the more discrepancies he became aware of. At first he and other leaders of the movement participated in the alleviation of discrimination in the South with certainty, aloofness and restraint, always restraint for this was the by-word of members of his class. It was not uncommon for the middle-class

to take the position of leader in revolutionary movements history was not replete in examples. In the process of gaining the favor of the whites by failure to associate with the more militant blacks, Dr. King became upper-class because of the circles into which he was drawn and because of the reverence from the masses and the middle-class which he and his movement were able to secure. He was not drawn away from his hope of making America beautiful because until the last ten days of his life, he was sure that America need only be shown the error of her ways.
Diamond:
The Morphogenesis of Class Structure
Among Black Women in America

Alexis De Tocqueville has stated in his 1935 publication, *Democracy in America*,

"Equality of conditions also promotes among men similar values and patterns of behavior—oriented to individualism, commercial interest... economic competition, monetary achievement (and potential feelings of relative deprivation) human fellowship and public order (in contrast to aristocratic societies). 40

In other words he saw the basis of a democracy as independent sources of power within the society. He further felt that the extremes of anarchy, tyranny, violence, etc. were blunted in a democratic society, and this because people tend to respect the legal forms and the judicial system retards individuals in some of their projects thereby protecting the minorities. 41

Now, both Marx and Durkheim, De Tocqueville's successors in the study of the system, saw the "individualism, commercial self interest...and economic competition..." in America's democracy but neither saw the human fellowship,

41 Ibid.
nor the judicial protection of minorities. They suggested instead that not unlike the aristocratic form of government, the proletariat was still subject to the ruling classes. Marx, in fact, incorporated into his ethics a protest against the inhumanity of the upper-classes toward the lower-classes. He advocated a take-over of power by the exploited classes, those classes which De Tocqueville felt were protected in the democracy by the judicial system. This take-over of power has been tried several times in the history of mankind. Factually, before Marx suggested it, people needed to test their strength against that of "the powers that be." Some of the results have been interesting as well as conclusive.

Martin Luther anticipated John Locke and initially advocated the peasant's right to self-defense. In 1524 the same peasants, like peasants of all the years before and all of the years that have followed, failed to realize the rhetoric of political advocacy and demanded emancipation and the right to worship as they chose. The Roman Church as well as the "Reformer" Martin Luther failed to realize, as politicians have for all the years that have followed, that a dream deferred, explodes; thence the Peasants Revolt.
Authority was re-established by fire and sword.\textsuperscript{42}

On July 14, 1789 "The Bastille," the peasants revolted because of unemployment and other economic difficulties. Ordinary citizens armed themselves and adopted the new flag of the revolution. The peasants stormed the Bastille and considered this just the beginning of the war. The battle turned out to be a mere battle in a war that was to continue even to this day. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the king's decision to move the court and government from Versailles back to Paris had no real effect on the economic conditions of the time. The Estates General moved to confiscate church lands and declare religious freedom because the landed aristocracy and the government of the entire country faced bankruptcy.\textsuperscript{43} The demands of the peasants were a by-product of the entire venture and served no real purpose save justification, if any were needed, for the actions taken.

The revolution of 1905 climaxed the attempts of the Russian government to play both ends against the middle. This government had co-operated with the rebellious labor class in hopes of drawing attention away from the government's inadequacies. The priest, Gapon, like revolutionary leaders


\textsuperscript{43}\textit{Ibid.} pp. 78-80.
before and after his time, forgot about the rhetoric of politics and led a group of workers from a large munitions factory to march and sing hymns. They felt that the midst of the Russo-Japanese was the best time to apply the pressure of their demands. The tsar, "little father", replied to their demands with a volley; "Bloody Sunday" was the result. A "Manifesto" was published, half-hearted promises were made and life resumed as usual.⁴⁴

Now, moving to America, the so-called revolutions that have taken place on these shores have not been different than those elsewhere. In reason for the uprising populace and the results achieved by those uprisings, the plight is the same. The reason is usually the deferment of dreams of that group which happens to be at the bottom of the capitalistic heap at that point in history. The results of that deferment is usually an explosion, commonly called a revolution. The results of the revolution are usually the same, i.e. inadequate change.

In 1776 the circumstances were the deferred dream of the British immigrants for economic security and religious

⁴⁴Ibid. 170-174.
purification. The result was the development of a pathway by which a few were to gain control and most people returned to a similar way of life after exchanging one tyranny for another. The gains made can be attributed to the fact that the British were not financially secure enough to maintain adequate troops on two fronts at the same time.

