7-1-1984

The Atlanta Race Riot of 1906 and the Black Community

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THE ATLANTA RACE RIOT OF 1906 AND THE BLACK COMMUNITY

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

BY
BARBARA A. TAGGER
ATLANTA GEORGIA

JULY 1984
ABSTRACT

HISTORY

TAGGER, BARBARA A. B. A. HOWARD UNIVERSITY, 1980

The Atlanta Race Riot of 1906 and the Black Community.

Advisor: Dr. Margaret Rowley

Thesis Dated: July 1984

The race riot that occurred in Atlanta, Georgia on September 22, 1906, is considered to be one of the worst riots to have ever happen in the South before World War I. The purpose of this study is to examine the social, political, and economic aspects of the city's Black community before and after the riot, and to show that Blacks were determined to build a strong society despite segregation. In addition to this, the paper will examine the events that occurred during the riot and discuss the interracial cooperation committees that were created immediately following the uprising to improve race relations in the city. The reactions of local and national Black leaders to the riot will also be explored.

The primary sources used for this study were the Black and white newspapers of the period: Atlanta Independent; Savannah Tribune; New York Age; Washington Bee; Baltimore Afro-American; Atlanta Constitution;
Atlanta Journal; Atlanta News; and New York Times. City Council Minutes, city ordinances, and other government documents were used for additional information. Also used in this study are numerous secondary sources such as books, articles, pamphlets, theses, dissertations, maps, and illustrations.
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INTRODUCTION

By the turn of the twentieth century, the United States was looking forward to an era of hope and prosperity. The nation had won the Spanish-American War in 1898 and with its victory it had acquired new territories in the Caribbean and the Pacific Oceans. As a result, many Americans, especially businessmen, saw these newly acquired territories as an opportunity for the expansion of industries; thus causing a growth of big business.

The growth of big business brought many people to the cities thereby causing an increase in the urban population. Because of the handsome salaries offered by industries, many people left the rural areas to work in the factories of large companies. Among these were Blacks who migrated to the large cities. By 1900, over seventy-two cities had a population of 5000 or more Blacks. Cities such as Louisville, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Atlanta saw an increase in the Black population. But those Blacks who migrated to

the cities seeking better opportunities ran into many problems.

One of the first problems that Blacks encountered was employment. Although it was rumored that employment opportunities were plentiful in the cities, many people found that the number of job positions were less plentiful than expected. Especially for Blacks, employment opportunities were few. Most Blacks could find jobs only in industries doing the less attractive work. The few attractive jobs for Blacks were offered by the Cigarmaker's International Union and the United Mine Workers. Black women, however, were able to find jobs as house servants which caused an increase in women moving to the cities.

Housing was another problem Blacks faced. Many Blacks found it difficult to find any decent, affordable housing. Since whites strongly protested the intrusion of Blacks into their neighborhoods, Blacks were forced to live in certain sections of the city. Most cities passed laws that segregated residential areas as early as 1900. Legal segregation forced Blacks to live in slum areas, where homes were not well-kept, streets were not paved,

Ibid, p. 320.
and unsanitary conditions existed.

Not only did Blacks face these problems during the early twentieth century, but they also faced the problem of losing their political rights. The Progressive movement in the South which arose during the late nineteenth century, and whose goals were to "purify American life" through social, economic, and political reforms, for example, called for the disfranchisement of Blacks. Progressive women, who were upset at the idea that Black men were given the right to vote through the Fourteenth Amendment before they were allowed to vote, similarly advocated the disfranchisement of Blacks. They, along with Southern Democrats, wanted to "purify" politics by removing Black politicians from office and those white politicians who bought Black votes. Actions taken by southerners to remove Blacks from political office were overlooked by the President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt, but won many Blacks over when he personally invited the famous Black leader at the time, Booker T. Washington, for dinner at


the White House. This event made headlines in every major newspaper in the country. Blacks were overjoyed at the idea that the President had personally invited a fellow Black citizen to the White House. White southerners, on the other hand, were totally outraged by the incident. Southerners were further outraged when Roosevelt appointed a Black to a federal office in Charleston, South Carolina. They were hoping that the president would cease in appointing Blacks to high-leveled government positions, especially in the South.

Blacks faced problems not only in the cities, but in the rural areas as well. Those Blacks who lived in small towns, especially in the South, were often threatened by whites who wanted either to keep Blacks in their place or forced them out of town.

Most small towns turned to violence to assist in controlling Blacks. Lynching became an increasingly common occurrence in the United States prior to the 1900s. According to one source, between the years 1890 and 1900, 1,780 lynchings had took place. Many of these

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5 Franklin, p. 318.
lynchings, which were most prevalent in the South and the Midwest, occurred after Blacks were accused often unfairly of rape, murder, or theft. Thousands of innocent Blacks died as a result of such false accusations.

Another form of violence whites resorted to during the early 1900s was rioting. While lynching declined slightly, race riots grew sharply in numbers throughout the nation. Race riots were, in part, a reaction to the increasing migration of Blacks to the cities, but riots occurred in small towns as well. Although the North and the Midwest were the primary areas where race riots occurred, the South had its share of race riots also. For example, a riot broke out in Statesboro, Georgia in 1904 when two Blacks were arrested for the murder of a white family. Not satisfied with the decision of the court that the two Blacks were to hang, the white citizens of Statesboro formed a mob, rushed the guarded town courthouse, and took the two prisoners and burned them alive.

In August, 1906, a riot broke out out in Brownsville, Texas, which involved the heroic Black

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Franklin, p. 323; Dittmer, pp. 32-35.
soldiers of the Twenty-Fifth regiment who fought during the Spanish-American War. White citizens of Brownsville spread the word that Blacks were attempting to take over the town since one white was killed and two were injured. One of the injured was the chief of police. A mob was formed to counter-attack the Black soldiers accused of being involved in the incident. But the quick decision of the commander of the division to settle the dispute helped prevent the riot from becoming very serious. The Brownsville riot led to the dismissal of the entire regiment by President Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt also gave the soldier dishonorable discharges and struck their military records. This action by Roosevelt came as a great shock to Black Americans since they considered him a reliable friend.

These are just two of the forty riots that occurred in the United States during the early part of the twentieth century. Of these forty riots, historians usually emphasize six major ones which occurred between 1900 and 1910. Five of these major riots took place in Springfield, Ohio (two riots occurred there), Springfield, Illinois, Greensburg, Indiana, and

Brownsville, Texas. The sixth principal riot that occurred was also considered the South's worst race riot during this time. This riot took place in Atlanta, Georgia on September 22, 1906.

Thus, this paper will attempt to examine the Black community before and after the race riot of 1906, and to show what type of effects the tragic incident had on Black Atlanta. The study will begin by looking at the social, economic, and political aspects of the Black community before 1906 in order to present a setting for the uprising. Secondly, the writer will examine the causes and give a brief description of the events that occurred during the Atlanta riot. Immediately following the disturbance, several investigative and interracial committees were created to restore order and to resolve the racial problems which prevailed in the city and these organizations will also be discussed. A look at the reactions of national and local Black leaders to the riot will be addressed in the third chapter. Finally, the study will analyze the impact the riot had on social, economic, and political aspects of the Black society and attempt to show how the uprising may have united Black

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Logan, p. 349.
Atlanta; thus forcing them to create a strong community within the controls of segregation.
CHAPTER I

THE BLACK COMMUNITY BEFORE THE RIOT

Atlanta, like its symbol the phoenix arising from the ashes, recovered quickly from its wounds after the Civil War to become a thriving city. Patterning itself after large northern cities such as New York and Chicago, Atlanta rebuilt itself around the railroad industry and became the leading urban center in the South. Although Atlanta did not have a large population like New York and Chicago, it did, nevertheless, emerge as a leading industrial center. By the end of the nineteenth century Atlanta was ready to discard its small-town image and become known as a thriving metropolis. To build this new image, the businessmen began to promote the city as the new commercial center of the South. Atlanta showed the nation how serious it was in this regard by hosting the Cotton States and International Exposition in 1895, which brought thousands of visitors to the city. Among these was the president of Tuskegee Institute, Booker T. Washington, who was one of the key speakers of the
affair. The Exposition helped convince northern
investors that Atlanta had the potential to become the
"New York of the South". Thus, by 1900, Atlanta had
traded its image as a "small town" city for that of a
regional metropolis.

Like many large cities during this period, Atlanta
saw its population grow tremendously. Whites and Blacks
who lived in the rural areas migrated to the city looking
for good jobs and decent homes and schools for their
families. Unfortunately, Atlanta soon found itself with
more people than jobs and housing which caused increasing
problems for the city.

By 1900, the city's population was 89,872 and of
that number, the Black population was 35,727. Because
of this large number of people, housing became a severe
problem, especially for Blacks. Prior to 1900, Black
migrants settled "in the center of the city". Most
Blacks lived near railroad yards, industrial, and low-
lined areas. Thus, settlements such as Tanyard Bottoms,
Mechanicsville, and others inherited their names

1 Karen Luehrs and Timothy J. Crimmins, "In the
Mind's Eye: The Downtown As Visual Metaphor for the
Metropolis," The Atlanta Historical Journal 26
(Summer/Fall 1982): 178-179.
2 U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census,
Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900 Population,
1:cxix.
from these regions. The areas that had the heaviest Black populations were Summerhill (the first Black settlement in the city), South Atlanta (the first location of Clark University and Gammon Theological Seminary and one of the locations of the Atlanta riot), Shermantown, Pittsburgh, Jenningsstown, and Brownsville (also the scene of the 1906 riot). These Black "urban clusters" and others as indicated on the maps show such settlements were usually located near the Central Business District or the downtown area (see maps).

By the turn of the century, Black settlements such as these were formed because segregation laws prevented Blacks from buying homes in most areas of the city. The influx of Blacks and immigrants caused whites to become greatly concerned about their neighborhoods. Loud protest from white citizens forced the city legislature to consider passing a law in 1900 to segregate residential areas in Atlanta. This Act of legislation made Atlanta the first city in Georgia to attempt to segregate residential areas by law after the Civil War. White immigrants and poor Blacks were forced to live on


4 Dittmer, p. 13.
the West Side of the city which was known as the slum area. This slum area, located "between Atlanta University and Georgia Railroad", remained in bad condition. Homes were poorly taken care of and the city showed no interest in cleaning or repairing the streets. Businesses of ill repute and bootlegging made their home here, too. A few middle class Blacks lived on the West Side, but the majority of them, along with Black professionals, located their homes and business along Decatur street and Auburn Avenue. Later, parts of Decatur Street declined drastically as it became the center of low class dives, gambling house and illegal activity. It was on Decatur Street that the Atlanta riot originated.

This riot was to cause many Blacks to move to Auburn Avenue. At the turn of the century, Auburn Avenue was a predominantly white residential area, with only a few Blacks living and working on this street. Before 1900, of the 28,000 Blacks that lived in Atlanta only 52 of

5 Ibid.

6 Auburn Avenue's previous name was Wheat Street. Named for an Atlantan merchant, Augustus M. Wheat, the street opened in 1853. Wheat Street was named Auburn Avenue in 1893 and should not be confused with Old Wheat Street.
them resided on Auburn. But by 1900, the Black population slowly occupied Auburn by establishing businesses and homes there, even though the area remained predominantly white. By 1906, the west sector of Auburn (the area closest to downtown) became racially mixed due to the increase of Black businesses and the desire of Blacks to live near their jobs and establishments. However, whites continued to dominate the residential area (see maps).

Although the Black community was not centered in the Auburn area before the riot, the rapid growth of important institutions such as churches, schools, and businesses in the area, indicates that Auburn was becoming increasingly important to Black Atlanta.

One of the most important institutions established in the Black community is the church. The church has always been the religious and social center of Black life. Atlanta's Black community, by the late 1890's had established twenty-two churches and of that number seven

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8 The information shown on the maps of Auburn Avenue was gathered by enumeration from Atlanta City Directory, 1900-1906.

9 Dittmer, p. 50.
MAP COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,
MARTIN LUTHER KING HISTORIC SITE

- 1906 -
AUBURN AVENUE
were located in the Auburn area.

The first Black church in the city, Bethel Tabernacle, was founded in 1847 by Black Methodist and was located on Jenkins Street. In 1865, this congregation united with the African Methodist Episcopal Church, changed its name to Big Bethel AME Church, and located on Auburn and Butler Street. Other churches that have served the Auburn community are Wheat Street Baptist (1870), Ebenezer Baptist Church (1886), Friendship Baptist Church (1862), Shaw Temple AME Zion (1890), and Turner Monumental AME (1899).

One of the churches that played a major role in the Black community and in the Atlanta riot was First Congregational Church. In 1864, three young theological students in the Yale University Divinity School who had joined the American Missionary Association came to Atlanta to work with the newly freed Blacks. The three young men, Reverend Erastus Cravath, Reverend Edmund Asa Ware, and Cyrus W. Francis, organized a school on primary and secondary levels and named it Storrs School. Since the school emphasized religious training, the

organizers found it essential to establish a church. Thus, in May, 1867, the new church, First Congregational, held its first service in the chapel of Storrs School.

From the years 1867 to 1894, seven white ministers served as pastors of First Congregational Church. In 1894, Henry Hugh Proctor became the first Black pastor of the church. Under Proctor's leadership, the church became involved in various projects that helped improved the community. For example, Proctor states in his autobiography, *Between Black and White*, that the church organized a temperance society prior to the race riot. This organization soon "became the forerunner of prohibition in Georgia, the South, and the nation." Even though First Congregational Church organized and participated in various programs to aid the Black community, its greatest contributions to the community occurred after the race riot.

