Attitudes towards Negroes as reflected in the Atlanta Constitution, 1908-1918

Eugene Pierce Walker
Atlanta University

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ATTITUDES TOWARDS NEGROES AS REFLECTED IN THE ATLANTA
CONSTITUTION, 1908-1918

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN
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THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY
EUGENE PIERCE WALKER

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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INTRODUCTION

How did the Atlanta Constitution view Georgia Negroes from the time of their legal disfranchisement in 1908, until the end of World War I in 1918?

Most newspapers, North and South, in the early years of the century ignored Negroes in their news columns except for their crimes.\(^1\) Many newspapers, notably in the Atlanta race riot of 1906 and the disturbances in Columbia, Tennessee, in 1946, have actually contributed to racial dissension through inflammatory and sensational treatment of Negroes.\(^2\) Since this is true, a more penetrating study of the attitudes of newspapers toward Negroes becomes increasingly important.

This study will focus on the attitudes towards Negroes as reflected in the Atlanta Constitution from 1908 through 1918. Although the Constitution will serve as the primary source for illumination, the Atlanta Independent and other works pertinent to the study will be used in an effort to find possible answers to questions raised in the study.

In an attempt to visualize the attitude of the Constitution toward Negroes, two aspects relative to coverage of Negroes have been considered. First, consideration has been given to the general tone of the coverage. In connection with the general tone, the following points were cited: (1) the identification by race in crime stories; (2) the human

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\(^2\)Race in the News (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, 1949), p. 3.
interest stories showing Negroes in the familiar stereotype of the
simple, ignorant being; and (3) the extent of coverage given to the
Negro community.

Secondly, the writer has given thought to the style of the
coverage. Some elements which are considered as style in newspaper
handbooks are: (1) identification by race in all news stories and
captions of pictures; (2) use of courtesy titles before the names of
Negroes; (3) capitalization of the word "Negro"; and (4) use of photo-
graphs of Negroes in the news columns.

There are several questions the writer has considered in this
study. The first and most important question is whether or not the
Atlanta Constitution's attitude concerning Negroes was evident during
the ten years under investigation. To discover this, it will be neces-
sary to consider the rules of treatment of news about Negroes and find
out which rules have undergone a change throughout the years. It will
also be necessary to ask how the newspaper treated stories involving
Negroes as citizens and to trace the attitude of the paper toward
lynching and similar crimes bred by racial dissension.

One must also ask how the newspaper treated crime news involving
Negroes. Did it perpetuate through constant identification of the
race and crime stories the kind of stereotype thinking which attributes
criminal habits to the entire race? Did it allot more space to Negroes
when they committed crimes than when crimes were committed against
them?

Does the evidence show that the Constitution, in gathering and
reporting news of the Negro community, took into account the opinions of
Negroes in the formation of the larger body of public opinion? Did the paper refrain from abusive and inflammatory practices and contribute to the status of Negroes as citizens, or did it respond in an opposite manner?

These questions were kept in mind during the research reported in this thesis and are used as guides in the interpretation of the material presented. One of the greatest problems of this study lay in the conflicting data furnished by different sources. In each case, the first criterion was the actual paper itself. Effort was made to consider all available evidence with every other piece of related information in assigning a date, incident or to make a particular point. In each case, whenever exact dates have been ascertained, they are given; when they are not available, approximations, noted as such, are given.
CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In order to understand better the treatment of Negroes by the Constitution, it is necessary to sketch briefly the historical background of this newspaper. Its historical origin may be summarized briefly, while some of its ramifications must be discussed in more detail.

The Atlanta Constitution was born during Reconstruction times when the State of Georgia was attempting to regain control of the state government and eliminate military rule. In order to provide journalistic leadership in the conflict, the Constitution made its first appearance on June 16, 1868. President Andrew Johnson suggested the name to its first editor, Cary W. Styles, on a visit to the White House. He felt that it would be an appropriate name for a paper seeking to restore constitutional government in the South. 3

Henry W. Grady joined the staff of the Constitution in 1876, purchased an interest in the paper and became its managing editor in 1880. The philosophy of Henry W. Grady revolved around the phrase "the New South." It meant a subordination of class conflict in the South, the development of manufacturing and a business economy to supplement the agrarian economy of the Old South, and the development

3History of the Atlanta Constitution and Journal (Atlanta, n.d.), p. 3. Mr. Tom McRae, managing editor of the Constitution thinks that 1958 was the approximate year of publication.
of the land's natural resources.\textsuperscript{4} William A. Hemphill, Evan P. Howell, and N. P. T. Finch were the other owners. Soon after 1900, a new company was formed, with Clark Howell and Roby Robinson buying the Hemphill stock.\textsuperscript{5}

Industrial progress was to play an important role in Georgia politics of the 1880's. From 1870 to 1890 the leadership of the state was passed back and forth among three men, the so-called "Bourbon Triumvirate"; Alfred H. Colquitt, one of the large planters of the state; General John B. Gordon, the popular military hero who helped promote railroads, mining and other developments; and Joseph E. Brown, the millionaire industrialist.\textsuperscript{6} It is an evident conclusion, in view of the events of the next decade, that their government was favorable to industrial interests and that the small farmers of the state suffered at their hands.

