

In the Shadow of the White Man's Burden: Black Americans and the Philippines, 1898-1903

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Introduction

In April of 1899, Edward Abbott, a prominent Episcopalian minister from Cambridge, Massachusetts, embarked on a voyage to the Far East aboard the USS Chingtu. Visiting China, Japan, and the newly annexed Philippines, Abbot kept an extensive travel journal of his journey that included numerous pen-and-ink sketches of coastline, architecture and inhabitants as well as maps, hotel brochures, postcards, newspaper clippings, and photographs.¹ In a hotel for foreigners in Nagasaki, he and other imperial elite from countries like France, Great Britain and Germany listened to a musical performance that included an American contribution: “All Coons Look Alike to Me” by Ernest Hogan. Subtitled a “darkie misunderstanding,” the song tells the story of a woman of color who leaves her beau for another, more spendthrift man. The pain of the doomed affair is deadened by the fact that to her, “all coons look alike.” More than 600 such “coon songs” were published in the 1890s in response to massive popular demand.² During his voyage, Abbott confronted a world that he and others made sense of through the lens of “race.” The movement of American imperialism into the Pacific was from its very start deeply intertwined with debates about the meaning of race in America.

Minstrelry, though diverse in its forms and articulations, trafficked in racist stereotypes of African Americans and achieved its most pernicious form near the end of the nineteenth century. Minstrel music rears its head throughout the historical archive of American empire in the Pacific. Theophilus G. Steward, the black chaplain of the

¹ Edward Abbott’s Travel Journal, p. 40; 1899; Edward Abbott Papers; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

² James M. Dormon, “Shaping the Popular Image of Post-Reconstruction American Blacks: The ‘Coon Song’ Phenomenon of the Gilded Age,” *American Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (1988): 453.

twenty-fifth infantry regiment and an administrator of the “Americanization” of the provincial school system in the Philippines, confronted the musical form several times during his tour of duty in the islands. While visiting one school, a boy’s choir sang him “‘Hello ma honey, hello ma baby, hello ma ragtime gal,’ [and] struck the most lively minstrel dance.” “Apparently,” wrote Steward, “This was their idea of American song and music.” Later, in Manila, he observed, “a well educated Spanish lady singing, “A hot time in the old town,” etc., supposing it to be our national air.”³ Indeed, “A Hot Time in the Old Town” – a minstrel song which took its name from the 1886 burning of a black man’s cabin in Old Town, Louisiana - was later recognized as the “theme song of the Spanish-American War.”⁴ It was this war that delivered the Philippines to the United States as a colonial possession, touching off a conflict between the American army and the anti-colonial nationalist forces of the Malolos Republic.

The intense dehumanization of black people emblemized in the motifs of minstrel music was met during these years with growing challenges from black intellectuals. When W.E.B. Du Bois published *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903, it was groundbreaking not just for its criticism of the conservative political hegemony of Booker T. Washington, but centrally for its affirmation of black humanity.⁵ As Herbert Aptheker, Du Bois’ literary executor, noted, the very title of the book was a militant step, coming as it did, “at a time when the idea of the subhumanity (not merely inferiority) of the Afro-

³ Diary entry on December 5th, 1900, T.G. Steward, *Fifty Years in the Gospel Ministry from 1864 to 1914*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001. 323-324.

⁴ “Music: Old Ragtimer,” *New York Times*, August 5th, 1935. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁵ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, New York City: Penguin Books, 1996. Originally published in 1903 by A.C. McClurg & Co., Chicago.

American was common.”⁶ This was the “nadir” of American race relations, and across the South white elites busied themselves institutionalizing disfranchisement as lynching rates skyrocketed.⁷ Since the end of Reconstruction, a great sectional rapprochement had occurred, focused around the issue of the “Negro problem.” A broad consensus developed that Reconstruction had failed largely due to the inability of the freed black population to effectively participate in government. It was an idea that ceded ground to the Southern segregationists and their formulation of the supposedly bestial and primitive nature of black Americans. The problem of dehumanization however, as the Pacific reach of minstrel music indicates and as Du Bois quickly realized, was not limited to a national context. In 1906, Du Bois published an article entitled, “The Color Line Belts the World,” in which he noted the intimate connection between national “the color line” and the world system of colonialism.⁸ Indeed, the warp and weft of the American color line at this time encompassed events in the colonial periphery, and especially in the Philippines.

Black soldiers played a significant role in the colonial conflict, and their participation became an important locus of debate over what Du Bois called, “the strange meaning of being black here in the dawning of the Twentieth Century.”⁹ Having gone to the Philippines in order to prove their manhood and deservingness of citizenship, black soldiers ultimately became subjected to horrifying racist conditions. On June 19th, 1902, just prior to the departure of the black regiments from the islands, a group of minstrel

⁶ Herbert Aptheker, *Annotated Bibliography of the Published Writings of W. E. B. Du Bois*, Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson, 1973, 52.

⁷ The *Richmond Planet* ran a series of articles every week reporting lynchings in the South, which show rising levels of violence. Sc. Micro RS-939 r. 2: July 2, 1898-Sept. 29 1900. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (hereafter abbreviated as SCRBC).

⁸ “The Color Line Belts the World,” *Collier's*, October 20, 1906, Vol. XXVIII, p. 20.

⁹ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1.

musicians from the black twenty-fourth regiment then stationed in Manila were detained without charge by metropolitan police. Arrested upon leaving the theatre where they had just delivered a minstrel performance, they were beaten, thrown into jail and told, “we now have the upper hand on you damn niggers and we intend to keep it[!]”¹⁰ The colonial situation - characterized by extensive extra-judicial use of violence in the name of upholding the “white man’s burden” to civilize and uplift - was an ideal opportunity to intensify the distinctions created by the “color line.” Ultimately, the colonial context was central to the way nominally “national” race problems were elaborated and understood.

In the early years of the conflict, between 1898 and 1903, Empire in the Philippines was thought to be a chance to solve the so-called “Negro problem” by getting rid of the “surplus Negro population” through mass colonization. Together, a diverse coalition of black conservatives and white racists fashioned the notion of a “Black Imperial,” a black soldier or colonial administrator who would be an integral part of the effort to construct an American Empire in the Pacific. For more conservative factions of the black elite such as members of the Tuskegee machine and the Washington D.C. oriented black republicans, Empire was a chance to prove their status as cultured citizens. Hypothetically, in helping to pacify, settle, and civilize the islands, black American soldiers could at once prove their citizenship and build a new home for their people far away from racism. Eventually an “Afro-Filipino” republic would form, a freedom-loving outpost of Americanism in the Pacific. Those with political connections to the federal Republican patronage system were especially attracted by the possibility of positions in the Philippine commission and colonial administration. Booker T. Washington’s

¹⁰ Colonel McKibbon to the Regimental Headquarters at Manila, June 21, 1902. Press Copies of Letters Sent, National Archives Record Group 391 (hereafter abbreviated as NA RG 391).

conservative Tuskegee machine saw appointments in the islands as a chance to prove black manhood and capability before a national audience. In their more wildly optimistic moments, men like Washington and the bourgeois black republicans hoped that the new Pacific possessions would become a new promised land outside the reach of American racism where black Americans could live in dignity.