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14 These contributions will be discussed in Chapter IV.
The church not only provided the community with religious fulfillment, but it also took on the responsibility of educating its parishioners. In fact, most of the schools established in the Black community began in the church.

Before the 1860's, Georgia had no public school system for any children. As early as 1858, a movement was organized to establish a public school system, but the movement failed. It was not until September 24, 1869 that the city of Atlanta established a public school system for Black and white children under the "separate but equal conditions". In early 1865, two ex-slaves James Tate and Grandison B. Daniels opened the first Black school in the city on Jenkins Street. In November, 1865, Reverend Frederick Ayer and his wife of the First Congregational Church opened a school in a railroad box and called it Walton Spring School. This

school merged with Storrs School which was located Houston and Piedmont streets.

The Black community established six colleges before the twentieth century. One of these schools was Clark University (now Clark College) which was founded in 1866. Named for Dr. Davis Wesgatt Clark, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the school was first situated in the Summerhill area. In the next fourteen years the school was relocated twice and was finally located in South Atlanta until 1941.

Atlanta University, which grew out of Storrs School, was founded in 1867 under the leadership of Edmund Asa Ware and the American Missionary Association. Living by its motto, "I Will Find A Way Or Make One", Atlanta University opened its doors to educate not only Blacks, but all people. The school catered to the educational needs of the people by offering courses that ranged from elementary to college levels.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church tried to help educate Blacks by organizing Morris Brown College in 1881 under the leadership of Reverend Wesley J. Gaines, pastor

18 Brawley, pp. 3-4.
19 Ibid, pp. 4, 6, 10-11.
of Big Bethel AME Church. Morris Brown College held its first classes in Big Bethel AME Church. After the congregation was able to raise enough money to buy a building, the school was relocated at the corner of Boulevard and Houston Streets, where it officially opened its doors to the public in 1885.

On April 11, 1881, Miss Sophie E. Pachard and Miss Harriet E. Giles founded the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary and held classes in the lower level of the Friendship Baptist Church. Afterwards, the school was moved to its present location in West Side Atlanta in 1883. On its third anniversary, the school was renamed Spelman College in honor of Mrs. Laura Spelman Rockefeller, wife of oil entrepreneur John D. Rockefeller, for her gracious gifts to the institution.

In February, 1867, Morehouse College was organized in Augusta, Georgia. At this time, it was known as the Augusta Institute. After moving to Atlanta in 1879, the

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22 "History of Spelman at a Glance", in Spelman College History, Vertical Files, Special Collections, Woodruff Library, Atlanta University; Florence M. Read, The Story of Spelman College (Atlanta, Georgia, 1961) p. 82.
school was renamed the Atlanta Baptist Seminary. The all-male institution emphasized the training of young men as religious leaders and teachers. On June 7, 1913, the charter for the school was changed and the school was renamed Morehouse College, in honor of Henry Lyman Morehouse, Secretary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society.

One of the schools that was involved in the Atlanta race riot was Gammon Theological Seminary. Under the leadership of Bishop Henry White Warren of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the school was founded in 1883 and was named for Elijah H. Gammon, a white minister who had generously donated money to build the school. The school was located in the well-kept, Black middle class area known as "Brownsville" in South Atlanta. During the 1906 riot, Gammon, along with Clark University, opened its doors and offered shelter to those Blacks who were chased, threatened, and left homeless by the vicious white mob. The President of Gammon, Dr. J. W. E. Bowen, 

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24 "Gammon Theological Seminary," in Gammon Theological Founder's Day File, vertical files, Special Collections, Woodruff Library, Atlanta University; *Atlanta Daily World*, 8 December 1951.
was one of many Blacks who was beaten by police officers during this incident. As a result of the "Brownsville riot", at least six Blacks and whites were killed while sixty Blacks were arrested.

Like the church and educational institutions, Black businesses played an important role in the community. The first Black business established in the city was a grocery store owned by an ex-slave, James Tate (also one of the founders of the first school for Blacks in the city). He opened his business on Walton Street in 1866. In the following years, other businesses developed as well. For instance, in the 1890's two financial institutions, the Atlanta Loan and Trust Company and the Georgia Real Estate Loan and Trust Company, were established. These two businesses served the Black community by providing loans to its customers. The latter firm concentrated on providing loans for real


Another important business that proved to be a major institution in the Black community was the Gate City Drug Store. Established in 1896 by Moses Amos and a group of prominent Black physicians, it was the first Black drugstore in the city. The store, located on Auburn Avenue and Butler Street, not only provided drug prescriptions to customers, but it also had a soda fountain from which customers were served sandwiches, ice cream, coffee, and sodas. Gate City also contained space for a sub-post office for its customers.

Insurance businesses also proved to be successful at this time. Many of the insurance companies that were organized in the Black community grew out of mutual aid and benevolent societies organized in the local churches. Since white insurance companies considered Blacks bad risks, Black churches organized aid societies to take the responsibility of providing financial aid to Blacks during time of sickness and death. Unfortunately most of these mutual aid and benevolent societies could not meet the

demands of the people due to insufficient capital; thus, many of these organizations ceased operation or sold their interests to another party. For example, in September, 1905, the Atlanta Benevolent and Protective Association, a mutual aid society organized in Wheat Street Baptist Church, sold its interests to an upcoming prosperous businessman by the name of Alonzo F. Herndon. Herndon, an ex-slave and owner of three very successful barbershops that were located in downtown Atlanta, purchased this mutual aid society, along with several other mutual aid groups, and formed the Atlanta Mutual Insurance Association. Atlanta Mutual grew to be one of the largest Black-owned insurance companies in the country and Herndon became the wealthiest Black in Atlanta.

Other insurance firms were also established at this time, but the only other Black insurance company that closely competed with Atlanta Mutual was Union Relief Association. Organized in 1902 by William Driskell, Union Mutual became the first incorporated Black insurance association in Georgia.

A number of other businesses were established in the

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30 Ibid, p. 27.
Black community by businessmen who eventually became leaders in the community. Some of these successful entrepreneurs included Alexander Hamilton, a leading contractor; funeral director, David T. Howard; Henry A. Rucker, the first Black Internal Revenue Collector of Georgia and owner of the first Black office building in the city; Antoine Graves, realtor; and Benjamin J. Davis, editor of *Atlanta Independent* newspaper.

As anti-Negro sentiment grew in the white community in the early 1900's, Black communities began to emphasize the philosophy of self help and racial solidarity. This period saw the creation of various Black organizations such as the Afro-American Council (1890-1908), the Niagara Movement (1905-1908), and other which centered their concerns around racial solidarity and race advancement. Many Blacks believed that economic was the key to these goals. The organization that most clearly endorsed this idea was the National Negro Business League (NNBL), which was formed by the renowned Black leader Booker T. Washington on August 23, 1900 in order to stimulate and 32

These are just a few of the many types of businesses that were operated in the Black community before the Atlanta riot. For further information on Black enterprises see: Henderson and Walker, "Sweet Auburn," pp. 25-33; Dwight Fennell, "A Demographic Study of Black Business 1905-1908 with Respect to the Atlanta Race Riot of 1906," (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1977), pp. 20-34; Dittmer, pp. 37-39; 41-49.
encourage the growth of Black businesses. The NNBL held its first meeting in Boston, Massachusetts with over thirty-two states represented by Black businessmen. Out of this meeting, state and local leagues were organized in the similar manner as the white chamber of commerce and the board of trade.

A local NNBL was established in Atlanta by 1904. Unlike other local business leagues in Georgia, the Atlanta organization did not receive overwhelming support from the business community (mainly because many businessmen felt that the organization placed too much emphasis on the "rags to riches" stories instead of finding ways for Blacks to open and maintain successful businesses). Instead a number of Atlanta's Black businessmen organized a Board Trade to help solve their problems.

By 1906, however, the Atlanta branch of the NNBL had roused enough enthusiasm in the business community to host the sixth annual NNBL convention. Over 1200

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33 Dittmer, p. 39.
35 Dittmer, p. 39; Atlanta Independent, 16 June 1904.
36 delegates attended and Booker T. Washington, president of the organization, delivered the keynote address at Big Bethel AME Church on August 29, 1906. In his speech, Washington encouraged Blacks to establish businesses, especially in the South since it "offer(ed) the best permanent abode for the masses of our people". He asserted that,

"... there is no sure road by which we can reach ... development than by laying foundation in the ownership and cultivation of the soil, the saving of money, commercial growth, and the skillful, conscientious performance of any duty with which we are entrusted."

Washington also believed that the growth of economic self-sufficiency in the Black race would eventually bring not only race pride, but respect from the white race. "The race that has ... pride in itself," he declared, "will eventually win ... respect."

Washington's speech spurred much hope and assurance among the delegates. Almost a month later, however, the


37 Atlanta Independent, 1 September 1906.


city had become a victim of a race riot in which some Black businesses, especially the more successful ones, became targets of the mob. Some Blacks later condemned Washington for inciting this riot because he encouraged Blacks in his speech to pursue financial independence and his condemned of those Blacks who resorted to violent crimes.

During the post Civil War period, Black Georgians eagerly participated in politics on the state and local levels. In Georgia, as in most states during this period, the Republican party held political power, and Blacks pledged their loyalty to the party of Lincoln. Republicans dominated Georgia's politics from 1868 to 1872. Within this four year period, two Blacks, William Finch and George Graham, were elected to serve on Atlanta's City Council. By 1872, Republican power had given way to Democratic control which was caused by whites pulling out of the Republican party due to the large numbers of Blacks supporting the party. Many whites believed the false stories and rumors that Blacks

Further information will be given in Chapter III.

Dittmer, p. 90.


Ibid.
and corrupted whites held all of the top level positions in the party. Therefore, white Georgians pledged their loyalty to the Democratic party which changed Georgia's politics dramatically.

When the Democrats took political control in 1872 their first priority was to eliminate Black participation in elections, which eventually led to disfranchisement. As early as 1877, a law was passed by the state legislature which declared that all back poll taxes must be paid in order to participate in any elections. This law did not only prevent many Blacks from voting, but it also forced poor whites from becoming eligible voters.

While the poll tax kept most Blacks in rural localities from voting, those Blacks that lived in urban areas continued to vote in large numbers. Again, white Democrats, devised another plan to prevent Blacks from voting by creating the white primary. The white primary, a method Democrats used to register only white males in the party, first appeared in Atlanta in 1892 and had spread throughout the state by the late 1890's. According to one source, Democrats believed that the white primary was necessary in order "to 'purify' the

44 Dittmer, p. 91.
ballot" and to prevent white candidates from buying Black votes in elections.

In time for the city election of 1895, Atlanta's City Executive Committee decided to eliminate the white primary because citizens were opposed to the political machine "which controlled city government". The city elections held in this year allowed Black Atlantans to participate in the voting for the first time since 1891. On the state level, Democrats were able to crush their opposition, the Populists, in the elections of 1896, and gain total control of state politics. But, by 1897, the City Executive Committee in Atlanta once again reversed its decision and legalized the white primary to prevent Blacks from voting. Their decision to use the white primary was based on the belief that Black voters "corrupted local politics." According to historian Clarence Bacote, white voters went as far as to elect incompetent public officials in order to keep Black voters from determining the better man for the job. The corruption and chaos caused by white candidates and voters were blamed on Black voters and resulted into a

46 Dittmer, p. 94.
47 Bacote, p. 338.
large number of disfranchised Blacks by the 1900s.

By the turn of the century, Georgia's politicians and political candidates called for a complete disfranchisement of Blacks. As early as 1899, state legislators debated passing a disfranchisement bill introduced by Populist supporter, Thomas Hardwick. After heated debates and protests by Black leaders such as Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois, the bill was defeated on the grounds that the poll tax and the white primary had already eliminated Blacks from voting; thus the bill would be unnecessary. But Hardwick and his supporters continued to push the disfranchisement amendment so that it became a public issue and one of the major items of the gubernatorial campaign in 1906.

Thus, Atlanta's Black population had created a community to resist the restrictions of segregation. Because of these limitations set by Jim Crow laws, Blacks built churches, schools, and businesses to cater to the residents. Whites did not only attempt to restrict the social and economic privileges of Blacks, but they tried to impede Black participation in politics. Although their efforts were semi-successful, Blacks

50 Dittmer, p. 96.
continued to vote in city elections. Therefore, white politicians, especially Democrats, pushed for the complete disfranchisement of Black voters. Their efforts to take voting rights away from Blacks would create so much racial tension in the city, that Atlanta found itself in the midst of one of the worst race riots to ever occur in the South.
CHAPTER II

THE ATLANTA RACE RIOT OF 1906

The years between 1890 and 1917 have been characterized as the Progressive Era because it was during this period that American citizens formed groups and organizations to reform the American society on the social, economic, and political levels. As far as Blacks were concerned, however, the Progressive Era only meant that the rights granted to him at the end of the Civil War were taken away. Progressive politicians, especially those in the South, advocated through campaign speeches and newspaper editorials the disfranchisement of Blacks and other legal restrictions on them. Some politicians and civic leaders even went so far as to find legal methods to keep Blacks from buying and selling liquor. White politicians, along with the white ministry, believed that liquor brought out the animal or beast in Black males, which caused them to rape and assault white women.

Georgian politicians, led by Charles Daniels and John Temple Graves, gubernatorial candidates in 1905, based their campaigns on the fact that drunken and vagrant Blacks needed to be eliminated from the community. The presence of the Black vagrant and alcohol caused white women to fear to walk the streets of Atlanta alone. Candidates Graves and Daniels used this issue to their advantage to reach white voters. During the early months of the campaign, the candidates used the disfranchisement issue to woo white voters. But to their surprise, white voters did not respond as overwhelmingly to their appeal as they had expected. Therefore, Daniels and Graves began to appeal to the white fear of Blacks. They took advantage of the numerous supposed assaults publicized extensively in the local newspapers to stir up hatred and animosity of the white voters in order to win their ballots.