The Populist movement in the South and West did not originate with Tom Watson, but he was its outstanding leader almost from the beginning. It was the first serious threat to political domination by the "Black Belt" whites, and also one of the last.\textsuperscript{7} It began as an agrarian movement, with the formation of the Farmer's Alliance in


\textsuperscript{6}Lynwood Holland, \textit{The Direct Primary in Georgia} (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949), p. 12.

\textsuperscript{7}The term "Black Belt" is used to indicate those regions where the population is roughly 50 percent Negro. See V. O. Key, \textit{Southern Politics in State and Nation} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), p. 5.
several states. The alliances grew in strength and in political importance until, by 1890, they had 3,000,000 members. It was essentially a protest movement by the small farmers against the industrial and mercantile domination which, at one time, had forced them to sell for six cents a pound the cotton it had taken eight cents to raise.

Although the Democrats continued to cry "nigger" with some success, the old unity against a common enemy was gone. As Vann Woodward says,

The theme was clearly announced! The Solid South against the insurgent rebels, the new capitalists against the old and new agrarians. The Negro was introduced in his inevitable role, a black Nemesis. The chorus of shibboleths would remain the same: race chauvinism, religious superstition, military fetishism.

Watson ran for president of the United States twice, once in 1896 and again in 1904. When he was elected to Congress in 1890, the Alliance swept the state, controlling the state convention and naming the governor, three-fourths of the state senators and four-fifths of the state representatives. In his early and more influential days, when he led 90,000 Populists in Georgia alone, Watson said that he was "not afraid of Negro Domination," and that "the cry that we are in danger of 'the nigger' is the most hypocritical that unscrupulous leadership could invent."

Whites and Negroes had been united in Populism but, in the early years of this century, the movement began to lose its force and

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9Ibid., p. 161.

10Ibid., p. 370.
the balance of power swung again from Populists to Negroes. Watson ran for president for the second time in a vain attempt to hold the party together on a local level. Then, in the Georgia governor's race of 1906, he attempted to swing his remaining 27,000 followers over to Hoke Smith in return for concessions in the platform which were designed to put into effect some of Watson's cherished railroad reforms. In this campaign, Watson made speech after speech, employing the most violent race-baiting tactics against his old allies, the Negroes. His speeches and others by the two candidates were fully reported in the columns of the Atlanta Constitution. In this election, a color line was drawn in the politics of the state which still exists today.

In the history of Georgia since the Civil War, the one element which has served to unite rival political groups is the fear of domination by Negroes. At first it was a valid fear, rising out of the fact that the Republican bosses of the Reconstruction had skillfully used the votes of Negroes to perpetuate themselves in office. After the whites of the state had recovered the ballot, however, it was still used as a clever political device to persuade Democrats, Republicans and other elements to vote as a unit in any political campaign.

This was true in the elections of the 1880's as well as in the early years of this century. In the election of 1906, the Constitution was filled with political charges from both sides involving the importance of white supremacy and whether Hoke Smith or Clark Howell was most

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11Key, op.cit., p. 5.
likely to "keep the Negro in his place."\(^{12}\)

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL IMAGE

The new century was one of hopes and promises for almost all persons in America, except Negroes. During the previous generations, America had emerged as a highly industrialized nation with a productive capacity far beyond its own needs. There were also afloat moves to regulate unfavorable business which was making profits far out of proportion and exploiting the people.

When we look at Negroes as reflected by the Atlanta Constitution, however, the resolutions and optimism characteristic of whites becomes an irony. Progressivism and reactionary become synonymous with white supremacy because the major reforms Southern progressives sought were ones to disfranchise Negroes and keep them in inferior positions.

Clark Howell had some doubts about the effectiveness of disfranchisement. He felt it would disfranchise illiterate whites, while allowing educated Negroes to vote. Disfranchisement has failed in its purpose in Alabama and had even encouraged some Negroes to climb out of their "place" into the ranks of the literate.\(^\text{13}\) Perhaps his beliefs about the ineffectiveness of disfranchisement led him to become a candidate for governor in 1906.

The gubernatorial campaign of 1906 between Smith and Howell,

\(^\text{13}\)Editorial, Atlanta Constitution, August 3, 1906.
mentioned in the previous chapter, was one of unprecedented race-baiting and bitter political feeling. The speeches of Tom Watson and Hoke Smith, and the answering ones from Clark Howell, were reported fully in the pages of the Journal and the Constitution, and were backed up by exaggerated stories of Negro violence and attempted attacks upon white women. Lynchings were actually anticipated in some stories, as in the one which appeared in the Constitution of August 20, 1906, on Page 7, with the headline, "Negro Fiend Sought by Posse":

Another lynching in South Carolina is probable if it has not already taken place. The name of the Negro is unknown. He is a 17-year-old boy in Saluda County, who several days ago assaulted the 7-year-old daughter of J. H. West.