Nat Turner's slave revolt is an example of the black man's early attempts to remove himself from the bottom of the capitalistic heap. When it was over, the majority of those that took part were dead. Many who were not involved were dead and life proceeded as usual.

The 1955 revolt of the oppressed was led by Martin Luther King, Jr. The establishment gave up the position in which they had usually sat on the public conveyance, they maintained the position that they had held in the economic and political distribution of power, life proceeded as usual. 45

The black man is still on the bottom of the capitalistic heap in a racist society. In an attempt to answer the question, "Why?" Cohn-Bendit has stated that the power of the revolution has been taken away from the working-class. 46 Melvin H. Kohn has volunteered the "How".

by stating that the working-class occupations demand conformity to authority. But all black men do not belong to the working-class (lower-class), there are the same class divisions within black "society" as in white society. How is it then, that all black men are still on the bottom of the heap?

Well, the bottom of the heap is seen as the "Negroes place." After interminable trying to reach another rung on the ladder the Negro simply took the white man's culture back across the tracks. Booker T. Washington stated the rational thusly

"The wisest of my race understand that the agitation on questions of social equality is the merest folly..." 47

And Washington was loved by the white man because he had said for them that only the bad niggers were the ones who sought to overcome their station. The others, like "good" Booker T. knew which side their bread was buttered on. When the Labor unions started to use the black man as a strike breaker, the black man started to earn more money than he ever had. Survival (slave) ethics took over again.

At this point, economics was not only the basis for class; it was the determinant of life. For Washington continued his above statement by stating, "The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory...is worth more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera house." And so this Atlanta Compromise was merely an expression of appeasement for the whites. But it was also a stabilizing force for the ambitions of the Negro.

But as Negroes earned more and more money and became more and more affluent, the problems started to arise. As we saw in the chapter Sapphire, the general feeling among those of the middle class is the feeling that money is the equalizer. So, the previously under-class man and those who were constituents of the middle-class started to storm the bastille of the upper-class. The upper-class, those who could trace their lineage to some great white man, resented these upstarts for several reasons. First, because of their interpretation of social reality, second, because it is common for a counter-culture to accept and internalize larger society's views of them no matter that they are largely inaccurate.

---

48 Ibid. Underlining mine.
Now, whites as well as blacks have studied the discipline of sociology and come to the conclusion that there is no black upper-class because they have no power. Possibly they have no power in the larger society but they do have enough power to make sociologists devise a "new upper-class" to encompass those who have the finances but whose genealogies could be traced neatly in twenty minutes or less. But, even without power, if we return to Marx's theory of inhumanity of the upper-classes toward the lower-classes we could establish an upper-class just on the basis of the inhumanity shown to lower-class women by the women of the upper-class.

Whenever another study was to be done on the black woman in poverty, black women who had made it were asked to write it. Pauli Murray, Jean L. Noble and Dorothy Height (members of the intellectual and aristocratic upper-class) took seriously the requests of the white liberals to "explain" why the indigenous poor were mostly black (fallacious thinking in and of itself); and why these poor blacks refused to get off welfare and get jobs. These women drew there pens as though they were swords and used them to score the flesh of their sisters with such statements as
The poor are lazy and do not want to work.
Some women would rather have "illegitimate" babies and support them on ADC allowances than to marry.
The poor steal, have illegitimate babies, use dope, alcohol, and commit most of the violent crimes.
The poor are responsible for their own poverty because they could pull themselves up by their own bootstraps if they really tried...

Joyce Ladner has stated, "In spite of a recognition of the blatant inequities in the society, millions of the affluent blame the poverty on its victims." It is my contention that among the affluent blacks there had been no recognition. Even though the class status which they had attained was based neither on economics or power in some cases, according to Melvin H. Kohn, class is the "correlation of values to the interpretation of social reality." Hollingshead also developed his class system analysis without the economic factor in the "Index of Status Position."

---


51 Kohn, op. cit. p. 71.
Between 1955 and 1965 the black man caught a new glimpse of himself and his white "brother (?)". During this period Martin Luther King, Jr. who had never had to ride a bus in his life got involved in a bus boycott to help other Negroes who did have to ride the bus. In 1963 Dr. King delivered his now famous "I have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington, culmination. He expressed some thoughts that had been held by many black Americans. He said that he looked forward to the day when little white children and little black children could join hands in the Southern states and play together. He and many other Americans really felt that the March on Washington, 1963 would show white America the error of her ways; once shown, America was expected to make drastic changes. The platform was laden with acceptable Negroes; blacks who could trace their economically stable lineage, condescended from their ivory towers of establishment membership to lend a hand to the poor. Unfortunately, they did not take a tip from an old song and they did, go to crap games with barons and earls; they went to Harlem in diamonds and pearls... and when it came to their lower-class sisters they dished the dirt with the rest of the white girls...
They proved that they were ladies, i.e. upper-class and not tramps, i.e. lower-class. This continued up through the Marches for freedom in the South. Liberal whites and secure blacks went down to "help out."