The increased hatred built up by the candidates did more than stir the whites to voting; it stirred them to rioting. It was in part, the cause of one of the worst riot that ever occurred in the South - The Atlanta Riot of September 22, 1906.

The causes of the Atlanta riot of 1906 have been examined by several historians. They allege that there were several reasons for the racial outburst: politics;
yellow journalism; and economics. Historian Charles Crowe, for instance, asserts that the primary cause of the Atlanta riot was that Georgian political campaigns, especially the gubernatorial race, based its platform around the disfranchisement issue and the closing of Black dives located in the Decatur and Peachtree Street vicinity. Thus, he concludes that the riot was instigated by Georgian politicians on state and local levels.

Other historians that have studied the incident maintain that the riot was caused by the sensationalism of local newspapers. The Atlanta News and Atlanta Georgian have been accused of providing the uprising by printing false and misleading stories of Black assaults on white women. Other local journals were just as guilty of printing false stories on Black crimes as these two newspapers, but what made these two newspapers stand out was that the editors of the News and the Georgian were also gubernatorial candidates. Editors Charles Daniels and John Temple Graves of the Atlanta News and Atlanta Georgian respectively, campaigned in their editorial columns the need to be rid

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2 Ibid. Crowe's article analyzes the causes of the race riot and stresses that politics was the main reason for the outbreak of disturbance.
of Black saloons and vagrants. Both men endorsed the idea of disfranchising Blacks as well. Although Daniels went so far as to suggest a reorganization of the Klu Klux Klan, his idea did not get as much popularity as he had hoped it would.

Also during this time, the nation was struck by a Depression, which left many people especially low income, rural whites, unemployed. When many of these impoverished whites moved to the city in search for jobs, they discovered that Blacks were also competing for the same positions. The competition for employment created dissension between the two races. Furthermore, poor whites were jealous of Black merchants and resented the success of these enterprises. Therefore, the riot was one way that low income white released their anger toward and envy of the Black middle class. Thus, the stage was set for the infamous Atlanta Riot.

It was a warm, Indian summer night in Atlanta on

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3 Atlanta News, 25 August 1906. Unfortunately, the writer could not find any issues of the Atlanta Georgian published during this time. Therefore, accounts of the riot printed by this particular newspaper cannot be presented.

4 Dittmer, p. 131.
September 22, 1906. The Saturday evening was a typical weekend night. Many men had just left their jobs and had headed to the nearest saloon to celebrate pay day. Some of the men gathered in groups with their friends and discussed the local news. A newsboy walked by holding a stack of newspapers in one hand and exclaiming, "Extra! Extra! Read all about it!", while holding a newspaper high above his head. The newspaper that he was trying to sell were issues of the Atlanta News. Another newsboy eagerly trying to sell his newspapers, loudly chanted the same call, while trying to sell the latest edition of the Atlanta Georgian. Meanwhile, just down the street, a group of men were discussing the printed stories of the assaults by Black men upon white women that had appeared in the daily newspapers. This had been the general discussion of the white community throughout the entire week. A man leaves the group temporarily and responds to

The accounts of the riot were taken from local and national newspapers. The writer found discrepancies in the stories printed by these daily publications, as well as an exaggeration of the events that occurred during the riot. By examining the various accounts of the uprising, the author found that sensible judgment had to be used in order to determine what actually happened. The overall report of the riot was found to be the same in all newspapers, but details such as the number wounded and killed varied. Even the main causes of the riot as it was discussed by local journals were different. The writer also discovered the same mishap when reading eye-witness accounts written in the secondary sources.
the chant of the newsboy. After paying for the paper, he reads the headlines which reported that just that afternoon four more white women had been assaulted by Negro men. The man hurriedly returns to his group of friends who are still discussing the assaults that happened during the week. Revealing to his friends, the headlines read: "EMPTY GUN SAVES HER. MRS. LIZZIE CHAFFIN DRAWS UNLOADED REVOLVER ON NEGRO. TWICE ATTEMPTED ASSAULT HER".

After reading the headlines, the men began to grow angry. On every side of the group, each man was saying, "What are we going to do about it?" Someone exclaimed, "Something must be done!" As the expression of concern of the group grew, so did the number of men in the crowd. By this time the crowd was made up of rough, half-drunken men and boys who were between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one years of age. Between the hours of 8:00 and 9:00 p.m., a man mounted a drygoods box in front of the Kendall House, located on the corner of Decatur and Pryor Streets, one block east of Peachtree Street, and began to

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6 Atlanta News, 23 September 1906.
8 Ibid.
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6 Atlanta News, 23 September 1906.
8 Ibid.
incite the crowd by displaying the headlines of the newspaper and appealing to the crowd that something should be done. By this time, the crowd had grown to a thousand men. Those who were in the group were incited to riot by the man who spoke out on the assault issue.

Looking for any Blacks to beat, the crowd saw a Black messenger riding his bicycle in the direction of the crowd. Unaware of the intentions of the mob, the Negro continued toward them. As he was about to pass by, several men in the crowd knocked him off the bicycle. He arose and was knocked down again and beaten by the mob. Meanwhile, an unknown Black on the edge of the crowd had stabbed G. C. Tomlinson, a white man, in the thigh. The man was not seriously injured and the Negro escaped. By this time the crowd had grown from one thousand to five thousand people.

As the mob moved from the corner of Pryor and Decatur streets, men were walking the streets holding up newspapers with printed headlines that white women were being assaulted by Blacks. Anxious to find Blacks to beat or kill, the crowd caught Negroes unaware of their

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9 Ibid; *Atlanta Constitution* 23, 24, September 1906.
10 *Atlanta Journal*, 23 September 1906; Gibson, p. 1457.
11 *Savannah Tribune*, 29 September 1906.
intentions. Blacks walking the streets were caught and beaten to death by the mob. The crowd split up into groups and some headed to the Black dives located on the streets of Decatur, Marietta, Peters, Ivy, Piedmont, and Edgewood Avenue. It was this area that supposedly bred the Black "brutes" who assaulted white women. Prior to the riot, the black and white citizens had demanded that the police department do something to close down these dives in which vagrants, drunks, and loafers loitered. Since the police force did very little about closing the saloons, other than raiding them every so often, Black dives increased.

The typical dive or saloon is described as a cheap, frame building that was kept very shabbily. Pictures of nude women decorated the walls of some of these dives. Whites believed that these pictures, along with cheap liquor, caused Negroes to lust for white women. Not satisfied with the performance of the police department, the mob decided to take matters into their own hands. A small group of whites invaded the dives. Strangely enough, the majority of Blacks who congregated around the dives were not harmed. Only a few deaths and injuries

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12 Atlanta Independent, 22 September 1906.
13 Gibson, p. 1457.
DECATUR STREET, WHERE THE RIOT ORIGINATED

It is a street of low saloons, dives, negro "clubs" and pawnshops, frequented by the lowest classes of both races. A few days before the riot an investigating committee counted no fewer than 2435 idle negroes in the 40 saloons of Decatur street.

were reported by the newspapers.

The killing and the beating of Blacks was found mainly in the business center of Atlanta. This was in the vicinity of Peachtree and Forsyth. The crowd consisted of men from all classes. Whenever Negroes were spotted, the mob chased them with sticks, clubs, stones, and guns through the streets, while shouting "Kill Them!" "Shoot Them!" "Lynch Them!" "Down with Negroes who attack and assault our women!" Black cab drivers were quick victims of the mob. They were pulled from their carriages and were beaten to death. Blacks sought desperately for shelter, but some never reached safety.

After being notified about the riot, Mayor James G. Woodward urged the mob to disperse and go home. He was patiently listened to by the crowd, but as soon as he finished, they chanted, "Kill the niggers!" By this time, the mob was bloodthirsty. They continued to search for Blacks to kill, but most of the vulnerable Blacks had fled. Seeing the mob was getting out of control, Mayor

14 Atlanta Constitution, 23 September 1906; Atlanta Journal, 23 September 1906.
16 Atlanta Tri-Weekly, 24 September 1906; Gibson, p. 1457.
Woodward, out of anger, ordered the fire department to break it up with the fire hoses. Responding promptly to the firebell, fire chief and mayor-elect Joiner, had his men turn their hoses on the mob. The powerful force of the water caused the crowd to disperse temporarily. Some of the crowd headed to their homes, while others formed into smaller groups and continued to search frantically for Blacks to kill.

Behind the mob, trolley car #207 was approaching the downtown area about 10:30 p.m. Noticing that the trolley car had Black passengers, the mob eagerly attacked. Allowing the white passengers to leave the trolley unharmed, the mob began to attack four Negroes on the cars—three men and one woman. During the early stages of the riot, the mob had allowed Negro women to escape the trolley unharmed. But at this point of the riot, the attitude of the mob was the "All niggers look alike!" Like invading ants, the mob attacked the trolley by overturning it and cutting the wires.

17 Gibson, p. 1457; Atlanta Constitution, 24 September 1906.
18 Atlanta Constitution, 23 September 1906; Atlanta Tri-Weekly, 24 September 1906.
19 Atlanta Journal, 23 September 1906.
Drawings which appeared as front covers of French magazine, "Le Petit Journal," October 7, 1906 (above) and October 11, 1906 (below). Both drawings are of the Atlanta riot of 1906. Atlanta Historical Society Collections.

mob on, saw the angry white men beat two Blacks to death. One man was beaten so badly, that he could not be identified. The mob left one Black man seriously injured and the Black woman, who fought the back as best as she knew how, was also seriously wounded. Another trolley making a stop at Fair Street was also attacked by the mob and Negroes on the trolley car were beaten to unconsciousness with heavy clubs and brass knuckles by a dozen or more white men. The police who were on the scene used every effort to protect the Negroes. Chief of Police Henry Jennings took a minor beating from the crowd while trying to save a Negro from being attacked.

Still looking for more Negroes to kill, the mob began to march toward some of the Black businesses located in the downtown area. A Black man had just stepped off of the streetcar at the corner of Marietta and Forsyth streets. Seeing the crowd was approaching him, the man began to run. The man had run only ten yards before the mob attacked and beat him to death. Finally reaching a Negro business, the crowd invade Alonzo F. Herndon's barbershop on Peachtree Street. Herndon's barbershop, which was recognized as one of the

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20 *Atlanta Constitution*, 23 September 1906.
21 Ibid.
most successful black business in Atlanta at the time, was attacked and destroyed by the mob. Down the street two Black barbers had their shop invaded by the mob. Both of the barbers were attending to customers when the mob entered the shop and proceeded to destroyed it. Shaken by the raid, both barbers surrendered to the mob. One of the Black barbers was struck in the face with a brick thrown by an angry rioter. Suddenly two shots were fired and both barbers immediately fell to the floor wounded. The bloodthirsty crowd proceeded to beat the wounded Blacks to a pulp. Convinced that the two men were dead, the crowd carried bodies to the monument of Henry Grady located on Marietta street and displayed them. After the people had taken clothing off of the bodies for souvenirs, the bodies of the dead men were tossed in a nearby alley. Another Negro was attacked and tortured in the same manner as the two barbers. After the crowd had killed the Negro, his body was thrown on top of the two barbers in the alleyway.

Searching for more Blacks to murder, the savage mob headed toward Darktown, a Black residential area located near the downtown vicinity. To their surprise, the white mob was met by armed Blacks who were ready to retaliate.

22 Ibid; Gibson, p. 1457.
Nearly all of Darktown's residents were ready to slay any white invader that attempted to attack them. The retaliatory actions of the residents caused the white rioters to retreat quickly. One source notes that the resistance displayed by Blacks "prevented a second bloodbath."

Mayor Woodward admitted that the riot was totally out of hand, and that if would be necessary to call the Governor and ask for help. At 12:30 a.m. Sunday morning, the Mayor asked Sheriff Nelms to sound the fire alarm to alert the state militia. Just before retiring for the night on Saturday Governor John Terrell was notified by the *Atlanta Constitution* that a race riot had hit the city. The governor immediately held a conference with a number of public officials and decided to order state troops to patrol the city. But the governor could not call out the state troops unless a city official requested it. The *Atlanta Constitution* state that, "The governor... has no authority of his own motion to call out the troops for riot duty, until the request for such call has first come from the sheriff, a judge, or

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23 Dittmer, p. 127.
24 *Atlanta Constitution*, 23 September 1906.
25 Ibid.
some other recognized civil authority". According to the Constitution, the request for troops was made by Judge A. E. Calhoun of the city court in Atlanta. More requests were made by "other sources".

The riot was under control after the arrival of state troops early Sunday morning. Nine Atlanta military companies, seven from the Fifth Regiment, the Governor's Horse Guard and the Governor's Light Artillery, patrolled the streets of downtown Atlanta. Eight outside company troops arrived in Atlanta Sunday night, which brought the total to seventeen companies and 600 state troops. Governor Terrell ordered the state troops to patrol the Atlanta area, especially the outskirts of the city. The state troops were under the command of Colonel Clifford L. Anderson of the Fifth Infantry. Colonel Anderson set up temporary headquarters at Elkin-Watson store located at the corners of Peachtree and Marietta streets. Troops were ordered by Colonel Anderson to occupy sections of the city where Negroes lived and areas where Negroes were reported, collecting for the purpose of "preserving order".