The character of this report violated at least two tenets of present-day journalistic ethics. In the first place, a criminal is usually not spoken of as guilty until actually convicted of the crime. He may be "accused of" the crime, but he cannot be "convicted" by a newspaper. In the second place, the name of the victim of such an assault is kept secret, whenever possible, according to Georgia law for the protection of the name of the victim.

The Atlanta Constitution was an important regional newspaper and, together with the Atlanta Journal, shaped many cultural and political attitudes. The newspaper was vigilant in its effort to keep Negroes out of politics, and keeping whites mindful of their benevolent nature towards them. In an editorial response to the New York Times about the importance of the expositions to be held in Atlanta in 1913, the Constitution emphasized that
the proposed exposition should, to be successful in its purpose, receive the aid of the southern white people, and it should likewise point the way clearly and unequivocably to the destiny that waits the Negro in the South as soon as he abandons unprofitable political aspirations and addresses himself to those tasks that beckon his natural learnings and abilities in abundance. . . . 14

These blatant assertions and injustices did not go unnoticed by some Northern states. The Constitution printed the following plank that was passed by the Ohio Republicans at their 1908 State Convention:

The civil and political rights of the American Negro in every state believing as we do that his marvelous progress in industry and good citizenship has earned the respect and encouragement of the nation, and those legislative enactments for reasons of color are unfair, un-American and repugnant to the supreme law of the land; we favor the reduction of representatives in Congress and the electoral colleges in all states of the union where white and colored citizens are disfranchised to the end that the fourteenth amendment to the constitution may be enforced according to its letter and spirit. 15

The Constitution quoted with approval the assertions of Democratic leader, U.S. Senator John Sharp Williams of Mississippi, that the Ohio Republicans' plank for Negroes was, "just a piece of political pettifogging where you promise everything to everybody without taking anything from anybody." 16 It is clear that the Constitution regarded the plank on Negro enfranchisement as being meaningless politics.

One thing seemed certain to the newspaper: Negroes held a place low on the social ladder, and the editor was certain they should remain there. They had no business voting until they had greatly improved

14Atlanta Constitution, January 3, 1910, p. 2.
15Ibid., March 5, 1908, p. 3.
16Ibid.
their economic and intellectual conditions. They were most appreciated by the newspaper when they exhibited a sycophantic humility and kept their "place."

Although the paper was consistent in reflecting its views of Negroes, it also printed views of Negroes that fitted into its mold of thinking. A number of illustrations may be used to substantiate this point. An organization called the "Neighborhood Union," which was headed by Mrs. John Hope, the wife of the president of Morehouse College, was the object of praise by the Constitution. The paper stated that

The primary purposes of the organization are to elevate the moral, social, intellectual and spiritual standards in each neighborhood; to lead mothers to better care of infants, cleaner and more sanitary maintenance of their premises; to campaign everywhere against vice and disease, by appealing to individual members of the home; to organize classes for tuition in cooking, sewing and general housework. . . . It is by the purity, virility and aspiration of the home that the white race has achieved and safeguarded its civilization. . . .

It is to be hoped progress will be made in these directions by this new organization, which is not of a commercial nature. The Constitution has many times pointed out cooperation from the superior race is called for in the degree that the white man is inevitably affected by the progress or retrogression of the negro.17

The Constitution reported an article of praise it received from a group of Negro Methodists. The Atlanta Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church adopted a resolution and had it signed by Bishop J. S. Flipper, and L. S. Smith, who was the treasurer of Morris Brown College at that time.

17Editorial, ibid., February 2, 1911, p. 6. See also for discussion of Neighborhood Union, Louie Davis Shively, "The Neighborhood Union," Phylon (Second Quarter, 1942), 146-62.
The gist of the Methodist resolution follows:

... Whereas ten per cent of the solid nation constituted the Negroes of America ... it now seems that the party of Abraham Lincoln has finished its work for humanity and the "solid nations."

... Resolved that the millions of white people of the "solid nations" with their surpassing knowledge, wisdom, newspaper skill and monetary ability can and should do much, especially in the south where most of our ten million are and aim to stay.

... Resolved that we believe the editors of the Atlanta Constitution, the Macon Telegraph, yea, all the daily and weekly newspapers of Georgia and the South with other needed help will work wonders for the peace, good will, prosperity and perpetuation of America's solid nation.18

The editorial of November 11, 1912, acknowledged the significance of the Methodist resolution by stating that "this resolution includes a far step towards the solution of the race problem by the Negroes themselves formally celebrating the obsequious of the traditional 'party of emancipation.'"

Ostensibly Negroes in politics conformed to one of two types--either they were comics or they represented the image of the "good Negro" who knew his place.

"Wilson Insulted by Negro Speaker" appeared as a headline in the Constitution on November 13, 1914. The reporting of this incident was exception, however, rather than a rule. The gist of the news item was that William M. Trotter (editor of the Boston Guardian)19 and a delegation of Negroes called at the White House to protest against segregation in the Post Office and the Treasury Department. President Wilson.