Unsurprisingly, the civilizing project immediately became a fertile ground for racist articulations of black masculinity. Belief in racial difference was the foundation for many of the arguments about why black colonization of the islands was necessary or desirable – it reified racial difference in assuming that coexistence on the North American continent was impossible. After sending the black regiments to the islands to civilize the natives and create an outpost of Americanism in the Pacific, fears abounded that the soldiers themselves might “go native.” Sexuality formed a central axis around which colonial authorities articulated an anxiety about a specifically black tendency to “go native.” Authorities came to view sexual arrangements between black soldiers and Filipinos as deviant according to Victorian standards of moral domesticity and as a likely component of anti-imperialist politics or sympathies on the part of the soldiers. Racism did not merely follow the flag to the Philippines in a static or simplistic fashion. Instead, racist ideas evolved through an articulation of the colony as an “anachronistic space” where the atavistic racial attributes of black men would “naturally” come to the fore and where they could be subjected to observation and regulation. As part of a “civilizing mission” which made extensive use of the concept of a world-historical “Anglo-Saxon” destiny to govern and uplift, the colony became a laboratory for ideas about race.¹¹

¹¹ Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006. Kramer’s work is likely the most important recent

Despite Du Bois' evident awareness of the global dimensions of the problem of racism, more recent scholars of African American history have generally overlooked its international character, preferring to view it within a national or an Atlantic context. In line with "New Americanist" historians like Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease, I hope that this study can help to disrupt the simplistic spatial antinomies of inside/outside, domestic/foreign and metropole/colony that have hampered understandings of American racism which seem to understand it only within the narrow horizon of the nation.¹² Specifically, I would like to suggest the importance of considering the "Black Pacific," not just the "Black Atlantic," to understanding race in America during the early twentieth century.

It is difficult to talk about racist ideology without understanding the way that racialized bodies are also sexualized in particular ways. I will argue with Anne McClintock that a sexualized colonial periphery formed in conjunction with the development of bourgeois domestic space and sexual morality.¹³ While colonial subjects were sexualized and feminized, deviant sexual and domestic arrangements could likewise be racialized. I will argue that the Philippines constituted a "porno-tropics": a sexually deviant space within which racist interpretations of black male sexuality could be developed in order to construct properly "American" sexual morality as well as ideas

historiographical intervention in the study of American colonization in the Philippines in the sense that it attempts to "de-insularize" this history by emphasizing the importance of colonial knowledge production but also arguing that the events and developments in the metropole and colony were deeply intertwined and mutually dependent.

¹² Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1996. Also see Donald Pease, "New Americanists: Revisionist Interventions into the Canon," *boundary 2* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1990); and "New Americanists 2: National Identities, Postmodern Artifacts and Postnational Narratives," *boundary 2* 19, no. 1 (1992) and Eva Cherniavsky, "Subaltern Studies in a U.S. Frame," *boundary 2* 23, no. 2 (1996): 85-110.

¹³ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, New York: Routledge, 1995; Ann Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

about race. Segregation, with its peculiar racist and sexual logic, was not just a regional or national project; it was an international one. We cannot read the development of American racism without taking into account the contemporary phenomena of the expansion of American and global capital into the Pacific and the intellectual exchanges between imperial powers, especially between Great Britain and the United States.

A global and Pacific perspective is essential in order to fully understand not only American racism, but also the black radicalisms that took shape early in the twentieth century. It was during the “Philippines insurrection” that alternatives to the conservative Tuskegee machine and the black Republican patronage system began to take shape. In Boston, the vociferous radical William Monroe Trotter publicly denounced Washington’s accommodationist stance. As was already noted, it was also during these years that W.E.B. Du Bois first publicly outlined his differences from the Wizard of Tuskegee in *The Souls of Black Folk*. The abject failure of the Tuskegee-backed plan for black colonization of the Philippines plan played a significant role in discrediting more conservative elements within black politics and in galvanizing the pro-agitation forces that formed the Niagara movement in 1905 and subsequently the NAACP in 1909. Du Bois would later go on to pen globalist criticisms of Euro-American Empire and its racist epistemological underpinnings.¹⁴

The Black Imperial idea represented a particular articulation of the ideology of American racism that occurred in the context of burgeoning American involvement on the global stage. This story follows the arc of that idea’s rise and fall. It follows how

¹⁴ Writings like “The Souls of White Folk” from 1920 or his essay “The Negro Mind Reaches Out,” published in Alain Locke’s *New Negro Anthology* in 1925, for example, show a strong global consciousness of the problem of racism that also prefigures the work of black intellectuals like Aime Cesaire and Franz Fanon.

different men and women were hailed by the idea and the roles they played in its unraveling. Finally, it traces how the unraveling of the idea influenced the subsequent political commitments of those who lived through it. The years between 1898 and 1905 encompass a period of crisis in American politics - dissatisfaction with and resistance to worsening racist conditions led some to fantasize an Afro-Filipino Republic that would solve the problem. However, when the plan itself became an opportunity to develop and buttress racist ideology, it discredited black conservatives and helped give rise to a new era in black politics of resistance.

This thesis first examines the ideological commitments that went into forging the Black Imperial. It explains the forces that gave rise to the plan to use black soldiers in the war and to subsequently settle the islands with the black American population. The second section then turns to the situation in the Philippines to examine in detail why the plan failed. The second section will also argue that despite the nominal failure of the “Black Imperial” idea to achieve its stated goals, it “succeeded” in providing an opportunity to enact race and to regulate Victorian domesticity. Finally, this paper will suggest that the failure of the Black Imperial plan was part of a movement within black politics away from racial uplift and toward a more antagonistic anti-racist and anti-imperialist politics. Scholars have often understood this political transformation as the move from Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee machine toward W.E.B. Du Bois and the NAACP, though this formula has many problems.¹⁵ Nonetheless, by examining

¹⁵ For one, Du Bois as a “representative man” of the radicalizing trend in black politics obscures the radicalization of many other figures whose politics often diverged from Du Bois in important ways. Second, Du Bois was himself heavily indebted to the concept of race uplift and bourgeois moral codes, making him similar to Booker T. Washington in very significant ways. This thesis attempts to remedy the problems of this aspect of the historiography of black politics by looking at a wide variety of actors besides Du Bois and how they experienced events in the Philippines; I look not only at Du Bois but also at newspaper editors like T. Thomas Fortune and Pauline Elizabeth Hopkin’s role in the sea changes going on

print media, political and theoretical writings from black intellectuals, and literature from the time, I hope to show a connection between the involvement of black Americans in the Philippines and a certain drift toward radicalism in black politics that took place early in the twentieth century. Scholarly work has traditionally understood this drift within a national or Atlantic context, ignoring the fact that it occurred against the backdrop of a colonial war in the Pacific in which the notion of “race” played a central role. The course of black politics during these years was intimately related to Pacific developments and their racial politics.

in anti-racist politics, etc.. In examining how these very different actors were radicalized during the years of the Philippine insurrection, I hope to uncover convincing evidence of a historical trend that transcends easy distinctions between Washington and Du Bois.