Then the marches moved North through Chicago and the bitterness of Cairo and other Northern cities became apparent. Malcolm X was killed in the North and Robert Kennedy was killed in the West. It became obvious to all those who had taken the heroine of "Northern and Western life" that everywhere but the North Star was the South. And when the president of the United States was killed in the Southwest and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed in the South, it became obvious to those "acceptable niggers" seated on the platform in 1963, that even the approved coloreds were not safe and neither were the liberal whites. In his book Why We Can't Wait, Dr. King came to the conclusion himself that the death of Kennedy "demolished the myth that hate and violence can be confined..." "The assination...killed not only a man but a complex of illusions."53 If this complex of illusions became a corpse when Kennedy was killed, even the corpse was ravaged when Dr. King was assinated. It became slowly and painfully obvious to many blacks that there

53Martin Luther King, Jr. op.cit. p. 144.
was nothing, not white blood, not education, not no-thing
to prevent their being next. It was even more painful
for some of us to deal with the over-obvious fact, black is
one boat, if it sinks, we all drown.

This realization amounted to a redefinition of
social reality. The former definition made social reality
of existence a quest for individual identity. A search
for that which would defy the gap of race by denying that
it existed. In 1944, Gunnar Myrdal reported black religion
in America to be highly segregated.54 The churches that
catered to the lower-classes were highly emotional
(many still are) because the outlet of witnessing to the
sermon allotted expression to the psychological needs
of financially oppressed socio-economic groups. The middle-
class and upper-classes were members of predominately
white denominations, whether they worshipped in segregated
situations or not. The liturgy and ritual were strictly
adhered to and there was no emotionalism present at all.55

54Gunnar Myrdal, The American Dilemma (New York:
Harper and Brothers, 1944) P. 864.
55Ruby F. Johnstone, The Development of Negro
The lack of emotionalism was equivalent to another attempt to prove to the whites that they were different from the vast majority of the black race. These non-emotional blacks discovered, however, that they were not being discriminated against because of their denomination; the discrimination had to do with being black. The voiceless, faceless, powerless status of the Invisible Man only added to the grueling struggle.\(^{56}\)

A recent research project on church attendance in Columbus, Georgia proved that blacks sought church affiliation, yet, to a certain extent, on the basis of financial affluence. But, since the period of morphogenesis, which we have defined to be between 1964–68, there have been changes. There is emotionalism in about 92% of the upper-class churches including the Roman Catholic Church. The emotionalism in the Roman Catholic Church was so pronounced that the priest had to remark, "I've never seen anything like it."\(^{57}\)

\(^{56}\)Geddes Hanson, "Black Theology and Protestant Thought", *Social Progress*, LX, no.1 (September–October, 1969) pp. 13ff.  
\(^{57}\)Cebrun and Smith, *op.cit.* p. 7.
I would conclude that these church members are not economically depressed, they have now redefined their social reality so that they are among the oppressed. In other words, "Equality of conditions also promotes among men similar patterns of behavior..."58

April, 1968 represents a tragic prophecy for Spring is ideally the time when all things are made new. Morphogenesis of class structure among black women began at this time on a large scale for many who were shaken from the womb of misinterpretation of social reality. The redefinition of social reality came with the realization that the struggle was not one of meaning as it relayed to the larger society but a struggle, instead for fulfillment embodied in the accomplishments of the group rather than the individual.59

Hentton has stated that the woman is the strongest proponent in the maintenance of class structure. It is therefore easy to conclude that this would be the most

58 De Tocqueville, op.cit.
59 Hanson, op.cit.
important formidable stronghold. If this conclusion is allowed to hold, when women start to drop the barriers, the classless society is nearer to materializing. Or at least, morphogenesis is closer to replacing the rigormortis of intra-culture segregation.

The Negro society woman (upper-class), maintained an integrated social society which delighted in attending night clubs, opera, and museum showings that did not readily admit Negro patrons and guests. These women established social clubs and could count all of the members on the fingers of one hand. From the time that the food for their functions was supplied from the table scraps from the "big house" until 1961, society was just "good company". These black pharisees thanked God that they were not as other women and kept the company of a few selected "better class" white folk and no "quarter niggers" at all.