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18 Atlanta Constitution, November 11, 1912, p. 4.

listened to the statements then replied that "no discrimination had been practiced against Negroes but that segregation was inaugurated to avoid friction between the races." After this shocking statement from President Wilson, Trotter took issue with the President declaring that "the Negroes did not seek charity or assistance but that they held equal rights with the whites and that these rights should be respected." Trotter further stated that "there had been no friction before segregation was inaugurated." The article states that, at this point, the President ended the discussion because Trotter had addressed him in "such a tone and background of passion" that he was offended.

The extensive treatment of the article by the press was for both whites and Negroes and, as such, the editor was not merely deferring to the Negro race in giving them front page coverage but was probably intending to portray an adverse political attitude.

The Constitution showed the same type of indifference in reporting lynchings of Negroes and of racial discrimination. Racial friction gave rise to innumerable incidents. This was especially true of lynchings which were more often perpetrated against Negroes than whites. If a white man was lynched, the Constitution wrote in anguish against these orgies, as was done in the case of Leo Frank, a Jew, to which the newspaper probably contributed because it had

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20Atlanta Constitution, August 17, 1915, p. 1; Editorial, ibid., August 18, 1915, p. 8. The Constitution did not defend Frank, but it was adamant in its denunciations of mob rule.
printed false information. The newspaper was less angry, however, about gross racial discrimination which led to the lynching of Negroes. The paper seldom expressed a constructive opinion as to how Negroes might improve their social outlook and conditions in order to be accepted into society.

The Constitution had published an editorial on the morning of January 5, 1911, titled "Judge Broyles' Solemn Warning." The editorial quoted Broyles warning on lawlessness thus:

The increase of lawlessness in our country is most alarming. Nearly 10,000 of our people were murdered during the last twelve months, and lawlessness of all kinds flourished like a green bay tree. We are fast becoming known to the rest of the world as a nation of criminals--as a nation of murderers. Unless this lawlessness is checked, life and property will soon become so unsafe in our country that our peaceable and law-abiding citizens will emigrate to some other country where the law will protect them.

The editorial response was

The Constitution has often indicated, crime is as contagious as disease and knows no distinction of race or geography. Ignoring the law ourselves we are sowing in the wind and will and are reaping the whirlwind in the shape of more flagrant and widespread violations by that child race which does not enjoy the restraining influence speaking generally, of heredity or of education.

Although these accounts indicate a more responsible attitude of the press toward lawlessness and lynching, it did not aid the image of Negroes.

The Constitution presented a Georgia Compendium on November 7, 1912, in which pages 21 through 24 consisted of articles by Negroes dealing with the progress of Negroes. On Page 21 was printed an

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21Ibid., May 20, 1913, p. 1. The paper printed a story stating that a Negro had confessed he saw Frank commit the murder. The trial was not over and the alleged testimony of the Negro was inconclusive.
article by the Reverend H. H. Practor, pastor of the First Congregational Church, titled "Religion among Negroes Brings Racial Harmony."

His thesis was that practical religion brings self-respect. He further stated that:

Here are two races living in a democracy on terms of equality theoretically. They are separate and distinct in social life. The better elements of both races believe that the races should maintain their solidarity. Let white stay white and black stay black, each as God has made it. This requires high moral development and fine discrimination to so live as to do exact justice to each in such a relation.

Of all the articles read, this was by far the most liberal one—liberal in the sense that the writer did mention "equality theoretically." In reality the entire compendium supported white supremacy, but it was significant in two ways. The first of these is that partial identification of Negroes by the use of courtesy titles. The use of the titles "Dr." or "Rev." were employed; however, "Mr." "Mrs." or "Miss" were not used in references to Negro men and women. The second significance is the capitalization of the word "Negro," which, similar to Caucasian, Mongolian, Anglo-Saxon, and other words denoting race, nationality, or ethnic group, should be capitalized.\(^22\)

The new combined style book of the Journal and Constitution does not mention Negroes in the instructions on courtesy titles. It simply states, "use Mr. before surnames standing alone in state and local stories unless the man is some notorious character to whom such respect would appear absurd." Concerning the use of courtesy titles for women, it says, "There's no rule against calling a woman Miss or Mrs. even in

\(^{22}\)Southern Regional Council, Race in the News—Usage in Southern Newspapers (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, Inc., 1949.)
The Constitution did no better than any other Southern institution in providing separate but equal treatment of Negroes. Surely any reader will recognize this after a moment's reflection of these typical news items:

Her Berth Adjoined That of Three Blacks

Vicksburg, Mississippi, February 9—Because she was given a berth in a sleeping car adjoining that of three negroes, Miss Pearl Morris of this city, filed suit yesterday against the Alabama and Vicksburg Railroad Company for the recovery of $25,000 alleged damages.

She alleges her experience resulted in nervous illness and that there was considerable delay in changing her berth.24

Stories about Negroes were usually of a criminal or barbaric nature. Following is an article depicting the former:

A Hot House for Negro Criminals

The need of a reformatory for negro juvenile criminals was never more strongly emphasized than during a recent session of the criminal branch of the superior court under Judge Roan.