Section 1: Forging Black Imperials

The notion of a “Black Imperial” did not emerge fully formed following the American victory over Spain late in 1898; rather it developed gradually during the course of a decade that by all accounts seemed to look westward toward the Pacific. As John Eperjesi has helpfully suggested, this look toward the Pacific was due to capital’s need for a regional imaginary, “in order to overcome spatial barriers to expansion.”¹⁶ The late nineteenth century, with its exaggerated boom bust cycle and potent labor activism, constituted a crisis period for American capital. For an abstract national community, the Pacific became an outlet into which excess economic energy might be directed, easing overproduction and unemployment. The creation of this “regional imaginary” helped to discursively transform a dispersed area into an abstract unity ready to be opened to commerce. To Eperjesi’s point about the co-constitution of capitalist expansion and regional imaginaries I would add that these regional imaginaries in their anthropological dimension also co-constituted nominally “national” ideas about race - in this case vis-à-vis what it meant to be a “Negro.” The scientific racism that made sense of “natives” also provided a framework for understanding what it meant for black men to live in the Philippines, and ultimately for the meaning of “race” in America. In double movement, the anthropological construction of the colonial periphery provided a zone into which capital could expand under the rubric of “uplifting the natives” while simultaneously producing racist ideas that helped to depress the cost of labor in the “metropole.” The American Pacific as a region populated by “savage peoples” outside of civilized morality

¹⁶ John Eperjesi, “The American Asiatic Association and the Imperialist Imaginary of the American Pacific,” *boundary 2* 29 no. 1 (2001): 197.

became a stage on which the racial atavism of black men could be diagnosed by imperial commentators and advocates of Jim Crow.

The 1890s were a period of intense international competition over access to trade in the Eastern Pacific. In 1897 Germany seized Jiaozhou and Gunqdao in the Shandong Province of China, prompting Russia, France, Japan, and Britain to escalate efforts to acquire “spheres of influence” in the Celestial Empire. Alarmed New York merchants responded on January 6, 1898, by forming the Committee on American Interests in China, later renamed the American Asiatic Association.¹⁷ The Association maintained regular contact with the Department of State during the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations, and dedicated itself, “to foster and safeguard the trade and commercial interests of the citizens of the United States, and others associated therewith, in the Empires of China, Japan, and Korea, and in the Philippine Islands, and elsewhere in Asia or Oceania.”¹⁸ The Association aimed to educate, “the American public into a clearer perception of the intimate way in which the future of this Republic is bound up with its prestige on the Pacific Ocean.”¹⁹ The regular coverage of the Association in the *New York Times*, the *New York Tribune*, and *American Trade*, demonstrate the success of its pedagogical mission. The group also produced a monthly journal that reported on trade statistics interspersed with articles on the region from a variety of other prominent periodicals. Taken together, these journals and periodicals constituted a complex discursive terrain covering a wide range of topics such as climate, population, trade, politics, colonial administration and anthropology.

¹⁷ Eperjesi, “The American Asiatic Association and the Imperialist Imaginary of the American Pacific,” 197-198.

¹⁸ *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 6, no. 1 (1899): 45.

¹⁹ John Foord, “Current Comment,” *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 2, no.2 (December 1903): 322.

The principle difference between the Philippines and Cuba was the *degree* to which its inhabitants were depicted as profoundly savage and other. The relatively young science of Anthropology was brought to bear on the islands as never before and its “insights” into the culture and behavior of the locals managed to penetrate deeply into discussions about policy. For example, a lengthy article in *The American Anthropologist* was dedicated to “The Peoples of the Philippines” in October of 1898.²⁰ Its author, Daniel G. Brinton, detailed the ethnic makeup of the islands, telling his readership that of the estimated six and a half million souls in the islands, “the pure whites... are not above 9,000 and those of white mixed blood about 12,000... the large remainder [being] made up of the two stocks which were found in possession of the islands at their discovery, to wit, the small black Negritos... and the brown Malayan peoples, who are in the vast majority.”²¹ Despite the numerical insignificance of the Negrito people, Brinton focused a great deal of his article on “these wretches,” their physiology and cultural practices.²² According to Brinton, “the Malayan Peoples,” “popularly termed ‘Filipinos,’” “vary widely in appearance, culture, and language,” being a mix of “Malayan... Chinese... and Negrito blood.”²³ Brinton further depicted the inhabitants of the islands as headhunters and heathens who still preserved the customs of tattooing their bodies and filing their teeth into points.²⁴

²⁰ Daniel G. Brinton, “The Peoples of the Philippines,” *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 11, No. 10 (Oct., 1898), 293-307. It is also significant that the very next article in this edition of the journal was a “Study of the Normal Tibia,” that compared bone measurements between Afro-Americans and American Indians. Anthropological knowledge production such as that represented in the journal was thus a site where racial/physiological comparisons meshed with social judgments about morality and sexuality.

²¹ Brinton, “The Peoples of the Philippines,” 295.

²² *Ibid.*, 298-301.

²³ *Ibid.*, 302.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 303.

Most importantly, Briton depicted the inhabitants of the islands as morally and sexually degenerate. “Gross laxity in sexual relations has been repeatedly mentioned, and it is said that the lowest vices of the Chinese in this direction have become widely prevalent in Luzon.”²⁵ Briton also cautioned that “the moral character of the Tagalas and of the Malaysians generally has not been well spoken of by most writers who have personally known them... they are... devoid of originality... without energy; proud, bigoted, vain... unwilling to labor for real knowledge [and] forgetful of benefits.”²⁶ His depiction of the islands fits very well with Anne McClintock’s “porno-tropics”; an “anachronistic space” untouched by civilization and characterized by sexual deviancy, moral turpitude, and physical torpescence; a backdrop against which to define the bourgeois moral codes of the metropole. This conception of the Philippines would later contribute to anxieties about the sexual and racial proclivities of black soldiers who served there.

Anthropological knowledge and rhetoric dovetailed neatly into policy discussions in other popular and scholarly periodicals. In 1898, an article by Colonel W. Winthrop entitled “The Problem of the Philippines: Racial, Commercial, Religious, Political, and Social Conditions,” set out to answer whether it would be prudent to hold the Philippines should Manila fall to American forces, and explored various geographic, governmental, economic and anthropological characteristics of the islands.²⁷ Of the population, he wrote that, “the Indian of Manila is an indolent creature given up to gambling and cock-fighting.” Of the interior natives he wrote that they “are mostly still uncivilized

²⁵ Ibid., 304.

²⁶ Ibid., 304.

²⁷ Colonel W. Winthrop, “The Problem of the Philippines: Racial, Commercial, Religious, Political, and Social Conditions,” *Outlook* 6, June 11, 1898.

brigands.” However, he concluded that the islands were fertile with many valuable agricultural products and that, “by improved cultivation and means of transport, and the exercise of justice and humanity toward the wage-earning laborer, these products might be indefinitely increased, and [the Philippines] made centers of extended and profitable commerce.”²⁸ The main problem was the Spanish form of government, which had been so lax and corrupt that any occupation would have to “abolish it altogether and at once... extirpate it root and branch, and substitute a simple, efficient system in harmony with Anglo-Saxon sentiments and traditions.”²⁹ In this view, Anglo-Saxon governance could both uplift the natives from their depraved condition and make the islands productive and profitable. Winthrop concluded in favor of retaining the islands, noting that, “we have seen no better paper than the article published in the London *Spectator* of May 7 last, entitled “The Fate of the Philippines.” The writer declares: “We hope the Americans will keep the Philippines, and that they can keep them we have no doubt whatever.” He further speculated that the British desired Americans to gain a further stake in the trade of the region in anticipation that their interests would overlap in future crises. Work like Brinton’s and Winthrop’s set the stage for the Philippines as space that lent itself to the Anglo-Saxon imaginary of racial difference.³⁰

It was this nexus of ideas about trade and non-Anglo backwardness that came to define American policy in the Philippines after the Spanish-American war. After the victory over Spanish forces in the islands in the summer of 1898, the Philippines came to

²⁸ Winthrop, “The Problem of the Philippines.”