In 1962, Mrs. John Cashin, Jr. of Huntsville, Alabama decided to help out in a Sit-In. Mrs. John Cashin, Jr. discovered that the fact that she was an upper-class woman made no difference. White society, part of which she was as
good as, the other part of which she was better than, put her in jail, too. Her discovery that she was being treated as were the quarter niggers led her to influence her husband to lead a small group of Negroes in the temporary integration of the White Citizen's Council meeting. She became interested in school desegregation and wrote her objections down in a lengthy treatise. She became fully active in local, state and national politics on the plebian level of voter registration.

Mrs. Henry Lee Moon, a retired school teacher in New York City and Mrs. John Cashin, Jr., M.A. in psychology and child development, represent the aristocratic, intellectual upper-class. They are two of their kind who acted upon the idiom of Porchitta Pierce who said, "...but they [the Negro woman intellectual] must be functional to aid in the social revolution of the Negro."61

Intelligence will seize the immediate meaning of a situation and evaluate it. Intellect evaluates the evaluation. 62

60 Gerri Major, "The New Image of the Socialite," Ebony, August, 1966, p. 120.
62 Ibid.
The black woman who has chosen to adopt the natural hair style is as varied as the black woman's class structure. This has not always been the case. In 1966 it was found that the women wearing the natural look were those who composed what Phyl Garland called the avant-garde; the trend setting group. As we have seen, the probability of a lower-class or middle-class woman being in the rank of trend-setter is slim. If these women have come into "good" jobs or relatively high salaries or if they have achieved the position of teacher in the public schools, social worker or nurse, they see trend making as expensive. It has taken too much for them to get where they are to

risk it on a game of pitch and toss and lose, and start again at their beginnings and never breathe a word about their loss....

The professions in which these women are involved were always those in which the woman of the avant-garde was not required to conform to authority and frequently those in which middle-class mores made no difference. Jewelry designers, art students and entertainers are often more

---

64 Rudyard Kipling, If.
acceptable in their professions if they do not conform. Garland also pointed out the fact that all of the women to whom she talked were very vocal about why they had chosen to wear the natural. In every case these women who had tried to do everything according to the formula for success. Each had failed to attain the elusive white defined point at which to "qualify". In every case, these women had redefined their social reality to accept the fact that they were being discriminated against because they were black.

Lower-class women were the next to accept the natural as a style. The women of the lower-class had worn the natural as a matter of necessity between the times when they could afford to go to the beauty shop and the times when they could not. First because of economics, then because of the entertainers, whom they admired, the lower-class woman accepted the natural. Immediately following the Ebony article in 1966 letters to the editor were voluminous. Writing letters to the editor is strictly a middle-class habit. The middle-class as we have seen in our examination of the March on Washington, believed that all that needs to be done to change things is that they speak out. The middle-class disapproved of the natural.
Even today few middle-class black women wear the natural. From 1966-1968 the style of the "beautiful" girl that was printed by Ebony magazine was still traditional white beauty. Following the period which we have delineated as the morphogenesis, the natural gained in popularity in Ebony and among black women generally.

Pauli Murray has stated in a recent article in the Miami Herald, 65 that the black woman has never experienced the protection of society nor has she experienced the idealizations of womanhood and motherhood that have been accorded the American woman in mythology. The black woman has not been accorded the natural birthright of personhood. Pauli Murray is a member of the aristocratic, intellectual upper-class. Lena Horne is a member of the "new upper-class" and she, too has realized the fact that she is no better than her sister.

The woman in the slums could not know

...when the stuff hits the fan and the nitty gritty arises, we are just another black woman who would be stopped at the next barrier created by society. 66


In other words, the upper-class black woman has been through all of the "changes" that society is still trying to put the other women through. Middle-class women are more reluctant to the thought of giving it up because this society has convinced them that it can be done and they feel that they are too close, now, to turn around. But because the upper-class woman has come to these realizations and knows that no group in power has ever given up that power without a struggle, her intellect has evaluated the evaluation. She knows now that she must teach her sister in the ghetto that the driving force must not be wasted in searching for the proverbial pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Indeed, she must teach her sister that there is no rainbow.