One after another youthful negroes charged with offenses as horse stealing, larceny and burglary were brought before the judge until he finally exclaimed, "The court has been turned into a nursery..."25

In line with the South's traditional double standard, these faults were by no means peculiar to the Atlanta Constitution. The press was partly a product, as well as a creator, of public opinion. It should be remembered that criticism of the Constitution is neces-

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23Style Book of the Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution (Atlanta, 1931), p. 6. Mr. Tom McRae, Managing Editor of the Constitution, told the writer there was no definite policy governing courtesy titles, but the matter was probably left to the discretion of the individual copy-reader.

sarily a criticism also of Southern society. The working editor was probably plagued every day by a question he rarely answered to his own satisfaction. The question was whether to give readers what he thought they wanted, or to give them what he thought they should have. Not to give them what they wanted may have meant reduced circulation, curtailed advertising, or the possibility of bankruptcy. Not to give them what he thought they should have may have meant a forfeiture of an editor's historic responsibility for leadership.

The possibility of bankruptcy and forfeiture of leadership were no excuses for the discriminatory treatment of news about Negroes by the Constitution. But the evidence indicates, regardless of reason, that the Constitution did not print viable human interest stories about Negroes.
CHAPTER III

ECONOMIC IMAGE

The evil that confounds men in the present often causes them to look nostalgically to the good they think they see in some misty past. . . .

Among white Americans the popular tradition about slavery days emphasizes the love that united benevolent "massas" and pampered servants, not the hostility that divided harsh overseers and disgruntled field hands. After a century, few remember that southern slavery was not so much a patriarchial institution as a practical labor system. Few recall that slaveholders were more often ambitious entrepreneurs than selfless philanthropists. And few ask what the slaves themselves thought of bondage.26

The Constitution in regard to the economic conditions of Negroes was a paternalistic institution which advocated practical work for them. The paper was vicious in its attack on whites who offered Negroes work other than that of a practical nature. Hoke Smith, before becoming a classic demagogue in 1908, was accused by the paper of trying to give Negroes jobs that whites should have.27

It is necessary at this point to restate the cleavage between Howell and Smith. The center of the gubernatorial campaign of 1906 found its most violent expression in the daily columns of the Journal and Constitution. The Constitution condemned the Smith men as


27Atlanta Constitution, August 3, 1907, p. 1.
"Jeremiahs of calamity in the much-abused name of reform" and described the Smith campaign as an attempt to "pillory Georgia in the eyes of the nation as a state hopelessly in the clutches of corruptors." Smith and the Journal charged that Howell had opposed the election of John B. Gordon to the Senate in 1890, and scored Howell's record on the question of railroad regulation. The two newspapers antagonized each other throughout the period under discussion. The antagonism of Smith and the Journal and the implicit disregard for equality of Negroes prompted the Constitution to surmise that Smith was "trying to take bread out of the mouths of white men, women and children to feed underserving blacks."

The Constitution also made its feelings known in regard to the working conditions. A United States congressional investigation was launched to investigate peonage and the convict lease system, in which the majority of participants were Negroes, for irregularities in Georgia. The paper attacked this investigation in its editorial by saying that "Whatever may be underlying official investigation into alleged peonage in the South, the motive at the bottom if it is anything but creditable for those responsible for it." A member of the City Council in Atlanta, A. Hancock, acted more responsibly in introducing a resolution that "misdemeanor convicts be

29 Atlanta Constitution, August 3, 1907, p. 1.
30 Ibid., January 10, 1908.
31 Editorial, Ibid., January 10, 1908, p. 8.
turned over to public works departments of this city to be worked on
city streets and highways instead of being leased." His motion lost
eleven to five.32

Though the Constitution had earlier criticized the congressional
investigation as being an effort to tarnish the image of Georgia, it
launched a campaign against peonage and the convict lease system. In
an editorial of March 11, 1909, the paper stated that the services of
convicts could be put to better use by building and maintaining streets
and roads. Benjamin Davis, Negro editor of the Atlanta Independent,
was the first to point out the atrocities imposed on Negroes as a result
of peonage and the convict lease system.33 The efforts of Davis concern-
ing the evils of peonage and convict lease and lack of opportunities for
Negroes to obtain gainful employment caused a number of Negroes to
migrate to the North and East.

The Constitution, in its editorial of November 24, 1916, refused
to acknowledge the flight of Negroes to better working opportunities,
but instead attributed the exodus to the fear of "mob rule and the in-
fluence of immigration agents." The editorial continued by expressing
regret that

Georgia was losing her best laborers and suggested that
the Georgia Legislature should pass more stringent laws
against immigration agents and put heavy license taxes upon
them so that they would not be able to trick the Negroes
into leaving the South.

Yet it failed to suggest a remedy to lawlessness and mob rule. Davis
again addressed himself to the causes of migration to the North in an

32 Atlanta City Council Proceedings, January 27, 1908, p. 642.
editorial of October 14, 1916. He pled for better treatment for Negroes in the South. "If there is needed further proof of the Negroes' unrest and dissatisfaction it is furnished in the fact that thousands of them are migrating North on account of their present treatment."