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Atlanta Constitution, 24 September 1906.
With the presence of the state militia and the downpour of heavy thundershowers, the crowd had broken up and headed home between the hours of 2:00 and 3:00 a.m. Sunday morning. Some of the young boys lingered around watching the actions of the military troops.

Sunday editions of the local newspapers reported the various incidents that happened during the riot. The number of dead and wounded varied. No newspaper could find a reliable source that could give an accurate number of how many whites and Negroes that were killed or wounded in the riot. An estimate of six to sixteen Blacks were reported dead. A total of 20 to 100 people were injured. One source estimated that at least 25 Blacks died and about 130 were seriously wounded. The newspapers revealed that many of the dead were buried immediately after their bodies were found. This is one reason given for the inaccurate total number of dead. Grady Memorial Hospital reported that their emergency ward treated over 300 wounded people.

Monday evening the riot was revived when state troops were informed that Negroes located in the outer

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30 Dittmer, p. 129.
city limits were holding a meeting in which community leaders appealed to Negro citizens to defend themselves. The militia invaded the Brownsville area, which was in the vicinity of Clark University and Gammon Theological Seminary, and forced Negroes to disarm themselves. Refusing to forfeit their firearms, Blacks began to retaliate by firing their guns at the police force. The outcome of the incident left one police officer dead and three wounded. At least four Blacks were killed in the crossfire. After the incident, almost three hundred Blacks were arrested, which included some students from Gammon Theological Seminary and Clark University. President of Gammon J. W. E. Bowen was one of the three hundred that were arrested for starting the riot. Three Blacks were arrested for the murder of Police Officer Heard. Whites wanted to immediately lynch the men, but Sheriff John Nelms prevented the mob from doing so. The two Black men were about to be escorted to the jailhouse in the city when an unknown gunman shot two of three of the Blacks dead. The other Black male was seriously injured and died later that night at the city hospital. A young, expecting white woman who witnessed

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31 Ibid, p. 128; Gibson, p. 1458.
the shooting was so shocked by the incident that she suffered a heart attack and died.

The Atlanta massacre paralyzed the city almost a week. The physical aspects of the riot had subsided after three days, but Atlanta's business center saw no activity until the following week. Black workers were too afraid to venture out of their home for fearing the riot would be revived. Not having Black employees at their jobs caused several businesses to suffer.

The city's leading merchants were afraid that the inessential uprising caused Atlanta to lose its good name. Before the riot, Atlanta was recognized as one of the few southern cities to have good race relations, but after the disturbance the city's reputation had declined. White businessmen were especially concerned about Atlanta's name because they were afraid northern investors would cease investing into the commercial center. Thus in an effort to restore peace and order between the two races and to retain the city's respectability, several of Atlanta's influential entrepreneurs organized investigative and biracial

33 Savannah Tribune, 29 September 1906.
34 New York Times, 26 September 1906.
committees in hopes to resolve racial problems and to prevent future riots from reoccurring. The three most important organizations formed by Atlanta's Black and white citizens in order to ameliorate relations were: the Committee of Ten; Atlanta Civic League; and the Christian League.

Promptly after the rioting had ceased, public authorities called for an official investigation of the disorder. City officials appointed a Grand Jury of the Fulton County Superior Court to examine and report on the causes of the riot. After a one month investigation, the Grand Jury announced that the city's police force acted unprofessionally as far as protecting Blacks from the vicious white mob. They discovered that some of the police officers either took very little action in stopping the rioters or actually participated in the riot. As far as the Grand Jury was concerned, their failure to defend helpless victims from the mob brought shame and disgrace to the Atlanta Police Department:

It is the opinion of the Grand Jury that, had the Police Department opposed a determined front to the mob at the inception of the riot all serious trouble could have been averted . . . . When innocent persons were being maimed an murdered no measure was too extreme for their protection. We regret exceedingly to report that some members of the police force failed signally and absolutely in the performance of their duty . . . .
Whether their failure was due to cowardice or active sympathy with the rioters, their conduct was a blot on the fair name and face of Atlanta and brought reproach upon the whole Police Department of the city. 35

In addition to their condemnation of the Police Force, the Grand Jury recommended that both races should cooperate and joined together to get rid of the low class, criminal types; all saloons including pool halls and gambling houses should be closed in order to restrain crime in these places; and capital punishment be applied to those who committed rape. 36

While the Grand Jury was investigating the riot, two prominent businessmen W. G. Cooper, secretary of the Chamber of Commerce and George Muse, wealthy businessman, along with the aid of the "sober citizenship" of the city, joined together to examine the tragic incident. This group discovered and reported the following: many of the victims were not of the criminal type and most of those who suffered were hard working, law abiding citizens, many of the dead left women and children with

36 Ibid; Originally, they suggested to apply the death to those who were convicted of the crime, but decided that the punishment was too harsh and thus recommended a twenty year sentence to the convicted person or persons.
practically no means of support; wounded victims lost wages while recuperating from injuries; at least seventy (70) persons were injured and many of them permanently disfigured; ten whites and sixty Blacks were wounded and two whites and ten Blacks (two women, eight men) were killed. It was presumed more people were murdered but records could not verify this presumption; and the uprising did not prevent further crime because rapes and robberies continued in the city. Like the Grand Jury, this group was surprised to find that the city's police force did not perform their job as expected and felt that the policemen were just as guilty as the rioters.

Besides the investigations by these two groups, ten of Atlanta's white citizens (nearly all of them were businessmen) worked with public officials to "restore order and confidence" in the city. Known as The Committee of Ten, this group led by attorney Charles T. Hopkins believed that the race issue was the major reason the riot occurred in Atlanta. In addition to Hopkins, those who served on the committee were: Sam D. Jones, president of the Chamber of Commerce; L. Q. Rosser, president of the Board of Education; James W. English, president of Fourth National Bank; Forrest Adair,

37 Baker, pp. 10-11.
realtor; Captain W. D. Ellis, lawyer; A. B. Steele, merchant; M. L. Collier, railroadman; John E. Murphy, capitalist; and H. Y. McCord, grocer. They agreed the best way to propose solutions to prevent another racial disturbance was to hear the grievances of the Black community. The Committee invited six leading Black citizens to express the concerns of their race: Rev. Henry H. Proctor of First Congregational Church; Benjamin J. Davis, editor of the Atlanta Independent; Rev. E. P. Johnson; Rev. E. R. Carter; Rev. J. A. Rush; Bishop L. Holsey.

In the first biracial meeting of this type ever held in the city, the Black representatives declared that police harassment and unfair polices practiced on streetcars were their major complaints. The Committee agreed that these procedures were unnecessary and illegal and promised that changes concerning these matters would occur. The meeting between the two races groups proved to be successful. Both groups agreed that interracial cooperation was needed to solve the racial problems prevalent in the city. The harmonious efforts displayed by the two races helped created the Atlanta Civic League.

38 Ibid, p. 15.
39 Ibid. Perhaps other grievances were given but they were not listed in the source.
The Atlanta Civic League was coordinated by Charles T. Hopkins, a graduate of Williams College and lawyer for Atlanta University, in November, 1906 under the auspices of the Unity Club. In a meeting held by this organization, Hopkins encouraged the white audience to join the Civic League in order to ameliorate race relations in the city. He believed that if both races united together and worked out their differences, perhaps racial harmony would exist and Atlanta would not be a victim of another race riot:

The way to handle the negro is to cooperate with him. Separate the lawless from the law-abiding. The white man and the negro should work together toward a common end.  

Thus, Hopkins set out to form the Civic League by sending out 2,000 cards to prominent white citizens inviting them to join the organization. At least 1500 people responded enthusiastically while another 500 uninvited persons asked to be members. Only two invitations were returned anonymously stating they did not wish to participate in the league. The cards sent

41 Atlanta Constitution, 30 November 1906.
42 Baker, pp. 15, 16.
Postmaster Price of Brownsville, a negro graduate of Atlanta University who was one of those arrested and charged with supplying the negro people with arms.

by Hopkins proclaimed the tentative name of the organization, "The Atlanta Civic League" and its purpose. "The purpose of the association," the invitation stated, "will be to take such steps, through an executive committee, as will tend to promote peace between the races, see that offenders of both races are apprehended and justice impartially administered, and permanently secure protection to both black and white." It also emphasized that, "the object of this association is not politics, and no one with political ambitions is desired as a member." Furthermore, the League would not collect any "dues" and members would not be forced to participate in any activities, but one must lend "moral support".

After the League was organized, an executive committee was appointed, whose membership included some of Atlanta's leading merchants. They were: C. B. Wilmer; George Muse; Forrest Adair; John J. Egan; F. L. Seely; L. Q. Rosser; H. Y. McCord; Robert Maddox; Frank Hawkins; H. S. Johnson; A. B. Steele; Alex W. Stirling; R. E. Ridley; F. J. Paxon; W. O. Foote; Jno. E. Murphey; Walter G. Cooper, and Charles T. Hopkins.

In the meantime, Hopkins encouraged Rev. Henry H. Proctor,
to form the Colored Co-operative Civic League to work in conjunction with the Atlanta Civic League. Proctor was able to enlist 1500 of the city's most prominent Black citizens as members.

The Civic League attempted to solve the city's race problems by having both groups meet and discuss their complaints. Black members, for example, used the Association as a way to voice their grievances toward the community. Members, such as newspaper editor Benjamin Davis, suggested that the League be utilized as a method to appeal to whites for fair treatment on "streetcars and elevators", as well as hiring Black police officers to patrol neighborhoods and appointing attorneys to defend Blacks in the courts. Even though he was aware the League was not a political organization, Davis could not see why it be used in an "indirect" way to show whites that some Blacks were responsible enough to vote.

Although a few Blacks appeared to agree with Davis' 

45 Proctor, Between Black and White, p. 76; Baker, p. 16; Washington, p. 915.

46 The author was unable to obtain any information that indicated as to how often the League met, where they met, and if the two groups met separately and afterwards held one biracial meeting to discuss these matters.

47 Atlanta Independent, 19 January 1907.
plea for suffrage, the majority of them agreed with him that Black policemen were needed in the community. In fact, most Black Atlantans wanted the association to arrange for Black policemen to patrol their neighborhoods, and suggested that the patrolmen be appointed by the Colored League.

Except for the police protection, the Civic League was able to respond to most of the grievances expressed by the Black community, and as a result it temporarily improved race relations in the city. The League accomplished a better relationship between Black and white leaders; released 60 Blacks arrested during the Brownsville incident; banned the racist newspaper the Atlanta News; closed saloons during the Christmas holidays in order to prevent another riot; hired a lawyer to defend Blacks in court and changed the attitudes of the court; and released an innocent Black and arrested the criminal who actually committed the crime.

It is not known how long the Atlanta Civic League existed, but during its entity, the organization played an important role in rebuilding the city after the riot. Recognized as the first successful organization of its

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48 Washington, p. 916.
kind in the South, the Civic League was one method both races tried to understand and cooperate with one another. The efforts of the association helped cultivate social conditions, and even though these improvements were short lived, the achievements and efforts were praised by both races on the national and local levels.

The Christian League was another biracial group which was created "to prevent future outbreak of race trouble" in the city. Founded by former Gospel Union, W. J. Northern, this religious association brought together Black and white ministers in hopes to emphasize Christianity and denounced any unlawful persons who performed any criminal acts. Northern announced that:

The executive committee and general officers of the Business Men's Gospel Union, in consultation and cooperation with the ministers in the city, have undertaken the readjustment of the relations of the races at the south, through the formation of a Christian league to which shall be eligible approved member of both races who will agree to promote, under the direction of the gospel, under the duration of citizenship, maintain all existing laws and promote peace and good will.

The Christian League, as such, shall not be an organization, but its membership shall consist of those who will agree to
EX-GOVERNOR W. S. NORTHERN

One of the best known and most respected citizens of Georgia, leader of the Christian League, who has been speaking throughout Georgia, urging obedience to law and complete justice to the negro


JOHN E. WHITE

Pastor of the Second Baptist Church and the head of a great movement which plans the appointment of committees to consider broadly the whole negro question.

Phillips Publishing Co.,
though the association sought interracial cooperation and promoted peace between the groups, Northern believed that it would be best if whites led the association in order to prevent conflict between the races:

It was proper that the initiative in this movement, looking to the readjustment of the relations of the races at the south should be undertaken by the white people, not only because of their greater numbers and superior wealth and intelligence, but for the reason that they constitute the ruling class, and are, therefore chiefly responsible for our present social, industrial, moral and political conditions. The negro cannot act without invitation from the white man and censure and probable rebuff . . .52

The Christian League asked every minister in the city to encourage his congregation to come to prayer meetings and to listen to the preaching of the "gospel" that were held every Tuesday evening at the YMCA (Colored). It also "arranged" that on the second Sunday in December every minister would address the subject of "obedience to law" to their congregations.

The racist attitudes of whites caused the city to become a victim of the worst racial massacre in the South during this period. White politicians were determined to rid low class Blacks of the criminal type who committed

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52 Ibid.
53 Ibid; Washington, p. 914.
offenses such as rape and robbery from society. In addition to this, they wanted to disfranchise Black citizens, and the crimes committed by these offenders were used as a reason why Blacks should not be allowed to buy liquor, and, more importantly, to vote. Therefore, whites used physical violence as one method to control Blacks. Many innocent Blacks were killed and injured, and the uprising ruined the city's reputation. To improve its image, a few of the leaders from both races in the city decided to form interracial committees in hopes to resolve Atlanta's racial problems, but these gains were short-lived.