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ It is important to note at this time, however, that racism in the islands certainly did not originate with American colonization. The Spanish colonial era had already developed a complex array of ideas about what constituted civilization and savagery and about how these two categories were dispersed across the various ethnic groups on the islands. Please see the first chapter of Paul Kramer’s *Blood of Government* for a history of “race” in the Spanish colonial era.

be commonly referred to as “our possessions,” a relationship that was defined and redefined in the context of a complex array of ideas about “race.”³¹ American imperialists styled themselves as “Anglo-Saxon” inheritors of what Senator Albert Beveridge in a speech before Congress on September 19, 1898, called “the blood of government.” According to the progressive Indiana Republican, it was America’s duty to help universalize Anglo-Saxon governance, and thereby “broaden [the] blessed reign” of freedom “until the empire of our principles is established over the hearts of all mankind.”³² Beveridge’s argument was that the knack for liberal governance displayed especially by the British and their American descendents was a fundamentally racial trait. This rhetoric that borrowed heavily from anthropological discourse like Brinton’s, which internalized and biologized the skill of crafting liberal institutions over and against the moral and physical degeneracy of so-called “natives.”

Anglo-Saxon noblesse oblige was also a product of intellectual exchanges between Great Britain and the United States. The relationship between these two powers broadened and deepened during the late nineteenth century as both nations became increasingly urbanized and industrialized and aligned their interests in regions like the Pacific.³³ The American navalist Alfred Thayer Mahan clearly was aware of the importance of imperial intellectual exchange when he wrote in 1900, one year into the war in the Philippines, that “it would be an interesting... to trace the genesis and evolution in the American people of the impulse towards expansion,” a study which “would be very imperfect if it failed clearly to recognize... that it is but one phase of a

³¹ By far the most thorough and helpful volume regarding this relationship in existence is Paul Kramer’s *The Blood of Government*.

³² Albert Beveridge, “The March of the Flag,” in *Meaning of the Times*.

³³ Paul A. Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910,” *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 4 (March, 2002): 1315-1353.

sentiment that has swept over the whole civilized European world within the last few decades.”³⁴ Indeed, it was a Brit who wrote the most memorable piece of propaganda in the lead up to the war; Rudyard Kipling’s “White Man’s Burden” first appeared in McClure’s Magazine in 1899 with the subtitle *The United States and the Philippine Islands*.³⁵ The poet called on Americans to “serve,” “Your new-caught, sullen peoples / Half-devil and half-child.” Kipling’s entreaty did not fall on deaf ears; the United States annexed the Philippines in February of 1899, igniting a vicious war between Filipino nationalist forces and the United States lasted until at least 1903 and beyond.

The “devil-child” image had clear resonance in the United States. Years later, W.E.B. Du Bois would explicitly connect this global historical moment with American racism. In “The Souls of White Folk,” he identified “whiteness” as a global phenomenon in which colonial expansion and aggrandizement led “the cultured world” to acclaim with one voice, “Darker peoples are dark in mind as well as in body; of dark, uncertain, and imperfect descent... “half-devil and half-child.””³⁶ It was within the context of this European and American desire for the “phantasy” of whiteness that America, “established a caste system, rushed into preparation for war, and conquered tropical colonies.”³⁷ Du Bois’ realization should be historically contextualized within the emergent Pacific Empire and the ways that black Americans confronted the imperial project.

³⁴ A.T. Mahan, *The Problem of Asia and Its Effects upon International Policy*, Cambridge, Mass., 1900, 4. Quoted in Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons,” 1316.

³⁵ Ideas about Empire travelled in many of the same channels as other “Atlantic Crossings,” as historian Daniel T. Rodgers has dubbed the numerous progressive intellectual exchanges then occurring between Europe and the U.S. Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age*, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998.

³⁶ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*, Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 1999, 24. Originally published in 1920 by Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 19, 28-29.

Between 1898 and 1901, a constellation of interests aligned behind the idea that black Americans had a supporting role to play in conquering these tropical colonies, as soldiers, administrators and eventually as colonists. As events unfolded in the aftermath of the Spanish defeat at Manila, these interests entered into a loose coalition founded upon the notion that African-Americans might pacify and govern the Philippines in trust for “white” America. The coalition’s cast of characters was nothing if not diverse; it included Bourbon Democratic politicians, military brass, and Northern imperial Republicans, as well as Black professors, soldiers, journalists, writers and religious leaders. These groups differed substantially not only in their reasons for supporting the idea, but also in their visions of the plan’s implications and consequences. Many whites hoped that Black involvement in colonization would result in the eventual transfer of “the nucleus of the negro race” to the islands “in a veritable hegira,”³⁸ while African-American supporters typically preferred to view Empire as a chance for the “representative men” of the race to test their mettle in battle and governance. Like previous plans for resettlement in places like Haiti or Liberia, large-scale colonization gained some traction within the African-American community but ultimately lost steam, though for different reasons than in the earlier cases.

Black Americans already had a long and proud tradition of service in the U.S. Army, one that was tied to the progressive struggle to uplift the race by proving their citizenship and “manhood.” In 1898 there were four regular colored regiments with

³⁸ The quote is drawn from the report of General George W. Davis, compiled late in 1902 at the urging of Senator Robert Morgan and members of the military establishment, on the feasibility of encouraging settlement of the islands by the Black population of the United States. Black soldiers would be encouraged to remain on the islands after their terms of enlistment ended, as a kind of vanguard for the relocation of the rest of the “surplus population from the southern states.” Sections of the report, which concluded that the plan was not workable, were reprinted in many newspapers. See “Not for Blacks, The Philippines; General Davis on Scheme to Send Them to the Islands,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 5, 1903. Proquest Historical Newspapers Online.

white officers, and two black volunteer regiments were in the process of being mustered in. The activity surrounding the invasion of Cuba in the summer of 1898 and the mustering of the black volunteer regiments resulted in a cacophony of calls from black newspapers to end discrimination in the army and the segregation of the officer's corps.³⁹ Even before Manila fell to U.S. troops on August 8th, 1898, General Thomas J. Morgan issued a plea the periodical *The Independent* for the use of black troops in the Philippines. "Negro papers in the country are very generally insisting that if negro soldiers are to be enlisted, negro officers should be appointed to command them," he reminded his readers of the gallant service rendered by the black regulars in the Civil War and later conflicts with the Plains Indians.⁴⁰ Echoing the call of the black periodicals, he reasoned that they asked merely for "a chance to show the stuff they are made of," and that therefore, "if the negroes are competent they should be commissioned."⁴¹ The eight million black Americans were "citizens of the Republic," and it was important "that they should... feel that their citizenship is not a mere name but is a solid reality; that citizenship means manhood; in no other way, perhaps, can the race be made to feel a sense of their real dignity as men and citizens more quickly than by effacing the color-line in military appointments."⁴² The stakes for the performance of black soldiers were thus very high indeed.

Military service was a fulcrum along which a national audience would judge the manhood and worth of black men. For the black Career-Republicans and professional

³⁹ Willard B. Gatewood, *Black Americans and the White Man's Burden, 1898-1903*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975.