The only reference this writer found to the gainful economic pursuit of Negroes in the Constitution was in the Georgia Compendium, which was published on November 7, 1912. Advertisements were presented by Negro funeral homes, schools, churches, a Negro lawyer and a Negro bank.

The editorial of November 14, 1914, concerning the Negro State Fair best describes the economic endeavors advocated for Negroes by the Constitution, in which was stated that "Whatever makes the Negro a better laborer and better farmer lessens the white man's burden. And there can be no question that the Negro Fair at Macon is a factor in this direction."

The paper was remiss in reporting stories of Negro achievements of success in business. It reported some prodigy story about a Negro educator, such as George Washington Carver, or a Negro preacher such as the Rev. Richard D. Stinson. The readers, Negro and white, were left almost completely in the dark as to the economic pursuits of Negroes. The tragedy is that, while the press ignored the economic aspirations of Negroes, demagogues and many so-called Negro leaders were giving the impression that Negroes were satisfied with their world of work.

Editorial, Atlanta Constitution, December 30, 1912, p. 4.
CHAPTER IV

EDUCATIONAL IMAGE

The Constitution used a quote of a local "prominent" Negro, the Rev. Richard D. Stinson, head of the Atlanta Normal and Industrial Institute, to describe its view of what education for Negroes should be. He is quoted as saying:

Industrial education through which every Negro boy and girl should have a permanent trade at the thing he or she can do best, and stress laid on home life and character rather than on politics, clothes, and empty airs is the greatest need of the colored people today, without which we cannot make permanent headway... .35

Whether Rev. Stinson meant this to be an immediate and temporary solution to the education of Negroes was not made quite clear, for the Constitution in that same editorial claimed that Stinson's advice was the wisest counsel that Negroes could get regarding education and that they should take heed. Without a doubt, this was the best type of training that the whites could use to keep Negroes in a backward state.

The Constitution, when answering queries of a Southern woman living in New York who was concerned about the entire field of Negro servant problems and its corollary--industrial and domestic training for Negroes--printed the following:

We cannot express the status of negro education in the south and its fundamental insufficiency more vividly than

35Editorial, Atlanta Constitution, April 16, 1911, p. 8.
did a negro himself. He is Superintendent Tyrill of the Mount Miegs (Alabama) Negro Reformatory who in discussing the method used to elevate the negro said: "We cannot build a race by building always at the top, if at the same time we are going to let the bottom drop out." The simile is apt, the negroes are themselves beginning to wake to the truth of these facts, and to the fundamental value of the plantation patriarchal system which by personal supervision and by preparing the negro for a field in which he has natural monopoly, made him an industrious productive member of society.

Last year the more prominent negro ministers of Atlanta petitioned the white people of this city to assist them in broadening the scope of negro primary schools to include training for garden and household work, work in the sewing room, in the kitchen, in the stable and on the farms, for the scholars.\textsuperscript{36}

Neither of the quotes mentioned stressed the resilience and adaptability of rational, educable creatures who depended upon their brains rather than their instinct for survival. The lack of stress on political and social education coupled with vocational education leads one to conclude that the mass of Negroes were misled by the Negroes previously quoted and the Constitution.

The Constitution did not voice the opinion of Negroes who protested industrial education, but ample space was alloted to print the views of Negroes whose ideas conformed to the status quo. An Emancipation Day Speech delivered by the Rev. Silas X. Floyd,\textsuperscript{37} in Macon, Georgia, as covered by the Constitution illustrates this point. On this occasion, the Rev. Floyd had this to say:

Now and then you will hear some Negroes say they have no chance, they have no rights, everything is against them. When colored people talk this way they mean as a general thing, they cannot vote, they cannot ride in the same cars with white people on railroad trains; that they must sit

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., January 2, 1918, p. 4.

behind on trolley cars, that they must go to the galleries in churches, theatres, etc. When I hear this, I ask "what would he do with the chance if he had it?" A great many rights and privileges are not denied the colored man in the South and what use is he making of his chances? More things are granted the Negro in the South than denied him. 38

The paper was consistent in its stand on industrial education and the publication of sympathetic views of Negroes; however, the commendation of the Eatonton, Georgia, solution to the race problem was a slight deviation. The title of the article printed on November 4, 1912, was "Putnam Blazes a New Race Solution Trail." The stand of the Constitution was interesting because it applauded the efforts of a bi-racial group which met together in churches and the courthouse seeking solutions to the race problem.

The paper printed a news item from Eatonton which explained the essence of a speech made by C. W. Driskell, a Negro businessman and educator. The article describes the speech thus:

... Driskell divided the Negro into four classes. The first three he regarded as contributing little to the solution of the problem. The first was the self important and egotistic; the second, those who flock to cities demanding large wages out of proportion to value given, and were of little help to their race; the third, "the educated parasite, the professional loafer and the human leach." It was the Negroes of these three classes that condemned what was going on in Putnam to bring a better understanding of the races.

... The Negroes composing fourth class present day educated negro taught their people to shun the jail bird and professional criminals of the race as they would shun a viper or a lion in their own pate... 39

Mr. Floyd was a preacher and principal of the largest Negro elementary school in Augusta, Georgia.