Even though the riot had negative aspects, it should be noted that it also produced a positive reaction, the development of racial cooperation. The creation of these organizations brought both races together for the first time, in hopes to solve the problems that existed between the two races. Only a small number of whites were willing to cooperate with Blacks in hopes to improve race relations, but the majority of whites refused to work with them. Thus, racial problems continued to prevail in the city. Despite the efforts of the interracial committees, local and national Black leaders still condemned the riot and its perpetrators.
CHAPTER III
BLACK REACTIONS TO THE RIOT

Not only were Blacks in Atlanta deeply concerned about the riot, but because the Atlanta tragedy was viewed as one of the most tragic incidents of its kind to ever occur in the South, Black leaders throughout the nation viewed their opinions concerning it. Black Americans expressed their rage, anger, and fears of the riot through various methods that ranged from poems and rebellions to suggestions on how to end racial tension in the city. Although their opinions and suggestions were voiced, they were never heeded by the majority of whites.

Recognized as one of the most prominent Black citizens in the United States, Booker T. Washington, president of Tuskegee Institute, was one of many Black leaders who expressed his reactions to the riot. He, like many other Blacks, felt that the riot was senseless and had ruined any chance to better racial relations in the South. Immediately after the incident, Washington quickly released a press statement to Black newspapers all over the country "begging Blacks not to retaliate."
In the statement he pleaded:

I would especially urge the colored people in Atlanta and elsewhere to exercise self control, and not make the fatal mistake of attempting to retaliate, but to rely upon the efforts of the proper authorities to bring order and security out of confusion. If they do this they will have the sympathy of good people world over.1

Immediately following the riot, Washington came to Atlanta, despite the advice of his good friend T. Thomas Fortune, editor of the New York Age. Fortune had asked Washington not to come to Atlanta because of the danger that still existed there. But Washington insisted on coming to the city in order to offer his services in helping out matters. During his two day stay in Atlanta, Washington visited the campuses of Clark University and Gammon Theological Seminary and encouraged students there to return to the schools. He assured them it was safe for them to enter the grounds now that the riot had ceased. In a letter sent to various Black newspapers in the country, he congratulated President Crogman of Clark University and Dr. John W. E. Bowen of Gammon for their heroic efforts during the riot:

1 New York Age, 27 September 1906.
...During the last few days President Crogman and Dr. Bowen have passed through severe trials for these two institutions and for the race, but they have stood manfully and courageously at their posts. When the true history of the Atlanta disturbance is written it will be shown that no two individuals acted more heroically and deserve greater credit than is true of President Crogman and Dr. Bowen.

Washington apparently was not surprised that a race riot had occurred in Atlanta for he had sensed racial tension in the city when he had visited there three weeks earlier. According to the New York Age, most of the Black delegates who had attended the National Negro Business League (NNBL) convention in Atlanta on August 29, 1906 felt the racial tension in the city. The Age claimed that Washington's keynote address to the delegation may have eased the tension temporarily. In his address, Washington had encouraged Blacks to remain in the South and build a sound economic community with hard work and determination. He emphasized in his speech that Black should not allow a small number of criminals, who had put the Black race to shame, discourage them. They should try to overlook this slight setback and look toward the future in which economic success would

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eventually win them respect of the white society.

In a letter sent to the New York Age, Washington expressed his reactions to the riot and offered a solution to help better racial relations in the city. He accused the Black criminal class of worsening the racial tension in Atlanta and indicated he had spoken against the actions of the criminals in his Business League address. He believed the criminal acts, such as assaulting white women and robbery, of which Black males were accused were in part the cause of the riot. Washington anticipated that this senseless incident would cause a dramatic increase in lynchings, especially to innocent law-abiding Blacks:

...I will state that in my address in Atlanta to the National Negro Business League... I spoke plainly against the crime of assaulting women and of resorting to lynching and mob law as a remedy for any evil...5

Since Washington believed that riots and lynchings would not improve race relations, he suggested that both races should come together and discuss their differences. Perhaps if both races talked and devised solutions to the problems, this would alleviate racial tension. "I would strongly urge," he stated," that the best white people
and the best colored people come together in council and use their united efforts to stop the present disorder."6

After returning from his two day stay in Atlanta, Washington was pleased to hear that leaders from both races had decided to form an interracial cooperation committee, the Civic League, where grievances could be heard and discussed and solutions to these problems would be made. He believed that the creation of the Civic League would be best for both races and would help the city regain its highly acclaimed reputation once again:

The best outcome, however, I think of the joint meeting was the appointing of a permanent cooperating committee of ten of each race. This, I think, is going to accomplish good work. I feel very very sure that Atlanta is deeply in earnest in its determination to blot out lawlessness in that city...7

Two months after the riot, Washington continued to speak highly of the interracial efforts of leaders in the city. He encouraged Blacks and whites in Atlanta to continue to work harmoniously and hopefully their example of interracial cooperation would spread throughout the country, especially in the South.

6 Ibid.
7 Washington to Buttrick, BTW Papers, p. 79.
8 BTW Papers, p. 160.
The Atlanta riot ruined almost any chance of improving race relations in the South and Washington was very much aware of it. He wholeheartedly supported the interracial cooperation committee in hopes it would improve race relations. It is important to indicate that Washington did endorse interracial cooperation not only to improve race relations, but also to save his reputation as a leader of Black Americans. After the riot, most Blacks tended to question his philosophy of "separate but equal" and economic success as devices for gaining equal rights. The Atlanta tragedy was evidence to many Black that whites were not ready or willing to accept them as equals. In fact, many of the victims of the riot were of those who had owned very profitable enterprises and were recognized as respectable citizens. To many Blacks, the outcome of the riot disproved Washington’s accommodationist’s theory. As a result, a large number of Blacks became skeptical of his ideas and theories on race progress. Moreover, there were others who accused him of inciting the riot because he put too much emphasis on building a strong economic power and because he condemned Black criminals. For example, two well known Black figures, Jesse Max Barber and Charles W. Chestnutt, accused Washington of provoking the riot. In a letter sent by his close friend, Samuel Laing
Williams, Washington was informed that Jesse Max Barber, editor of the *Voice of the Negro*, had accused him of inciting the riot. While in Chicago, according to Williams, Barber was spreading rumors that when Washington had condemned Black criminals in his Business League Address, white Atlanta newspapers took his comments out of context and placed emphasis on Blacks who committed these crimes. Because of his speech and the misleading news reports, Barber charged Washington for instigating the incident.

Like Barber, Charles W. Chestnutt, a well known author, was also convinced that Washington's Business League speech may have been one of the reasons the riot occurred. He told Washington in a letter that his economic policy which was to eventually lead Black and whites working together peacefully would not solve the race issue.

Chestnutt was not only convinced that Washington's economic policy had instigated the riot, but he also believed that the strong desire of whites to disfranchise Blacks was also a major reason for the riot. "... It was not because the Negroes exercised the franchise or made any less progress or developed any less strength than elsewhere," he said, "but because of a wicked and
Other Black leaders have expressed their reactions to the Atlanta tragedy. Among them was the militant leader and president of the New England Suffrage League, Monroe Trotter. He agreed with Chestnutt that the riot was one method whites used to disfranchise Blacks. Trotter was assured that this incident would give white legislators a reason for disallowing Blacks the right to vote. He predicted that the attempt by whites to disfranchise Blacks would bring only destruction to the nation and that the Atlanta riot served as a warning. Therefore, Trotter suggested the only way the nation could avoid such destruction was to give Blacks an equal opportunity to participate in the political process.

Black newspapers nationwide reported the Atlanta incident. Most of the sentiment expressed by these weekly journals were given by the editors. As expected, their feelings toward the riot was rage and anger. They, like others, blamed the white newspapers and city officials for instigating the public disorder. The following comments, which were printed in the editorial

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10 Washington Bee, 13 October 1906.
section of the Washington Bee, expressed their fury:

The affair in Atlanta is regrettable for more reasons than one. We do not only regret the manner in which many of our men and women were killed and otherwise injured, but also regret the mob spirit.

- Savannah Tribune, 1906

The facts and circumstances surrounding the mob bear us out in the assertion that it was a preconnected and premeditated slaughter.

- St. Louis Advance, 1906

The Atlanta massacre is simply unspeakable. We mourn for the dead and the bereaved. We shudder when we think of the insecurity for our friends there. The whites were as cowardly as they were brutal. They gave us no warning and hundred fell upon one victim. One thing is proven — that the colored people of Georgia are brave.

- Boston Guardian, 1906

Several of the editors such as T. Thomas Fortune of the New York Age, C. Calvin Chase, Washington Bee, and J. B. Murphy of the Baltimore Afro-American compared the Atlanta riot to the tragic massacre of Jews in Russia. Near the same time the Atlanta riot was happening in the United States, millions of Russian Jews were being persecuted by Alexander III, the czar of Russia. Czar Alexander's goal was to have Russia return to an

11 Ibid, 12 October 1906.
12 Ibid. These are just a few of the editorial comments that were taken from the editorial column of the Bee.
autocratic republic, and in order to do that he needed to convert his empire to "Russification". This meant that Alexander would have control over the cultural, linguistics, and religious practices of the empire and all of his subjects would be under this command. In order to accomplish this goal, Alexander had his officials gradually disband the customs of other religions; only the Russian Orthodox religion would be practiced. So, Catholic Poles, Lutheran Finns, and Russian Jews lost their religious independence as a result of the "Russification" program. Of the three, the Jews suffered the most. Because of their religion and customs, over five million Jews were persecuted under the rule of Czar Alexander.

In their editorial columns, newspaper editors Fortune, Chase, and Murphy compared the annihilation of the Russian Jews to the senseless murders of the dozens of Black Atlantans. All three of the editors spoke of both incidents as being inhumane and cruel. Their opinions on both massacres indicates that they believed racial prejudice was the reason for the relentless

One white writer, A. J. McKelway, however, disagreed with them when comparing both tragedies. He believed that the two massacres have no similarities for a couple of reasons. First of all the Atlanta riot was not instigated on religious grounds. The Jews were killed because of their religious beliefs whereas Black Atlantans were murdered because of their race. In addition, McKelway viewed the Jews as "law abiding and inoffensive people". Unlike the Black criminal class in Atlanta who had attacked white women, the Jews had not committed any such crimes. Therefore, as far as McKelway was concerned the two incidents were not comparable. The only possible commonality the two events may have was that "there was race antagonism in both instances."

Although most Blacks displayed their anger toward the riot through letters, newspaper, and magazine articles, a few Black organizations used other methods to condemn the massacre. For example, Black delegates who had attended the Republican State Convention in Saratoga, New York unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the

14 New York Age, 27 September 1906; Washington Bee, 16 October 1906; and Baltimore Afro-American, 29 September 1906.

Atlanta riot and demanding that punishment be given to its participants. Charles W. Anderson, Collector of Internal Revenue, read the resolution before the delegation:

Realizing the national danger arising from the alarming growth of mob barbarities engendered by race hatred, we demand the prompt and adequate punishment of mob instigators and leaders and we insist upon the just and equal protection of the civil and political rights of all citizens without regard to race, creed or color, and we sympathize with all innocent victims of mob violence, whether that violence be perpetrated at home or abroad.16

While in most cases written statements were used to express reactions to the riot, one group of Blacks used physical violence to express their anger. After reading about the riot in a local newspaper, at least 35 Black prison inmates in Knoxville, Tennessee staged a rebellion against prison guards to protest the Atlanta incident. The inmates were finally calmed after two hours of rebellion and no major punishment was issued to them by prison officials.

On the local level, Black leaders protested the riot and

16 *New York Age*, 27 September 1906.
17 Ibid.
declared the incident barbaric and ruthless. Like most national Black leaders, Atlanta's leaders could not believe a tragedy such as this could possibly happen since racial relations overall were better here than in most southern cities. Although racial relations had worsened in Atlanta, many felt there was still no excuse for the riot to happen. Many of the city's Black leaders, especially those who were actually involved in the riot, openly expressed their outrage by condemning the public disturbance and its participants in letters and newspaper articles. One Black citizen in particular was forced by city officials to leave the city permanently because of his strong accusations and condemnations of the riot. Another well respected Black citizen expressed his rage through poetry. A few Black leaders even offered suggestions in hopes to prevent another riot from reoccurring in the city.

One of the most controversial reactions to the riot came from one of the Atlanta's leading Black citizens, Jesse Max Barber. Editor of the Voice of Negro, an Atlanta based monthly publication, Barber was accused by public officials of discrediting the city by stating that newspapers sensationalism and "unscrupulous politicians"
were the causes of the riot. In an article written in the *Voice*, Barber explained that he left the city because he had sent a letter to the *New York World*, a white newspaper, correcting the information given by John Temple Graves, editor of the racist newspaper the *Atlanta Georgian*. When the *World* had wired Graves to give the main cause for the riot, he replied by stating the riot occurred because of the series of rapes of white women by Black men. After discovering this information, Barber was so outraged by Grave's false accusations that he wrote an anonymous letter to the *World* declaring the riot had been caused by "sensational newspapers and unscrupulous politicians".

Afterwards, Barber sent a second anonymous letter to the *World*. When the letter was published in the newspaper, he was summoned by Captain James W. English, a member of the Board of Police Commissioners. English gave him three choices: he could either write a letter to be printed in the *World* denying his accusations of Graves; he could be jailed; or he could leave town.

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19 Jesse Max Barber, "Why Mr. Barber Left Atlanta," *The Voice* 3 (November 1906): 470.
permanently. If he decided to write the letter, English promised him his name would be cleared by the grand jury. In the meanwhile, Barber discovered that his telegram had been traced through the telegraph office and most of the leading white citizens knew he was the author of the letter. He suspected that he would be forced to leave the city; thus Barber decided to move north since he "didn't care to be a slave on a Georgia chaingang".