⁴⁰ "Epaulets or Chevrons?" Thomas J. Morgan, *The Independent; Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic*, June 30, 1898. ProQuest American Periodicals Series Online.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

military men who orchestrated the involvement of African-American soldiers in the fighting, the black soldier was an exemplar of race pride. The flurry of books published in 1899 that extolled the virtues of black soldiery during the Spanish-American war stand testament to the central importance of the “black troopers” to a certain brand of “race politics.” “History abounds,” began one such book, “in the striking narratives of chivalry and heroism... Sparta had her Thermopylae, Haiti her L’Ouverture... Scotland had her Bannockburn, and immortal Bruce. The Afro-Americans have legions, who have forever immortalized themselves by their soldierly conduct in defense of human liberty.”⁴³ In light of black service in the face of danger and in consideration of the fact that, “The status of Nations and Races is measured by their industry, scholarship and bravery,” it seemed reasonable to the author that, “just beyond the horizon of the blackening clouds... the world... will accord to the Negro all the considerations vouchsafed to the most favored branch of the human family.”⁴⁴ T.G. Steward himself embarked to the Philippines months after his regiment had already landed there because he was busily working on his own literary tribute to the virtues of black soldiery.⁴⁵ Black soldiers were “reconstructed” Negroes, who, because of their fierce dedication to liberty, manliness, and discipline, as well as their adherence to Victorian gentility, would be accorded greater respect than their enslaved ancestors. Indeed, positions in the black regiments were highly sought after. Army regulations required that members of the regiments be

⁴³ Miles V. Lynk, M.D., *The Black Troopers, Or, The Daring Heroism of The Negro Soldiers in the Spanish-American War*, New York: AMS Press, 1971, v. Originally published from the Jackson edition of 1899.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, vi.

⁴⁵ See T.G. Steward, *The Colored Regulars in the United States Army*, Humanity Books, 2003. Originally published in 1904 with the author’s preface dated September 1899.

literate and pass stringent physical and moral examinations.⁴⁶ Service in the regiments guaranteed a good wage and eventually a pension. Above all, membership augured a dignified masculinity and social independence that could be translated (if not without complications) into the racial lexicon of imperial governance.

White and black men alike, stationed in both military and government positions, performed the work of this translation. Men like General Morgan and T.G Steward, who as early as the summer of 1898 began to call for the use of black soldiers in the Philippines, often mixed the argument for black soldier-citizenry with arguments about a particular racial fitness for the task of colonization. General Morgan, for example, ended his call for black officer's commissions by noting that, "if the United States has really entered upon an era of colonization or of taking under its protection the... Philippine Islands, we must be prepared for the necessity of a large army of occupation," which could with advantage be made up largely if not exclusively of negro soldiers."⁴⁷ According to Morgan, they would be, "better suited for tropical and semi-tropical climates." He concluded that in light of their particular aptitude for the task, there seemed no reason not to give the black troopers, "a fair opportunity to show the soldierly qualities they possess."⁴⁸

More ominous voices, however, were already very much a part of the discussion; many commentators used the Anglo-Saxon ideology then taking shape in the context of knowledge-production about the Philippines to treat the issue of the "Negro Problem" in a way that was anything but progressive. A June 28 article in the *Baltimore Sun*, for example, referring to a recent *National Geographic Magazine* article on the islands, noted

⁴⁶ Press copies of letters received, 24th Infantry Regiment, Entry Number 1752, NA RG 391.

⁴⁷ "Epaulets or Chevrons?" Thomas J. Morgan, *The Independent*, June 30, 1898.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

that the article's "most striking feature... is the series of pictures showing the dress, or rather undress, of the natives," who were, "of course, incapable of self-government, and require troops to keep them in order."⁴⁹ The piece immediately followed up on this statement by arguing that while "an effort has been made hitherto to solve the negro problem along "white" lines... when once we accustom ourselves to governing our new citizens in Hawaii, Cuba, and the Philippines, without reference to the constitution of the United States, our negro problem will be treated, no doubt, in a simpler manner."⁵⁰ The argument drew an analogy between the savagery of the Filipino and the supposed savagery of the Afro-American, a savagery which meant that progressive solutions to the race problem were doomed to failure. The experience of governing savage natives by force in an extra-judicial colony would supply more appropriate solutions to the "Negro Problem." This argument must be read in the context of ongoing legislative attempts in many states during these years to disfranchise Afro-American men as well as unprecedented levels of extra-judicial violence and lynching.

Plans to use black soldiers in the Philippines in order to prove their worth as citizens also proved easily assimilable to racist labor agendas. In December of 1898, W.B. Gallaher of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* argued that "in the probable event that this country will hold and govern the Philippine Islands, after the English manner, as colonial possessions," it would be beneficial for both "American white labor" and "Southern black labor" to make the islands "an outlet for the surplus negro population of our Southern States."⁵¹ Black soldiers could first subdue the insurrection and bring the

⁴⁹ "Our Prospective Fellow-Citizens," *The Baltimore Sun*, June 28, 1898. Proquest Historical Newspapers.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ "Philippines and Negro Colonization," W.B. Gallagher, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 11, 1898; ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

country under American control and afterwards become colonizers and “secondary rulers, under the necessary white supervision,” eventually forming an “Afro-American republic of their own out of these and other islands in the Pacific.”⁵² This would prevent Northern workingmen from facing Black labor competition, which Gallaher viewed as inevitable as racism and violence drove black people to the North in search of a better life. It would also take “enough negroes from the South to prevent negro domination there.”⁵³ Within the Anglo-Saxon imaginary, black Americans were civilized enough to help govern the Philippines but still too far removed from Anglo-Saxon civility to live in harmony and social integration with whites. Sending them to the Philippines seemed an elegant way to transfer the “nation within a nation” into the imperial periphery and solve the problems it posed for America’s future.

Despite the ominous perspectives of segregationists North and South on the meaning of black participation securing an Anglo-Saxon Empire, the dominant mood of black periodicals in late 1898 and early 1899 remained largely conservative and willing to entertain the possibility of service in the islands. The Baltimore-based *Afro-American* cautioned that,

Despite the aggravating circumstances and the strong provocation for abuse and denunciation, the Negro’s attitude... has been calm and well-tempered, and obedience to the law has been the watchword of every address and memorial. Moderation, conservatism and far-sightedness have been the cardinal principles emphasized, and the sober second thought of our people is bringing about... a fraternal feeling between the better forces of the two races North and South... Let us... strive to acquire all the desirable things the white man has. We can only get them in the way he got them- by patient, hard, and long continued effort.⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “Obedience to the Law,” Baltimore *Afro-American*, February 25, 1899. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

This was the dominant view of race relations nourished by Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee machine, which during these years had amassed an unprecedented degree of control over the black press. After the Senate ratified annexation in early February and open hostilities erupted in the islands, the tone of the black press remained largely loyal to the imperialist line. The *Afro-American* reasoned that,

Misguided leaders have influenced the natives to believe recognition of the Filipino republic could be easily forced and the Americans driven from the Islands. Our soldiers quickly and effectually dispelled such illusion.... The action by the Senate in ratifying [annexation]... vests the United States with full legal authority to control where Spain once exercised control. This being the case, the insurgents are in insurrection against the authority of the United States, and can be dealt with accordingly.⁵⁵

This language turned "U.S. soldiers" into "our" soldiers, rhetorically enacting a United States that included within the scope of citizenship both black and white Americans. The legacy of black citizen-soldiery was very strong indeed and most commentators saw no reason why the Philippines should pose any particular difficulties when it came to loyalty to the flag and constitution.