The "haves" and the "have-nots" have been separated in the larger culture and we, having taken their culture back across the tracks took the separation as well. Lena Horne has referred to this division as a horrible dimension. Even Dorothy Height, one of the women who originally blamed poverty on the poor, has admitted recently that poor black women and poor black women have the same problems. She went further to own the fact that the problems are greater for the poor black woman due to societal pressure.67

67 Dorothy Height, Problems of Negro Women," in American Women. The Report of the President's Commission on
Angela Davis who is also a member of the intellectual upper-class exemplifies upper-class behavior as well. National Review has classified her as "The Girl with Everything". Everything necessary to be the perfect icon, that is. She was caught, discovered(?) in a Howard Johnson's motor inn with her boyfriend of the moment. Like members of the upper-class of the larger society, this left no scar on her acceptability record nor has the fact that she does not adhere to the "God-mother-apple-pie-country" ethics of the middle-class either black or white. Still, in it all she is very black and third worldly about her situation.

The fact that she belongs to the communist party could be just another way of saying, "All power to the people." Indeed, her Defense Attorney, William Knustler said that Angela must make a choice between the old line theory and her friendship with black people. 68 But this problem is not peculiar to Angela. Lena Horne has declared that the black woman of the upper-class must seek an ingroup identification her "sister". No longer will she be able to participate in this integrated society of pharisees. 69 When the stuff hits the fan, indeed, she is just another black woman.

69 Lena Horne, op.cit. p. 119.
Lena Horne states that there are more of us that can help to lift as we climb. In this is included the middle-class woman who has realized, as has the intermediate step to complete disillusionment, "No matter how well you play the game, black is black is black." Because they have played the game so well, "Links insist that they know, probably more poignantly than many the unalterable dilemmas of racism."!

The Links are devising ways for middle-class blacks to become involved with their ghetto brothers and sisters. Their new thrust is toward developing leadership in the ghetto, inner-city community through the use of and for the use of black college youth. This organization started this program in 1968. Before 1968 the Links were interested in presenting young ladies to society and giving charity balls for people who were never invited to attend the function, unless as examples of rank and file poverty. They also gave scholarships and awards to members of their group in the interest of charity.

70"Links Take Care of Business," Ebony, September, 1970.
71Ibid.
Now, Vivian Beamon, past president of the Links, denounces the label of "charity" for their deeds in the black community. When these 2,024 ladies raised $100,000 for the National Association For the Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense Fund and an equal amount for the National Urban League, she said,

*We're not a bourgeoise organization that donated $100,000, but simply a lot of people who contributed painlessly to what we believe in...* 72

Melvin H. Kohn has stated that the power of revolution has been taken away from the working-class because they are working in positions where they must conform to authority. If this is the case, then the people of the black race who do not belong to the working-class may be the ones who are to take the lead. Perhaps a muted rebellion has already started in the removal of the stigma from black skin and nappy hair. Perhaps this is only the beginning of a revolution which will, like the natural, start from the top. People fight harder for what they believe in and black people are beginning to

believe in black.

Peggy Chambers, Assistant Dean of Douglass College sees the black woman at a critical stage

The cry of Black Power, freedom and beauty represent everything they've worked and prayed for. For the first time since African days, Black women are coming forth as queens and their men as warriors. 73

This representation of the black man and woman appears to be fast becoming a mutual interest. Alexis De Tocqueville says that associations are formed in a democratic society to seek mutual support for an opinion or interest they wish to support in the world. 74 This mild statement could be translated to mean that the black man and the black woman in America are of the opinion that they should be free and they are willing to form association across class lines in order to insure that cause.

Especially those black people who constitute the upper-classes and middle-classes, the black man realizes that he cannot qualify. The lower-classes, especially the youth, feel that they would rather fight in the streets than grow up and live in the world that they see around them. "Freedom," in the words of a new rock song, "is just another word for nothing else to loose."

73 Fletcher Knebel, "Identity...The Black Woman's Burden," Look, September, 1969. p. 79.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Black, Matthew. "Pharisees." The Interpreter's Dictionary Of The Bible. III.


Bibliography (Cont'd)


Bibliography (Cont'd)

Periodicals

Hanson, Geddes. "Black Theology and Protestant Thought." Social Progress, LX (September-October, 1969) pp. 5-12.
Knebel, Fletcher. "Identity...The Black Woman's Burden." Look, September, 1969, p. 79.
Little Rock Daily Arkansas Gazette, October 19, 1883.
Major, Gerri. "The New Image of the Socialite." Ebony, August, 1966, p. 120.
Bibliography (Cont'd)

Other references


Cuney, Waring. No Images. 1926.

Kipling, Rudyard. If.


Osborne, William T. Interdenominational Theological Center. Class lectures on Social Ethics, Fall, 1970-71.