James W. Woodlee, circulation manager of the Voice of the Negro, of which Barber was editor, was also forced by the grand jury to leave the city.

In October, Barber and Woodlee left Atlanta for Chicago and decided to republish the magazine. Barber renamed the publication The Voice. Although the magazine had its headquarters in Chicago, Barber secretly had The Voice printed and distributed the publication from Atlanta with the aid of a white friend.

Barber's sudden exodus to Chicago led some prominent Black figures to believe he was afraid to face his accusers. For instance, Benjamin J. Davis, editor of the Atlanta Independent, sharply criticized Barber for

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20 Barber sent this letter to the New York World in telegraph form.
21 Ibid, p. 471.
22 Bullock, p. 98.
leaving the city and renaming the magazine, The Voice. In an editorial comment, Davis remarked that he despised the idea that Barber had dropped "Negro" from the title of the magazine. He strongly believed that this move made Barber look as if he had abandoned the Black race "for a dollar".

There were others, such as Booker T. Washington, who believed that Barber should have been astute enough not to have sent a telegram to the World knowing it would be discovered by authorities. In a letter to Rev. Henry H. Proctor, pastor of First Congregational Church, Washington wrote that despite his anonymity, it was inane to send a telegram of this type since it could be easily traced:

... I supposed you have learned by this time that B's name was not exposed through the treachery of the World, but he was foolish enough to send a telegram to the World requesting his name not be used in the article, and the Atlanta people got hold of the facts through the telegraph office....

Another Atlantan, Walter White, a NAACP activist, was one of the hundreds of Black who was involved in the riot. In his autobiography A Man Called White, he

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23 Atlanta Independent, 22 December 1906.
recalls the horrifying night when the disturbance took place near his home. Upon returning home from delivering mail in the downtown area, White and his father miraculously escaped the attacks of the vicious mob. He later claims it was because of their light skin color that he and his father were overlooked by the rioters. When they had returned home which was located on Houston Avenue, White's father immediately armed his son and himself with a gun in order to protect the home and the family. White recalls this was the first time he had feared for his life or someone else's for that matter, since his father had ordered him to kill any white man who had approached their home. Fortunately White never experienced killing anyone because after the gang of whites had made threats to attack the family, they suddenly retreated and no one was hurt. Like most Blacks in the city, White condemned the incident by proclaiming the riot was cruel and merciless. He also wrote that he could never forget the tragedy which was caused by racial prejudice and ignorance. This inhumane act, he claims, led him to despise all type of violence:

The Atlanta riot naturally stands

White states most white Atlantans had frequently mistaken his family and him as members of the Caucasian race.
out in my memory as a shocking awakening to the cruelty of which men driven by prejudice, ignorance, and hatred can be guilty. What I saw then has made me hate violence of every sort with implacable and ineradicable loathing.

Like White, Dr. John W. E. Bowen, president of Gammon Theological Seminary, was another Black leader in the community who also experienced the violent acts of the riot. Since Bowen was one of many Blacks that suffered injuries by the mob and had also witnessed the beatings and killing of innocent Blacks in the Brownsville area, it is assumed that he, too, would condemn the incident. But unlike most Blacks, Bowen believed that the Black criminal class contributed to the causes of the riot. He decided that there was a small group of lower class Blacks who were capable of committing rapes, robbery, and murder as claimed by white newspapers. These crimes were not only directed at the white community, but to Black areas as well:

The Negro is affiliated with a small brood of lustful, besotted, worthless and dangerous black harpies who fear neither God nor man and are the worst enemies of the society. I speak from an experience

of twenty-five years. They do attack white women, and, in addition, they pluck continuously and mercilessly at the vitals of their race...27

Bowen offered three solutions that would hopefully prevent future riots, and at the same time help improve the Black community. First, he suggested that if every family emphasized proper home training to their offspring this would prevent "dangerous characters" from destroying the community. In addition, Bowen believed the ministry should not only be for religious fulfillment, but should be available for counseling, which would give a person "sounder judgment, cooler head, and be purer in life". Most importantly, Bowen suggested that the city appoint Black policemen to patrol in Black areas. He stated also, that Blacks should be allowed to serve on juries to try members of their race.

Other members of the Black middle class inside and outside of Atlanta tended to agree with Dr. Bowen that the Black community should be allowed to have Black policemen to protect their areas. Some of them, such as Carrie W. Clifford, honorary president of the Ohio

27 New York Age, 4 October 1906.
28 Ibid.
Federated of Colored Women's Clubs, also suggested that Black lawyers and judges should be used as a method of racial self-restraint and equal justice:

...I mean if there were judges, lawyers and juries to try negro lawbreakers arrested by negro police. Nothing could be worse than the present system; for it you know aught of these things in the South, you know that for a negro to get justice is impossible.

Members of the Black middle class, therefore, had come to the conclusion that the only way Blacks could receive justice was to allow Black policemen, judges, lawyers, and juries to try Black criminals and to aid in enforcing the law. Many of them believed if Blacks were allowed to participate in the justice system instead of being victims of it, perhaps racial tension would not exist in Georgia, or for that matter, in the nation.

Unlike most Black response, Atlanta University professor, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, expressed his reactions to the riot through poetry. When the disturbance broke out in the city, DuBois was in Lowdnes County, Alabama conducting a social and economic study of Blacks in the South for the Atlanta University Studies. As soon as he

29 Carrie W. Clifford, "The Atlanta Riots: A Northern Point of View" Outlook 84 (November 1906): 564.
heard about the riot, DuBois immediately returned to Atlanta, and upon his return he wrote a poem entitled, "The Litany of Atlanta". In the poem, DuBois paid tribute to those innocent Blacks who died in the tragedy and blamed the racist whites for starting the riot:

Done at Atlanta, in the Day of Death, 1906, O Silent God, thou whose voice afar in rest and mystery hath left our ears unhungered in these fearful days. Hear us good Lord!....

We are not better than our fellows, Lord, we are but weak and human men. When our devils do deviltry, curse thou the doer and the deed: curse them as we curse them, do to them all and more than ever they have done to innocence and weakness, to womanhood and home. Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!....

Is thy justice, O Father, that guile be easier than innocence, and the innocent crucified for the guilt of the untouched guilty? Justice, O judge of men!...31

Thus, most Black leaders on the national and local levels believed that the riot was cruel and senseless. Many of them, such as Booker T. Washington, Walter White, 


W. E. B. DuBois, expressed their rage and fears through letters, newspapers articles, and poems. Dr. Bowen was one of the few leaders who offered suggestions as to how future riots could be prevented in the city. But many of these comments and suggestions were not heeded by the majority of the city's white population. After the riot, white politicians purposely created rigid segregation laws to keep the races separated. Therefore, Black Atlantans responded to these inferior conditions by building a strong community.
CHAPTER IV
THE BLACK COMMUNITY AFTER THE RIOT

The Atlanta riot practically devastated the Black community. Its greatest effect was felt by middle class Blacks, although the mobs' immediate intention was to retaliate against the Black low income class of the criminal type. Many of the victims of the tragic incident were Afro-Americans who had struggled to build respectable homes and businesses. These were people who were hoping to prove Booker T. Washington's philosophy that if they worked hard and lived respectably, whites would be so impressed by their efforts they would grant Blacks equal social and political rights. But this effort by the Black middle class proved to be ineffective and useless.

Following the riot, more Jim Crow laws were conceived to restrict further the rights and freedoms of Black Atlantans. These new laws prevented them from living in certain residential areas in the city; disfranchised them; and may have forced many Black enterprises to leave the Central Business District. The
Atlanta riot, therefore, may have hindered any type of progression for Blacks in the city. Their dreams of being totally accepted into the society as equals were shattered. Many Blacks, especially the influential class, decided it would be best that they create their own community where they could experience the comforts of life without encountering prejudice and discrimination. They resolved that the best area to build a strong community would be Auburn Avenue since it was located near the downtown vicinity. The excellent location of this area would allow them to be easily accessible to their businesses, homes, and public facilities without travelling far distances. Because of its excellent site, Auburn soon became the center of Atlanta's Black community.

Immediately after the uprising, many Afro-Americans had come to the conclusion that racial harmony could never exist in the city. Their fears were based upon the inhumane actions of the mob; the vituperative remarks expressed by white politicians; the false and misleading stories about Black criminal types printed in white newspapers; and the racial tension that prevailed in Atlanta. When the riot erupted, this was enough proof to many Blacks that both races could not live together peacefully. This outburst of race hatred was reason
enough to cause many Blacks to leave the city. A large number of them left Atlanta temporarily while the riot was in progress and some decided to abandon the city permanently. One source estimates that approximately one thousand to five thousand Blacks left Atlanta during the incident. An official riot investigation report revealed that at least twenty-five families out of "a small neighborhood" moved out of the city perhaps because of the barbarous actions of the rioters. Many Blacks, particularly successful businessmen, left Atlanta to start a new life in California or in northern cities. When several of the city's leading white citizens discovered that the riot caused many of the "good and law abiding" Blacks to leave, it was a great disappointment to them. They felt that the riot and the exodus of the thousands of innocent Black created a bad image for Atlanta. Since most of them were reputable businessmen who depended upon northern investors financial support, as well as Black labor to keep their enterprises operating, many of the whites believed that this tragic incident would hurt not only their establishment, but

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that it would also cause a financial setback to the city. 

Although thousands of Blacks left the city to seek a better life elsewhere, many of them remained in Atlanta. Those who stayed in the city encountered a number of rigid segregation laws which were created after the riot in order to keep Blacks in their place. These Jim Crow laws extended from residential areas to public facilities. 

Prior to the riot, residential segregation, for instance, was practiced by custom even though whites wanted Jim Crow laws enacted to legalize discrimination. Since residential segregation was not sanctioned until 1913, it was not unusual to see middle class and professional Blacks and low-middle income whites residing in the same neighborhoods. Residential segregation, by custom, however, did prevent Blacks from living in the exclusive white areas such as the West Peachtree vicinity. Because they were not allowed to reside in these areas, Auburn Avenue soon developed into a fashionable residential area for Black professionals and elites. Hence, Auburn Avenue was known as the

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"Peachtree" of the Black community.

After the riot, residential patterns in the city changed dramatically. This conversion came as a result of the racial tension that existed in Atlanta. Much of this anxiety left many whites as well as Blacks quite uneasy. Therefore, those whites who resided in racially mixed neighborhoods decided to move out of these areas into the newly developed suburban districts. As whites quickly departed these neighborhoods, Blacks began to occupy these homes thus causing racially mixed areas to become predominant Black localities. Auburn Avenue for example, was one of the many residential areas that went through this drastic transition. The Black population shift into this area actually becomes evident beginning in 1900. During this time, the east sector of Auburn had approximately 128 residents and of that number at least 59 Blacks resided in the vicinity. The Auburn area saw

6 Ditter, p. 15.
a slight increase of Black residents during the year of the riot, but the majority of residents were still white.

By 1910, however, whites quickly became the minority as large number of Blacks moved in the area. According to one source at least one-third of the white population left Auburn while, on the other hand, the number of Black residents increased tremendously. By this time at least 161 out of 208 residents who lived in the neighborhood was Black (see map).

As indicated earlier (see Chapter I), the east sector of Auburn was occupied by the Black middle class and professionals. Many of these homeowners resided in lovely, two story homes, which gave this portion of the Avenue the reputation of being an exclusive neighborhood for Blacks. But not all of Auburn was a fashionable area. In contrast, the west sector of the vicinity was occupied mainly by low income Blacks, and most of this

8 Ibid. The information shown on the map of Auburn Avenue was gathered by enumeration from the Atlanta City Directory, 1910.

9 Meier and Lewis, pp. 128-131. According to Meier and Lewis, most of Auburn's Black residents were mainly mulattoes who owned successful businesses or were professionals such as doctors, teachers, lawyers, and civil servants. A majority of them attended First Congregational Church, while a few people were members of the AME and Methodists Churches. Nearly all of them were formally educated and many of them sent their children to Storrs School, Atlanta University, Clark University, Morehouse, and Spelman Colleges.
area was considered a slum. Known as "Darktown", this section was situated between Auburn, Jackson, Forrest, and Piedmont streets and was one of the areas in which the white mob invaded during the riot. The Darktown section, which has been predominantly Black since 1900, consisted of single and two-family homes that were kept in poor condition.

After the riot many Blacks began to occupy homes in both the east and west sectors of the Avenue as large numbers of them began to move to the Auburn area from the West Side of Atlanta. Eventually, Auburn's residential area (the east sector) became a diverse economic community, while the west sector served primarily as the commercial district. Within seven years after the riot, Auburn's tremendous Black population increase may have been caused by two factors: the convenient location of Auburn to the downtown area; and the passage of rigid segregation laws beginning in 1913 when Atlanta

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10 Porter, p. 92.
11 This change became more evident during the next ten to fifteen years after the riot. Stringent segregation laws that may have been passed because of the tragic incident could perhaps have prevented Blacks from quickly moving into other residential areas in the city. However, by the mid-1920's, some middle and upper class Blacks began to migrate to the West Side area.
officially legalized residential segregation. This edict set the precedence for a series of residential segregation laws that were passed in the period between 1916 and the 1920's.

The Atlanta riot may not have had a direct affect upon residential segregation in the city, but it must be considered as a reason for the increase of this type of Jim Crow legislation. Also, the tragic incident may have been the reason why racially mixed neighborhoods disappeared in Atlanta until sixty to seventy years later. Moreover, it must be considered that the Atlanta tragedy influenced Blacks in the creation and building of their own residential areas. It was not until after the riot that Blacks from all economic levels began to live together and they relied upon each other even more than before. This strong determination and dependency Blacks gave to each other helped enabled them to survive the harsh treatment of segregation and prejudice. As a result, Black Atlantans created one of the most prosperous and successful Black communities in the country.