Meanwhile, plans to colonize the islands with black settlers were already being seriously discussed in public discourse and policy-making circles. An article carried by the *Washington Post* in late April of 1899 let it be known that "a proposition to utilize negro troops to a large extent in future military operations in the Philippines is attracting much attention, and it is believed will be considered by the administration in the near future. Such a policy is urged on the theory that certain racial affiliations may be utilized in a way to defeat rebellious acts on the part of Aguinaldo and his party."⁵⁶ Showing the

⁵⁵ "In the Philippines," *Baltimore Afro-American*, February 18, 1899. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁵⁶ "Conquest and Colonization," *Washington Post*, April 26, 1899. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

importance of the anthropological work that was widely disseminated in the States about the islands, the article further suggested that,

One-third of the population of the Philippines are negroes of the same race as those in the United States... advocates of the scheme believe that in a short time there would be an assimilation between the negroes of the Philippines and their kindred from the United States, and that there would follow for the colored people opportunities to get homes and possibilities of careers they could not hope for in this country.⁵⁷

Of course, the serious anthropological articles had specified that the Negritos were a small minority, but in the transition from scientific papers - which themselves fetishized the exotic and savage - to popular discourse, Negrito numbers became widely exaggerated. The arguments for racial mixing demonstrate the co-constitution of imperial racist logic and racism against African-Americans; on a basic physiological and racial level, black Americans were thought to bear deep similarities with the Negritos of the Philippines with whom they might easily “mix.” Since the tropics were the Afro-American’s natural home, it made sense to transport them there, thereby solving the “Negro problem.”

The notion that black troops possessed a natural affinity for the tropical climate was an important aspect of this logic. Military officials like Generals Thomas Morgan and A.G. Greenwood argued that African-American soldier-colonists were racially adapted to the tropical climate of the Philippines, whereas Anglo-Saxon physical dispositions would supposedly collapse under tropical environmental stress.⁵⁸ Unlike Kurz in Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* (which, not so coincidentally, appeared in 1899 as a three part serial in *Blackwood’s Magazine*), Black Imperials were considered

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ General Thomas J. Morgan, “Epaulets or Chevrons?” *The Independent; Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Concerns*, June 30, 1898; “Philippines for Negroes; Gen. Greenwood Thinks Their Colonization in Manila Would Solve the Race Problem,” *The New York Times*, February 25, 1900.

racially immune to the physical and mental trials of the tropical climate. Climate would have corrosive effects on the Anglo-Saxon body and psyche, corrupting it from within, as with Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*. African-Americans, however, as a result of their racial inheritance, would be immune to this corrupting influence. This idea was easily translatable into pro-colonization stances that took innate racial differences to mean that two races could never live in harmony in the same geographic space, and that therefore African Americans should be returned to the tropics.

Just such a scheme began to take official form when William Alden Doyle, a special agent for the United States Land Office, performed a survey and official tour of the Philippines in June with an eye to enacting a set of homestead laws in the “new possessions.”⁵⁹ The *New York Tribune* reported that special encouragement would be given to “American negroes... to take homesteads in localities where natives will be learning our improved methods of agriculture.”⁶⁰ Undergirding this effort was the racist sentiment and logic of W.A. Wasson, the rector of St. George’s Church in Brooklyn, who wrote in a letter to the editor published in the *New York Times* on July 9th that, “there is but one way to get rid of the negro problem, and that is to get rid of the negro.”⁶¹ “The white man and the negro were never intended by nature... to live together... The negro problem is a physical problem, pure and simple.”⁶² A home in the “new possessions” would “let them work out their own political and social salvation by themselves,” where they would have “self-government... and all the blessings and privileges of our language

⁵⁹ “Homestead Laws in New Possessions,” *New York Tribune*, July 1, 1899. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ “Race Problem in America,” W.A. Wasson, *New York Times*, July 9, 1899. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁶² *Ibid.*

and literature.” Unbeknownst to many black leaders, the Philippines posed different questions to black soldier than the Civil War had; this was a war that was spoken about and justified largely in terms of racial destiny.⁶³

What began for many black Americans as another test of their loyalty became instead a referendum on their racial characteristics and a chance to remove them from their homes in the continental United States. The words of one supporter, a “soldier and capitalist” named General A.G. Greenwood, aptly demonstrate the racism underlying support for the colonization idea: “Neither in the North nor South can the colored men have political or social equality,” but, “our war with Spain has developed a remedy... We ought to thoroughly develop the Philippines by colonizing those rich islands with our negro population.”⁶⁴ Greenwood’s support for black colonization presupposed both racial difference and an inability to coexist in the same social space. This seemingly elegant solution would, “not only afford the chance for the engagement of white labor in the South, but the latter section would soon be rid of all her troubles and there would be no more lynchings for the commission of shocking crimes in Southern States by negroes.” Greenwood’s justification for the necessity of a black exodus rested on the very same narrative of monstrous black male sexuality justified lynching in the first place as a

⁶³ Black voices that cautioned against viewing the Philippines as anything other than a race war existed, but were not as prominent in the press organs as the pro-war presence. In a letter to his friend W.E.H. Chase that was printed in the Baltimore *Afro-American* in June, Alpha J. Young, a steward aboard the transport ship Sheridan, called Manila “one of the last places on earth,” he would want to live and that there was no “inducement to a man of color.” “I would not advise any of our colored men to go to Manila, or any of the Philippines,” noting that the fighting was very intense and the tension between the Americans and the natives palpable. “Manila,” *Afro-American*, June 17, 1899. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁶⁴ Philippines for Negroes; Gen. Greenwood Thinks Their Colonization in Manila Would Solve the Race Problem.” *New York Times*, Feb. 25, 1900. Proquest Historical Newspapers.

defense of white femininity. The mass exportation of black people out of the United States, might, according to Wasson, “be started almost immediately,” and indeed it was.⁶⁵

The decision to send the 24th and 25th black infantry regiments to Manila in July of 1899 ignited a flurry of speculation from both black and white Americans on what it meant for thousands of black men to take up the white man’s burden. What had been sporadic calls for black involvement in late 1898 and early 1899 soon blossomed into a profusion of ideas about what the conflict meant for American “race relations.” Examining the perspectives on this question crafted by various Americans holds out the possibility of better understanding race as an American ideology formed in the context of imperial expansion. Powerful men in both white and black circles proposed the Black Imperial as a remedy for criticisms of William McKinley’s policy of “benevolent assimilation” and also for the so-called “Negro Problem” at home. While many whites championed the idea as a way to solve the “Negro problem” and white Republicans saw a chance to assuage black constituents with patronage positions in the colonial government, for the black bourgeoisie the Philippines became a testing ground, a chance to prove that the “blood of government” flowed also in its veins. Indeed, the fantasy of the Black imperial is an extremely effective cipher of imperial-racial formations during the period insofar as it justified and explained the new imperial social positions of both black and white elites, uniting both behind the project of Empire. The performance of black men in the islands would show the degree to which they had assimilated Anglo-Saxon culture or

⁶⁵ “Race Problem in America,” W.A. Wasson, *New York Times*, July 9, 1899. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

conversely the degree to which their every trait, in the British imperialist Archibald Colquhoun's words, could be traced "back to its original home in the African swamp."⁶⁶

Many conservative black leaders greeted the news that the regular regiments would serve in the islands enthusiastically. In a speech at the Stevens African Methodist Episcopal Church, Bishop W.G. Gaines of Atlanta ridiculed colonization schemes, arguing that, "The American negroes are citizens of the United States... This is the country where they should stay to work out their own salvation."⁶⁷ They had proved their loyalty, "On San Juan Hill and on the battlefields of the civil war."⁶⁸ In keeping with this tradition, "they stand ready to fight again when they are called upon. Two regiments of colored soldiers are at this very time about to be sent to the Philippines."⁶⁹ Bishop Gaines even declared his own willingness to go with them if he was called upon, and his patriotic sentiments were reportedly "greeted with great applause."⁷⁰ Gaines' speech demonstrates the collusion between the idea of patriotic imperial service and bourgeois ideals of race uplift; he asserted that it was merely the "5 percent of worthless and vicious negroes which throw discredit upon the negro race," and that upstanding Afro-Americans should refuse to give any comfort or support to such people, thereby elevating "the race standard."⁷¹ He also warned against "roving, shiftless habits," urging black Americans, "to settle... work hard, save their money, educate their children, accumulate property, insure their lives, and when they die leave their wives provided for."⁷² His interpretation

⁶⁶ Archibald R. Colquhoun, "The Future of the Negro," *North American Review*, No. 558, (May, 1903), 662.