38 Atlanta Constitution, January 2, 1918, p. 3.
39 Ibid., November 4, 1912.
The editorial, in commending Putnam County for its experimenting at a "sane" solution to the race problem, stated that there was no suggestion of social equality at any of the gatherings and Driskell had outlined with a remarkably clear vision the Negro problem of that day.

The significance of a biracial gathering during that time becomes diluted when one scrutinizes Driskell's speech. He condemned Negroes who bucked the system, went to the cities, and refused to work on the farms for petty wages or no wages at all. He exemplified the epitome of brainwashing by asserting that he and Negroes of his kind were better than all the rest. Again, the Constitution had an ample supply of views of "educated Negroes" to use in painting a false picture of members of the Negro race.

The paper was concerned about health conditions in the Negro schools. The editorial of January 22, 1911, pleaded with the Board of Education to extend medical inspection to the Negro schools and the reason for this request was also cited:

...With the dictates of long racial inheritance, the white child is surrounded by hygienic safeguards. Racial inheritance and natural inertia fight against the same protection for the Negro child. ... Disease knows no color line. The infected Negro scholar can infect the closely guarded white child. ... The domestic cooks, maids, butlers, laborers in Atlanta homes living in the squalor and filth of negro settlements may, and do carry contagion to the white people. ...

It is therefore necessary to establish sound conditions in the negro homes. One of the first steps in that direction is by medical inspection of negro students.

But—not by white nurses! ... These splendid women, devoted to their benign calling have evinced a willingness to go into the negro schools on their errand of science and upbuilding. Naturally...
The newspaper's plea for Negro nurses to inspect Negro children in order to protect whites and to keep white nurses from inspecting Negro students did not fall on deaf ears. The City Council promptly appointed the money for Negro nurses and physicians to doctor Negro children in public schools.

Though the Constitution did not print the opinions of Negroes who differed, this does not mean that differing opinions did not exist. Benjamin Davis, editor of the Atlanta Independent, a Negro-owned newspaper, and W. E. B. Dubois were constant critics.

Davis was a firm advocate of the Booker T. Washington philosophy. He told the Negro people to "let down their buckets" where they were and earn the respect of Southern whites through acquiring property and an education by frugality and hard work. He was a stern opponent of the more radical school of Negro thought, typified by W. E. B. Dubois of Atlanta University. Dr. Dubois pled for a higher education for members of the Negro race and did not believe that their efforts should be confined to vocational training only. He was not as conciliatory toward such anti-Negro devices as Jim Crow. His more radical tendencies embarrassed the school officials in Atlanta and led to his leaving the city for the North, where he later became affiliated with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

At times, Davis was forthright and bold in his attacks. In an editorial of January 4, 1913, he was irked by innocuous editorials in the Atlanta Constitution aimed at instructing Negroes how to live and lashed out: "Any student of the Southern press who has followed the

Atlanta City Council Proceedings, March 6, 1911, p. 274; June 5, 1911, p. 141.
Constitution's Negro policy knows that there is not a particle of sincerity in the attitude of the Constitution."

The evidence presented in this chapter shows that the Constitution in gathering and reporting news of the Negro community from selected individuals contributed to the kind of categorical thinking that Negroes were satisfied and getting the proper education. But this notion was, and still is, a myth, and lack of reporting on the intellectual attainments of Negroes did immeasurable harm. Negroes needed, but never obtained, something of which they could be proud.
CHAPTER V

THE REFLECTION OF NEGROES IN WORLD WAR I

Sarajevo was a long way from the main streets of most Georgia towns in June, 1914. Few Georgians had ever heard of the little Bosnian village until they read belatedly in the bulk of the state's newspapers that Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austro-Hungary, had been assassinated there. On the day of the assassination, the Atlanta Constitution considered the murder important enough to justify front-page coverage, but had no idea that the incident would lead to the most devastating war in history, taking untold numbers of black and white lives.

Part of the state's unconcerned attitude may be explained by its predominantly rural atmosphere in 1914. Georgia still had one foot in the horse-and-buggy age and was overwhelmingly isolationist in international affairs. Local, county and state officials were more concerned at the moment with difficulties at home than abroad. The Atlanta Constitution expressed the concern of the capital city over the Leo Frank murder case and the lack of statewide enthusiasm for upcoming elections. Meanwhile the Atlanta Independent, the Negro-owned newspaper edited by Benjamin Davis, was comparing Georgia to Germany:

It is the consensus of opinion of the enlightened world that the cause of the great war, in which seven nations are engaged, is religious and racial prejudice dating far back into the past. . . . This is the fiercest race conflict
of the world. . . .

In demagogue ridden Georgia, the same restrictions which caused the war are being practiced. God only knows what will be the outcome.

During the course of World War I, Davis became more belligerent than he was when he wrote an editorial on February 13, 1907, stating his response to white rule:

Well, the white man constitutes about 60 per cent of the people of the South, 75 per cent of the morals and intellect and 95 per cent of the wealth and from his standpoint it seems hardly fair and just that 40 per cent of the people, 25 per cent of the respectability, and 5 per cent of the wealth should direct the affairs of government or participate substantially against the will of the wealth, respectability and character of the community involved.