Much of the growth and success of the Black

community in Atlanta has come from the many contributions of the church. As mentioned previously, the church has always been the central force in the Black community, and the aid and assistance offered by the churches may have caused Auburn to grow into a prosperous area. First Congregational Church, for example, was one of the number of religious institutions that played an important role in reconstructing a new Black society.

Under the leadership of its first Black pastor, Rev. Henry H. Proctor, First Congregational soon became one of the most reputable churches in the community. Shortly after the tragic incident, Proctor became concerned about the large numbers of Black that were leaving the city because of the riot. He took it upon himself to "assure them that out of this would come a better Atlanta, that now was the time to settle down and build anew." Despite his plea, some Blacks abandoned the city, while a few left temporarily and returned only after the chaos was settled.

Rev. Proctor believed that the existence of local dives contributed to the causes of the riot. Before the disturbance, he had spoken out on several occasions.

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occasions about the closing these saloons mainly because of the crimes that took place here. These taverns, which were located on Decatur Street and some near First Congregational, attracted vagrants to the area, and those who patronized these establishments were considered as constituting the criminal class. Proctor discovered that many of these men would not be regarded as vagabonds and culprits if they were given decent living quarters, a recreation facility, and employment. Local dives, he presumed, allured these men there because they had no place to go. Proctor decided that if he opened his church to accommodate the needs of the vagrant, they would not be tempted to patronize these dives. He had hoped that opening the doors of the church to fulfill the needs of the people would eventually eliminate the Black criminal class.

Proctor created a number of programs that benefited the community until similar government programs were established. One of the first task he encountered was raising enough funds to get the programs started. He made appeals to both Black and white communities and an enthusiastic response by both groups enabled Proctor to

14 Proctor, p. 99.
raise $17,500 for his drive. With these donations, First Congregational created various programs and erected a few facilities that were needed in the community. These programs and facilities included a home for the Black working girls; a gymnasium for YMCA activities; a YWCA for girls; a clinic; a mission; a library; a kitchen; shower bath and lavatories; and an auditorium. In addition to these facilities, the church also provided the public the first desegregated water fountain in the city.

When First Congregational moved from Houston and Piedmont to its present location Houston and Courtland in 1908, the church continued to offer programs to the Black community. After returning from the North where he went to solicit funds for these programs, Proctor instituted an employment bureau, a kindergarten, and a business school, all of which emphatically aided and improved the Black community. Most of these programs that were originated by First Congregational lasted until World War I, and some even up to the 1920s.

The efforts and accomplishments made by First

15 Ibid, p. 100.
16 Russell, p. 34.
Congregational to assist those in need after the riot brought national recognition to the church, and caused it to be proclaimed as "the church that saved a city".  

Another major reason why Atlanta's Black society prospered after the uprising was the tremendous growth of businesses. The race riot and the strong competition of white businessmen may have possibly forced Black merchants to operate their establishments to meet the needs of the Black community. This great effort displayed by Black businessmen enabled them to create one of the most thriving Black commercial centers in the country.  

Before the 1906 riot, only a small number of Afro-Americans owned and operated successful enterprises in the city. Even though the majority of Black entrepreneurs managed skilled and service related operations such as carpentry, contracting, dray hack, and catering, the most popular businesses were barber shops and grocery stores. Almost all of these enterprises relied heavily upon the patronage of whites. Since most of these establishments were small-scaled, only a small number of the owners operated prosperous businesses, and just a few of them would have been classified as wealthy.  

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Ibid, p. 38.
For example, Alonzo F. Berndon, founder of one of the largest insurance companies, Atlanta Life Insurance Company, began in the business field as a barber. Known as the city's leading Black barbers, Berndon's three barbershops, which were located on Peachtree Street, catered solely to a white clientele. The success of Berndon's shops made him one of the wealthiest Blacks in Atlanta.

Like most of the white enterprises in the city, many of the Black establishments were located in the downtown area or the Central Business District (CBD). In 1905, the year before the Atlanta tragedy, over one half of the Black businesses in the city were located in the CBD, with many of them situated on Marietta and Decatur Streets. But as segregation and white competition increased in the city, many Black merchants began to direct their businesses to the Black community as a means of survival. After the riot, however, this dramatic change becomes even more apparent. For example, the number of Black enterprises in Atlanta grew from 398 in 1905 to 426 in 1907, an increase that probably developed

19 Dittmer, pp. 37-38; Baker, Following the Colour Line in the South, p. 41.
21 Dittmer, p. 38.
as Black merchants began to depend more upon Black patrons instead of whites.

As noted, the majority of Black businesses were located in the CBD, but after the riot the number of Black establishments in the downtown vicinity declined. One source reveals that the number of Blacks enterprises in the CBD dropped from 68 percent in 1905 to 52 percent in 1907. The Atlanta riot may have been the reason why at least 4 percent of the Black businesses left the downtown area. It definitely must be considered as a cause for so many Blacks relocating their enterprises in other areas of the city. As indicated earlier (see Chapter II), the white mob destroyed a great deal of Black property in the CBD. Because of this destruction, many Black entrepreneurs, who could afford to do so, decided it would be best to move their establishments out of the CBD for fear another racial disturbances might occur and their properties would be destroyed again. Since Auburn Avenue was close to the CBD, many of them decided it would be much easier to move here instead of localities that were further away from downtown. Hence, Auburn Avenue soon became the center of the Black

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22 Fennell, p. 8.
23 Ibid, pp. 8, 13.
Business District in Atlanta.

Because Auburn Avenue became the most favorable site for Black businesses in the city, it should be noted that the racial patterns of commercial property in the area changed dramatically. Prior to the riot, Auburn Avenue business center was primarily white. Of the 96 enterprises that were located in the vicinity, only 29 were owned by Afro-Americans. But this number increased greatly within a three year period. By 1907, for example, Black businesses on Auburn rose from 38 percent to 41 percent, and by 1908 the number of establishments scaled from 42 percent to 48 percent. At the same time, racial hatred forced so many Afro-Americans out of the CBD that Black enterprises decreased from 58 percent to 24 percent in the downtown area.

Because of the racial tension that existed in the city, many Afro-Americans ceased conducting business with white owners, and out of race pride they began to patronize only Black businesses. The outbreak of the riot led most Black Atlantans to believe that the only way they could be self-sufficient economically was to create enterprises that catered solely to Afro-Americans. Thus, Auburn's Black Business District (BBD) offered a variety of

\[\text{Ibid, pp. 8, 13, 22, 25.}\]
services which included shoemakers, photographers, tailors, launderers, clothing renovators, and others. Grocery stores remained the most popular enterprises in the BBD, but the increase of cafes and restaurants replaced barbershops as the most common business owned by Black merchants. These two enterprises, especially grocery stores, were quite common in the Black community because it took very little capital to operate them. But the success of these establishments depended greatly on an excellent location, good administration, and faithful customers.

Within the next five years after the riot, Auburn was steadily becoming one of the most thriving Black commercial centers in the nation. As the Avenue's Afro-American population expanded, the demand for services increased. Soon Black entrepreneurs began to pool their resources to establish enterprises such as banks, insurance companies, and office centers for professional use. In 1909, for instance, the Atlanta State Savings Bank, the city's first Black owned bank, was opened in order to lend money to Black businessmen.

26 Dittmer, p. 41.
and private citizens who were repeatedly rejected by white companies. Racist policies of white insurance companies led many Blacks to support Black insurance companies, which in fact grew rapidly during this time. Auburn Avenue became the home of the two largest Black insurance companies in the country: Atlanta Life Insurance and Standard Life Insurance, founded by Heman Perry in 1911. Atlanta Life, one of the few successful Black companies founded before the riot, became a leader in promoting race pride and self-sufficiency in the Black community. The encouragement of Black pride displayed by the company brought in a large number of customers for the corporation. Herndon's enterprise even boasted of hiring only Black employees.

The construction of office buildings on Auburn allowed the majority of Black professionals to relocate in the area. This ideal location allowed them to be more

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27 Meier and Lewis, p. 131; Dittmer, p. 46; Henderson and Walker, "Sweet Auburn," p. 21. Heman Perry, born in Texas, came to Atlanta in 1908 and within four years he became one of the leading Black entrepreneurs in the city. His empire included various types of enterprises ranging from real estate to dry cleaners. Perry's conglomerate of businesses was worth over $11 million. Unfortunately, his empire collapsed in 1927.

The Rucker Building, built in 1906 by Henry Rucker, the first Black Internal Revenue Collector of Georgia, was the city's first Black-owned office building. This structure provided space to doctors, lawyers, dentists, and small businesses. Six years after the riot, the state's largest and wealthiest fraternal organization, the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, raised over $250,000 to construct the Odd Fellows Building on Auburn Avenue. The six-story complex, which covered one full block, was built to provide more office space for professionals, political organizations, business schools, and small enterprises. In addition to the office tower, a 1300 seat auditorium was added one year later in order to provide space for the community's social activities.

The affect of the race riot upon the Black businesses indicates that it may have stimulated its growth instead of deterring it. The expansion of Black businesses becomes quite evident especially two years after the tragedy. Stringent segregation laws which were perhaps created because of the riot, probably caused most Blacks to relocate to Auburn Avenue for its ideal

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Henderson and Walker, pp. 10, 27.
location. As a result, Auburn became the center of the Blacks Business District, which offered a variety of services to cater to the needs of the Black community. Hence, the tremendous growth of Black enterprises was one way the Black community responded to the segregation.

Jim Crow laws did not only restrict Blacks to certain residential areas and business centers in the city, but it also denied them equal access to public facilities. The Atlanta riot may have been the primary factor as to why white legislators created ordinances to discriminate against Blacks. Before the riot, segregation laws existed but they were not rigidly enforced. Whites and Blacks continued to use facilities without encountering any major problems until some white user protested.

However, after the uprising, Atlanta changed its way of practicing segregation. Laws that were created before the 1906 riot were rigidly enforced following the incident, and new regulations were conceived to completely separate the races. For example, in 1910, the city's legislators passed an ordinance which prohibited Blacks and whites from being served in the same restaurants. The new law proclaimed that all owners must "specify which race they would serve". It also declared that:
Each license shall display, prominently in front of their place of business thereof, a notice as follows: 'licensed to sell to colored people only' so that the public may be informed of the character of trade served at such place.

Furthermore, the law stated that any "person, firm or corporation found violating the ordinance would be fined one hundred dollars and convicted to work thirty days of hard labor "on the public works of the city". In addition to this ordinance, new Jim Crow laws forbade Black barbers to cater to whites and established separate facilities such as parks, hotels, theatres, churches, elevators, libraries, prisons, cemeteries, and bibles in courtrooms for Black citizens. Even the saloons located on Decatur Street (where the riot originated) which were once patronized by Blacks and whites became segregated.

Although Black Atlantans were upset by all these strict regulations which deprived them equal access to these facilities, they were most angry about the rigid enforcement of the street car laws. As early as 1891,

31 Ibid.
the state of Georgia had passed an ordinance which legalized the segregation on street cars. Even though this law allowed Atlanta to practice segregation legally and specified that two races sit in separate sections of the streetcars, it was not unusual to see the two races riding together in the same cars. Actually the only time the ordinance was enforced was when a specific transportation company insisted that the two races sit in the designated cars.

By 1900, however, Atlanta's City Council unanimously adopted an ordinance which legalized separating seating of both races on city streetcars. According to the law, Blacks and whites were allowed to sit in the same cars but a separating seating section had to be designated for Blacks only. The inferior conditions applied by these segregation laws forced Blacks to boycott the street cars in the city. Black Atlantans staged successful boycotts in 1892-93 and in 1900. Again, segregation laws were not rigidly enforced on streetcars, and this was perhaps


34 *Atlanta Constitution*, 1 February 1900.
made possible by the boycott and the vague manner in which the ordinance was written. Although streetcar conductors continued to be discourteous to Black passengers, it was still common to see the two races sitting in the cars together. In fact, during the riot, group of hostile rioters purposely attacked a trolley car because Blacks were seated next to whites.

Following the uprising, street car companies enforced the segregation laws which required Blacks to sit in the rear of the trolley cars and to relinquish their seats to white passengers when the front of the cars were filled. Most Blacks, especially ministers and professionals, were so displeased by the rude treatment and inferior conditions that they decided to boycott once again. Protesters urged the Black community to use alternative means of transportation in order for the boycott to be successful. Benjamin Davis used his weekly publication to voice his grievances against the Jim Crow law. In an editorial comment printed in the Atlanta

35 Meier and Rudwick, p. 269.
Independent, he proclaimed that even though Blacks were forced to ride in segregated trolleys, they should not be commanded to surrender their seats to whites. Furthermore, Davis claimed that it was not uncommon to see white conductors refuse to provide protection for Black passengers when white "toughs" forced them from their seats. To validate his point, Davis told of an humiliating incident in which a conductor ordered him to give up his seat to a white passenger. Davis stated that since Blacks were compelled to separate seating areas they should at least be allowed to have equal access to seats provided in their section of the trolley and white conductors should treat them with the same respect and courtesy.

With the aid of a few white leaders such as Charles T. Hopkins of the Atlanta Civic League, Black protesters tried desperately to change the unfair Jim Crow laws, but their efforts fell short. Unfortunately the boycott failed, but their attempt to change the ordinance proved that Blacks were willing to fight against discrimination. As one historian noted, their struggle to change the segregation laws was an inspiration to

Atlanta Independent, 25 May 1907.
future protesters.