⁶⁷ "Race Harmony; Bishop Gaines Lectures on the Future of the Negro," *Los Angeles Times*, August 1, 1899. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

paired military service with adherence to bourgeois manners as means for blacks to gain the full blessings of American life.

Many black participants in the discussion also argued that, having emerged “out of the forge and fire” of slavery and emancipation, the Black imperial would bring civilization to the islands and pride to the race.⁷³ As a successful example of assimilation into Euro-American culture they would lead the way in assimilating Filipinos to industry and American values. Almost overnight, the very exception to the American ideology of racial inferiority (bourgeois Americans of African descent who participated in ostensibly “white” cultural practices) was transubstantiated into “proof” for the new ideology of imperial-racial uplift in the Pacific. In other words, imperial schemes that involved black proxy governance could portray Anglo-Saxon civilization as the apex of cultural advancement, bourgeois African-Americans as an example of successful racial tutelage, and Filipinos as savage others ready to be uplifted.⁷⁴ Forged in the fire of Anglo-Saxon civilization, the Black Imperial was a successful example of “benevolent assimilation” and racial uplift, pointing the way for their “dark skinned” Filipino brethren.

This idea found strong support in the summer of 1900 when W.S. Scarborough, the reknowned black classics professor and later president of Wilberforce University, argued that emigration to the islands would be beneficial both to the race and to their

⁷³ The phrase “out of the forge and fire of American slavery,” was coined by T. Thomas Fortune, the fiery African-American editor of the *New York Age*. Fortune wrote in an editorial that “the more dark peoples that we have under our flag the better it will be for those of us who came out of the forge and fire of American slavery.” Quoted in W.S. Scarborough, “The Negro and our New Possessions,” in *Forum*, May 1901.

⁷⁴ For an insightful examination this class of African-Americans, see Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990. See also for an explanation of the emergent politics of this class Henry Louis Gates, “The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black,” *Representations*, No. 24, Special Issue: American Reconstructed, 1840-1940 (Autumn, 1988): 129-155.

“color kinsfolk” in the Orient.⁷⁵ Scarborough’s article, “The Negro and our New Possessions,” first identified a crisis in American race relations in which, “the Negro finds everything against him,” included “boycott, refusal to work by his side,” and the “closed doors of labor unions,” along with widespread violence, intimidation and disfranchisement. Indeed, by all accounts it was, “the darkest period in the progress of the race since the Civil War,” not even excepting, “the dark days of Reconstruction; for then he had more sympathy from those who looked on and who stood by him.” In the context of the Spanish-American war, the African-American community was disturbed by what appeared to be a great sectional reconciliation that heralded both less attention by Republicans and Northerners to racial violence in the South and an acceptance of “Southern” racial ideology by Northerners. In light of the crisis, Scarborough hypothesized that “a certain amount of emigration would be advantageous,” and that, all considered, the black community had not “entertained seriously enough the possibility of using our new possessions as an opportunity for the American Negro.”

Noting that in each major conflict that involved the United States since the end of the Civil War, “the darker races of the world [had] formed a prominent feature,” there was now a chance for “the higher classes of the race,” to make “use of their acquisitions among the darker peoples of the newly acquired territory.” In short, “the evolutionary process the race has gone through in this country would make such men and women of color of inestimable value in undertaking the evolutions which must take place in the attempt to lead out to the light and on to strength the weaker, dark races of the world, wherever found. The cry comes from the Philippines, from the natives: Why does not the

⁷⁵ W.S. Scarborough, “Our New Possessions-An Open Door,” *Southern Workman*, XXIX, (July, 1900), 422-427.

United States send out colored men as school teachers, and in various other official capacities?” Filipinos desired Occidental culture, but wanted it to come through hands, “of a like complexion to theirs.”⁷⁶

These ideas also characterized the thinking of Steward on the role of African-Americans in Empire. Appended as a prosthetic to the American body politic, the Black Imperial would be America’s “hand of power in the Orient,” as Theophilus G. Steward so aptly put it.⁷⁷ The “hand of power” metaphor, which was voiced only later, in 1902, demonstrated a more mature form of the “Black Imperial” idea. By this time, black regiments had been fighting in the Philippines for some time, and serious plans for colonization were well underway. In 1891, Steward was approached by Francis J. Grimke, the influential leader of the Fifteenth St. Presbyterian church in Washington D.C. about a position as chaplain for the 25th U.S. Colored Infantry Regiment.⁷⁸ Grimke introduced Steward to Blanche K. Bruce, the Reconstruction-era black Republican Senator from Mississippi. Bruce, who was serving as the recorder of deeds for the District of Columbia at the time, was able to secure him a position as chaplain for the regiment. Steward would serve in the army until 1907, at which time he retired and

⁷⁶ W.S. Scarborough, “The Negro and our New Possessions,” *Forum*, May 1901; Vol. XXXI, No. 3, American Periodicals Series Online. “Boycott”; p. 2. “Entertained seriously,”; p. 3. “use of their acquisitions,”; p. 4. “The evolutionary process,”; p. 5.

⁷⁷ This is a reference to a letter to the Los Angeles Times from T.G. Steward, which was published under the title, “Chance for Negroes in the Philippines,” on March 29, 1902. T.G. Steward was stationed for several years in the Philippines, and is a perfect example of the Victorian Black Imperial. The metaphor of the “hand of power” is particularly illustrative of the phenomenon that I am identifying, since it evokes a quasi-naturalized relationship between Black and white America that could be forged in the context of empire. I refer here to the long history of the “body politic” metaphor in political theory.

⁷⁸ The Fifteenth St. Church was a commonly seen as a haven for the D.C.’s “aristocrats of color,” exactly the class of people who most commonly came to support the idea of Black involvement in the islands on the grounds that it would prove the degree to which they had achieved bourgeois civilization. The church included a large number of highly educated African-Americans who possessed lucrative posts in the city and federal government and were members of exclusive social clubs. Calvin Chase, editor of the *Washington Bee*, remarked in his paper that the first step taken by a socially ambitious new Black resident of the city was to seek membership in the fifteenth St. Presbyterian. *Washington Bee*, November 17, 1883. Quoted in Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, p. 478.

worked as a professor at Wilberforce until his death in 1924. He came to support emigration to the Philippines as a way for African-American men of standing to better both themselves and a kindred people, urging black Americans to emigrate to the islands.⁷⁹

Scarborough and Steward's point of view was by no means out of the African-American mainstream. Members of the upper class frequently urged participation in the Philippines, drawing on arguments made by Scarborough. Most of these men were well-connected members of the African-American political class embedded in the federal government through Republican patronage.⁸⁰ Ironically, in lobbying to appoint African-Americans to positions of prominence in the colonial administration and to use African-American regiments in the occupation, these men had stalwart allies in bourbon Southern democrats and racist white labor advocates.