The onslaught of World War I ended for Davis and many other Negroes the era of moderation. To speak of fighting for democracy in the world meant for these "new thinking" Negroes that they should enjoy some of that democracy at home. Although Davis and Dubois differed in their means for attaining equality, they both spoke boldly of their program and the desires of the Negro people.

Davis's editorial of October 27, 1917, as to his new disposition, may be detected in the following:

Here's our best hand and all our heart to our gallant boys just returning from Fort Des Moines with commissions ranging from captaincies to second lieutenants places. They look the part. These boys will never again be scullions, nor content with scullion's treatment, and we're here to back the boys up with all that's in us.

The editor of the Independent was beginning to enjoy his part of the increasing influence and prestige of the Negro press. July 13, 1918, he was called to Washington to take part in a conference the President was to hold with Negro editors. That same day an editorial

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appeared in the Independent eulogizing the Japanese for the progress they had made and pointing out their "team work" as an example to American Negroes.\footnote{Atlanta Constitution, July 18, 1917, p. 8.}

There is no evidence to indicate that the Constitution took issues with anything that was published in the Atlanta Independent. It must have regarded the latter as being an insignificant organ of expression on all local, state and national affairs.

The Constitution was derelict in pointing out the fact of enlistment and participation of Negroes in the war but was crystal clear in its stand for separate army camps. The paper argued that "white and black camps should be separate, and Negroes should be disciplined so as not to cause trouble when they went into town." The concern for those Negro soldiers coming to town was so great that this newspaper initiated a drive to raise money for the establishment of the Butler Street Y.M.C.A.\footnote{Ibid., July 13, 1918, p. 1.}

The Atlanta Independent editorial of August 25, 1917, condemned Governor Manning of South Carolina because he prevented the training of Negro troops in South Carolina. This indicates that Negroes probably ignored the insinuations that they were disturbers of the peace.

Davis loyally supported the war and gave editorial and news space to its successful conclusion. However, he seemed irritated by editorials in white newspapers which acted surprised at the "new" patriotism of Negroes and their willingness to take part in the war. Davis
responded to these editorials with this statement:

In the French and Indian War the Negro was there willingly doing his part; in the war of Independence they proved valuable aids to George Washington, the father of his country; in the War of 1812 General Andrew Jackson attests to the loyalty and bravery of the Negro soldiers in the Battle of New Orleans against the British. During the Civil War, Negroes were true and loyal both on the Union and Confederate sides. He has never been known to be a quitter; he has always been known to be a fighter, and yet these strange and surprising remarks are made as though it is something new under the sun that he displays such rare qualities of patriotism and gallantry in the present world conflict.

The Constitution's image of Negroes in World War I was reflected in what it did not print. One may conclude from the lack of data found in the Constitution in regard to Negro soldiers that they played a meaningless role in the war. Another conclusion might be that the paper wanted its readers to feel that Negroes contributed nothing worthwhile to the war effort. However, such notions are illusions. Negroes contributed their loyalty, spirit and manpower toward a democratic victory. A consolation of a kind lies in the fact that Benjamin Davis, editor of the Atlanta Independent, did attempt to present for Negroes in general and Negroes participating in World War I in particular a viable image. The efforts of the Atlanta Independent does not excuse the unforgivable neglect of the Negroes by the Constitution.

Atlanta Independent, March 16, 1918, p. 1.
CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, this writer must conclude that the most significant contribution made by the Constitution in regard to Negroes was convincing them that they were less men than whites. The paper was a constant reminder to its readers of the low status of Negroes in society and the limitations of their potential.

Negroes were never interviewed about what they wanted from government or how they meant to go about getting it. The paper was satisfied to interpret the political role of Negroes through the speeches of white politicians. It freely quoted statements of anti-Negro candidates and advocates of white supremacy. The tragedy of this type of reporting was that it misguided the readers and portrayed Negroes as having no influence at all in government.

The paper portrayed a pejorative social image of Negroes in almost every instance. During the period under investigation, there were no photographs or accurate pictures of Negroes or Negro news except in the comic strips. It handled the crime news of Negroes in one of three ways: (1) it emphasized individual cases instead of statistical proportions, thus giving Negro crime cases more emphasis than white criminal offenses; (2) it implied that the life of Negroes was cheap; and (3) because of the consistent neglect by the press of other and more favorable aspects of news of Negroes, it tended to fix Negroes in the minds of white men as incorrigible troublemakers.
Negroes were regarded in economics as practical workers to use their hands and brawn. Their major existence was to be tools of labor.

Finally, the Constitution did nothing to reflect a positive sentiment toward Negroes neither did it attempt to conserve the best interest of the race or promote its higher attainment. Whenever the paper said anything complimentary of a Negro it was of an individual and not of the race, and it invariably was of that class of individual who cared far more for self-aggrandizement than it did for the development of manhood.
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