Although Blacks were disturbed by the increase of segregation laws, their major concern was their political status. Black Atlantans were afraid that the riot may have hurt their chances of ever being part of the political process. As noted earlier, white Democrats attempted to curb Republican power in the state by adopting several legislative bills which called for the disfranchisement of Blacks. Even though these measures controlled Black participation in state elections, Negroes especially in urban areas, continued to vote in large numbers. White politicians feared Blacks possessed too much political power and, therefore, advocated a complete disfranchisement. Thus, candidates in the gubernatorial election of 1906 focused their campaigns on taking the ballot away from Blacks.

During the gubernatorial race of 1906, at least five potential candidates ran for the office: Boke Smith, Secretary of the Interior; Clark Howell, editor of the Atlanta Constitution; Judge Richard B. Russell; John B. Estill, editor of the Savannah Morning News; and James M. Dittmer, p. 19; Baker, Following the Colour Line, p. 32.
Smith, planter from Oglethorpe county. Though all of them based their campaigns on white supremacy, candidate Boke Smith pushed the disfranchisement issue. In his campaign speeches, Smith appealed to the emotions of his supporters by proclaiming:

With reference to Negro suffrage, I advocate the retention of those things that we now have to preserve white supremacy, namely the poll tax and the white primary. I also advocate that adoption of all addition legislation which could make white supremacy easy and permanent. In the thirty seven counties in Georgia, more Negroes than white men have paid their poll tax. In all local elections, as all matters now stand, the ignorant and the purchasable Negro has a vote equal to that of the white man. Without further argument, it is clear that great benefits will come to the people of Georgia by the adoption of a constitutional amendment, formed after the lines of those amendments adopted in our sister southern states, which will disfranchise ninety percent of the Negroes in the state. . . .

Smith believed if Blacks were forbidden to vote it would eliminate Black politicians, and repress them from getting any idea of obtaining social equality. He even had the absurd notion that if Blacks were disfranchised,


it would protect white womanhood and perhaps promote better race relations.

Even though Smith's opponents favored white supremacy, they did not, however, approve of his disfranchisement plan. In fact, all of the candidates were convicted that the educational requirement placed in Smith's proposed plan would not only disfranchise a large number of Blacks, but would disqualify poor, illiterate whites, as well. Despite their attacks, Hoke Smith won the election in a landslide decision. Blacks did not vote in large enough numbers to make the elections close. In fact, of the 16,661 registered Black voters in the city, only 1500 casted a ballot. The low turn out was caused by the white primary, poll taxes, and the racist campaign performed by Hoke Smith. His race-baiting speeches was one of the many reasons why the riot broke out immediately following the primary election held on September 5, 1906. The lack of Black votes in the election of 1906 indicates that Blacks were already disfranchised.

After winning the general election, governor-elect

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42 Bacote, pp. 416-417.
43 Ibid, pp. 418-422.
Hoke Smith believed that the poll tax and the white primary did not completely disqualify Black voters; therefore, he pushed for the state's General Assembly to legalize disfranchisement through a legislative bill. In June, 1907, nine months after the riot, State Representatives J. J. Anderson and G. W. Williams, presented a bill to the Georgia House of Representatives which called for a complete disfranchisement of Blacks. The new measure set the following voting qualifications: one must have "registered in accordance with the requirements of the law"; pass a literacy test; paid all property taxes; display good citizenship; have a good war record; and vote only if "he was a lineal descendant of a voter in 1866, provided he registered prior to a certain date". Although the disfranchisement measure curbed Black participation in politics, it did not eliminate it entirely. The few Blacks that were eligible to vote took advantage of this privilege and casted ballots in special, general, and open elections.

Blacks, of course, felt the disfranchisement laws

45 Dittmer, p. 99.
46 Adair, pp. 4-5; Dittmer, p. 101. This was the "grandfather clause".
violated their constitutional rights. To protest these measures, they immediately formed the Georgia Equal Rights League. Founded by Rev. William J. White, editor of the Georgia Baptist in February, 1906, the League's purpose was to secure political and social equality for Blacks. The organization attempted to register as many Blacks voters as possible in hope of defeating the disfranchisement bill. However, some Blacks such as newspaper editor, Ben Davis, disapproved of the Equal Rights League. As far as he was concerned he "could not see any help a set of colored man led by a set of theoretical agitators could contribute to the solutions of every day problems . . . .", Davis even denounced the leaders of the organization, Rev. William J. White, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, and Jesse Max Barber for not making any effort to improve racial condition. Davis, therefore, took it upon himself to use his newspaper, the Atlanta Independent to urge all Blacks to "qualify, register and vote". He even asked ministers to speak to their congregations at least once a month on the "ethical side of every political and economic question. . . ." in hopes

49 Atlanta Independent, 2 February 1907.
it would encourage them to vote.

Despite their hard drive to defeat the disfranchisement bill, the efforts of the Equal Rights League and other community leaders fell short. The bill was passed due to the overwhelming number of the white votes. Some Blacks, such as Ben Davis again, blamed the race for their own fate. But Davis did not take in consideration that the poll tax, harassment, and the white primary was the major reason why a small number of Blacks had registered to vote. Because of the lack of Black participation in elections, racist politicians were able to persuade enough voters to have a bill passed in 1908. The disfranchisement measure finally went into effect on January 1, 1909.

Hence, it is evident that the Atlanta riot brought a dramatic change to the Black community. It could be pointed out that the uprising had a positive and a negative affect on Black Atlanta. On the positive side, the segregation laws that were created and rigidly enforced after the riot gave Blacks the incentive to unite and fight the Jim Crow practices. In some cases,

50 Ibid, 6 April 1907.
51 Dittmer, p. 102.
they were victorious, but in most instances Blacks failed. Their determination to fight segregation led to the creation of a strong community, and Auburn Avenue was the example of this. The ideal location of Auburn allowed Blacks to build a fashionable residential area and a prosperous business district. Churches, such as First Congregational Church, aided in the efforts by establishing social programs such as a gymnasium, employment agencies, and educational facilities to help those in need and for the benefit of the community. On the other hand, the negative effects of the riot caused a decline of Black participation in politics. Although community leaders made attempts to retain the political status of Blacks, their efforts failed. Within two years of the uprising, Blacks were legally disfranchised.

Thus, the indirect effects of the riot probably helped increase strict segregation laws, and even though Blacks were subjected to the inferior restrictions of Jim Crow, they were determined to overcome these subordinate conditions by building a solid community.
CONCLUSION

By the turn of the century, Atlanta’s population had grown tremendously as the city became the leading commercial center in the South. Many Blacks and whites migrated from the rural areas to the city in hopes of finding a better life but most them encountered a great deal of problems. Housing and educational facilities were just a few of the many problems the new migrants met. Blacks, in particular, had a difficult time finding adequate housing. Whites wanted to legally restrict Blacks from residing in their neighborhoods, but these laws were not passed until later. Although these laws were not enacted, whites continued to practice residential segregation which prohibited Blacks from living in their communities. Low income Blacks were forced to live in undesirable sections of the city. All of these predominately Black sections were located near factories and railroad yards. These sections were identified as Mechanicsville, Tanyard Bottoms, and Summerhill. Although in most cases Blacks were restricted to certain areas of the city, whites and Blacks did reside
in some racially mixed neighborhoods. These areas were occupied primarily by the Black middle class and low income whites.

As segregation practices became more apparent in the city, Blacks found it necessary to create a community of their own. They built institutions such as churches, schools, and businesses to cater to the needs of the resident. Big Bethel AME, Wheat Street Baptist, and First Congregational Church are just a few of the many churches that were organized by Blacks. The churches took the responsibility of educating its parishioners and, therefore, created schools such as Morris Brown College; Atlanta Baptist Seminary (Morehouse); Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary (Spelman); Clark University; Gammon Theological Seminary; and Atlanta University. In addition to these institutions, Blacks opened various types of businesses such as barbershops, grocery stores, contracting, and catering to serve the residents. A few of the community's entrepreneurs opened enterprises such as insurance companies and funeral homes for Black use since white companies refused their patronage.

Although Blacks disliked the inferior conditions of segregation, they were most disturbed by the attempt of white politicians to take away their voting rights. White Democrats endorsed the disfranchisement of Black
voters in hope of curbing Republican power. They devised the poll tax and the white primary in hope of keeping Black from voting, but these stipulations did not prevent them entirely from casting their ballots in city elections. Because Blacks continued to participate in elections, white politicians pushed for a law that would disfranchise them.

During the election year of 1906, gubernatorial candidates tried to solicit white votes by calling for a law that would disfranchise Blacks completely. But to their surprise, whites did not appeal to their plea enthusiastically. Candidates, therefore, based their campaigns on eliminating Black vagrants and criminal types from the society because they were potential rapists. Gubernatorial candidates John Temple Graves, editor of the Atlanta Georgian and Charles Daniels, editor of the Atlanta News used their newspapers to win white votes. In their editorial columns, both men maintained that the low class Blacks should not be allowed to buy liquor because it made them commit crimes such as rape and robbery. Thus, they endorsed a law which would prohibit the sale of liquor. In addition to this, both candidates pushed for a disfranchisement bill.

Like Graves and Daniels, candidates Hoke Smith also based his campaign on the disfranchisement issue.
Smith's fiery, race baiting speeches stirred many whites to support his platform. The impetuous rhetoric given by all the candidates, especially by Hoke Smith, together with newspapers accounts of allegedly rapes by Black men, aroused whites so that many of them resorted to rioting.

The riot that occurred in Atlanta on September 22, 1906 was considered one of the worst racial disturbances to ever happen in the South during this time. Those historians that have studied the riot have asserted that there were three causes for the uprising: politics; newspaper sensationalism; and economics. During the uprising, white mobs killed at least twenty five Blacks and over one hundred were wounded. Also, angry whites purposely destroyed a great deal of Black property, perhaps because many of them were jealous of the success of Black businessmen. The riot caused the city to cease any type of activity for at least a week. Atlanta's merchants lost thousands of dollars due to property damage. Several sources indicate that thousands of Blacks fled the city temporarily and some never returned. Because of the uprising, Atlanta's reputation declined drastically.

In an effort to rebuild the city's image and improve race relations, several white and Black leaders organized interracial groups such as the Atlanta Civic League and
the Christian League. Both groups were organized to "promote peace between the races" and to "prevent future outbreak of race trouble". Although the Civic League was short-lived, it did help rebuild the city. The League temporarily improved social conditions, and its efforts were commended by both races. Despite the work of these groups, the majority of whites refused to cooperate with Blacks to resolve racial problems; therefore, race-relations in the city had worsened.

Black leaders on the national and local levels condemned the needless massacre and its participants by expressing their rage and fears through various ways. Leaders such as Booker T. Washington, Monroe Trotter, W. E. B. DuBois, and Walter White, expressed their rage and fears through letters, newspaper articles, and poems. Some Blacks went as far as staging rebellions to protest the riot. A few of them, such as Dr. J. W. E. Bowen of Gammon Theological Seminary offered suggestions as to how to prevent future riots. Apparently these comments and suggestions were overlooked because the majority of whites insisted that the races be separated.

After the riot, white legislators created rigid segregation laws which caused many Blacks to lose their social and political rights. Racial tension that prevailed in the city before and during the riot might
have indirectly caused legislators to pass Jim Crow laws to enforce segregation that was once exercised by custom. Blacks were prohibited equal use of public facilities such as parks, libraries, public transportation, hotels, and theatres. In addition to this, racially mixed neighborhoods became predominantly Black, as whites fled to the suburban areas of the city, and strict segregation practices barred Blacks from predominantly white residential areas. Jim Crow ordinances and white harassment also forced many Black merchants to move their businesses from the downtown vicinity to other areas of Atlanta. Moreover, laws forbade Black businesses from catering to white customers.

The culmination of segregation laws forced Black Atlantans to protest these unfair practices. Although their demonstrations failed, Blacks were determined to fight segregation, which led to the creation of a strong Black community. Because of its convenient location, Blacks built their new community in the Auburn Avenue vicinity. The Black middle class and professionals occupied the homes that were once owned by whites, and Auburn's residential section developed into a fashionable neighborhoods for Blacks. Many of the Black merchants relocated their businesses on Auburn because of its ideal location. Since Blacks were no longer allowed to
patronize white establishments, they created their own enterprises such as restaurants, grocery stores, banks, insurance companies, and realty firms to serve the community. Black doctors and lawyers relocated their offices in the new Rucker Building, an office building constructed by Internal Revenue Collector, Henry L. Rucker. Churches, of course, aided in the effort of building the community. First Congregational Church, for example, provided residents with various social programs such as a gymnasium, a YWCA, a library, educational facilities, and an employment bureau to help those in need.

Even though Blacks were able to build institutions to counter the inferior conditions that segregation created, they were unsuccessful in attempting to retain their political rights. Blacks used every type of method to maintain their suffrage rights, but white politicians were able to disfranchise them legally by January 1909.

The relationship of the Atlanta Riot of 1906 and the Black community, therefore, was not a simple one. On a whole, the riot was destructive both physically and socially. But while it caused a decline in race relationships, it also opened up lines of communication between Blacks and whites. Again it resulted in increased legal restrictions on Blacks, but it indirectly led to the building of a strong Black community whose
legacy is felt today. Perhaps the one area in which its results were most negative was that of politics. It was not until the late 1920s, that Blacks became politically active again. Yet, during a time when social and political rights were taken from them, Blacks refused to give in to inferior conditions. Through protest and solidarity, Black Atlantans, therefore, fought segregation by building one of the most successful communities in the country.
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