The concept of African-American colonization was seductive because for many members of the Southern-oriented white elite, it could pose as a solution to the "Negro Problem," and an opportunity to discourse about the "outrages" perpetrated by black men in the South. It is important to note again General Greenwood's argument that colonization would prevent the "commission of shocking crimes in Southern States by negroes."⁸¹ Greenwood also pointed out, in words that echoed Scarborough, that, "privileges which have been accorded the colored people here have equipped them, so that they could soon predominate."⁸² The imperial context provided an opportunity for

⁷⁹ L.A. Times, "Chance for Negroes in the Philippines," March 29, 1902

⁸⁰ For an in-depth discussion of this community and its politics, see Willard B. Gatewood Jr., *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990.

⁸¹ "Philippines for Negroes," *The New York Times*, February 25 1900.

⁸² *Ibid.*

racist southerners and dedicated advocates of race “uplift” like Scarborough to make common cause.

The biggest push given to the colonization plan was a result of the efforts of Senator John Tyler Morgan. A former Confederate general and powerful Democratic Senator from Alabama, he came to support the scheme as a means of ridding the South of some of its “excess” black population.⁸³ In 1900, at the same time that he was orchestrating the disfranchisement of African-Americans in Alabama, Morgan began to seriously promote colonization to the Philippines.⁸⁴ In December of 1901, Morgan suggested to Secretary of War Elihu Root that black soldiers be established in paramilitary colonies in the Philippines “as a prelude to government sponsored emigration” of African-Americans. Root forwarded Morgan’s request for a government investigation of conditions for such a plan to General Adna R. Chaffee, the American military commander in the Philippines, who ordered General George Davis, at the time stationed on the island of Mindanao, to file an investigation.⁸⁵ While Davis’ report rejected the use of African-American soldiers as a colonial vanguard because they enjoyed too many privileges and were too “aristocratic” to become agricultural laborers, he recommended government subsidies for sugar planters to recruit black laborers from Louisiana to work in the islands, after which they might set out as small-planters on their own.⁸⁶ Morgan continued to pursue the plan, lobbying President Roosevelt and Root throughout 1902 to appoint a special commissioner to continue preliminary assessments.

⁸³ Joseph O. Baylen and John Hammond Moore, “Senator John Tyler Morgan and Negro Colonization in the Philippines, 1901-1902,” *Phylon* Vol. 29, no. 1 (1st Qtr., 1968): 65-75.

⁸⁴ *Wichita Searchlight*, March 30, 1901. In a speech in 1900 before Congress, Morgan referred to the Philippines as a future home for black citizens, *Congressional Record*, 56 Cong., 1 sess. 675. From Gatewood, *Black Americans and the White Man’s Burden*, p. 303.

⁸⁵ Gatewood, *Black Americans and the White Man’s Burden*, 303-304.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 305.

In November of that year, Roosevelt appointed Timothy Thomas Fortune, the fiery editor of the *New York Age*, as a special commissioner to Hawaii and the Philippines to study labor and race conditions in the islands.⁸⁷

Fortune's voyage to the islands constitutes a unique opportunity to explore the racial dynamics of American Empire in the Philippines and how these dynamics affected the course of black politics. Born into slavery in Florida in 1854, Fortune not only lived through the betrayal of Reconstruction and the rise of the Jim Crow South, but also the massive changes wrought by industrialization and various economic crises during the tempestuous Gilded Age.⁸⁸ His father was a leader in local Reconstruction politics while he was a child, but later quit politics due to intimidation by the Ku Klux Klan. In 1881, Fortune moved from Florida to New York City where he began his life's work as a journalist, founding the New York *Freeman* in 1884. That same year, he wrote his most widely read and historically important book, *Black and White: Land Labor and Politics in the South*. In 1888 the *Freeman* became the *New York Age*, which would be Fortune's national mouthpiece and a pillar of black print agitation until 1907 when he resigned his editorial position. Although by the 1890s Fortune had secured his place as a nationally prominent black journalist with a reputation for fiery opposition to racism, it was also during this decade that he slipped into Booker T. Washington's sphere of influence.

⁸⁷ *Richmond Planet*, December 13, 1902; Indianapolis *Freeman*, November 29, 1902, SCRBC.

⁸⁸ The biographical information I present here on Fortune's life is drawn indirectly from Emma Lou Thornbrough, *T. Thomas Fortune: Militant Journalist*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972; through Winston James' essay, "Being Red and Black in Jim Crow America: On the Ideology and Travails of Afro-America's Socialist Pioneers, 1877-1930," in *Time Longer Than Rope: A Century of African American Activism, 1850-1950*, ed. Charles M. Payne and Adam Green, New York: New York University Press, 2003, and through Seth Moglen's introduction to the new edition of Fortune's *Black and White: Land, Labor, and Politics in the South*, New York: Washington Square Press, 2007. This information is also available in several retrospectives written on Fortune in the black press during his later career and after his death. See, Baltimore *Afro-American*, "Veteran Editor T. Thomas Fortune Gets Testimonial," March 18, 1911; Baltimore *Afro-American*, "On Heroes," April 8, 1916; Baltimore *Afro-American*, "Day by Day: T. Thomas Fortune, Journalism's Idealist," June 16, 1928

Facing mounting debts, he was forced to accept funding and editorial influence from the well-connected and more conservative Washington.

Fortune's relationship with Booker T. Washington was torturous and ambivalent. The two men obviously felt great affinity, respect and affection for one another. Unlike many of the proponents of black imperialism, they were born into slavery rather than with a silver spoon. In many respects, they were self-made men who occasionally felt out of sorts around or even antagonistic toward the Ivy-educated, freeborn aristocrats of color with their illustrious family trees.⁸⁹ At the same time, Washington's conservatism and the strings that came along with his financial assistance bore heavily on Fortune. Their correspondence testifies almost viscerally to Fortune's pain at coping with the political constraints imposed on his writing. Gradually, his physical and mental health deteriorated and he turned to alcohol as an outlet for frustration and depression.

Above all, Fortune was a fighter who enjoyed nothing more than yellow journalism and polemics, even if they were not entirely consistent with his stated political views. A satirical but nevertheless insightful piece on Fortune in the Indianapolis *Freeman* remarked that, "He is a man of much ability; he is dogged and malignantly persistent, making a very bad enemy, but an indifferent friend. He is so wedded to his style that he is useful only in opposing, never in support... he's a fighter."⁹⁰ Washington was quick to exploit Fortune's enthusiasm for vitriolic attacks to help construct the Tuskegee machine during the late 1890s.

⁸⁹ I draw the term "aristocrats of color" from Willard B. Gatewood's book of the same name. It refers to the political class of African-Americans, largely with family trees that included white people or freedmen from before emancipation, who were highly educated and well connected to Republican patronage positions in the years after the end of Reconstruction. These men and women believed in a genteel Victorianism that was often at odds with Fortune's tempestuous character. Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920*, Little Rock: University of Arkansas Press, 2000.

⁹⁰ The Indianapolis *Freeman*, "Mr. T. T. Fortune," March 19, 1904.

Fortune, however, also had the habit of consistently and publicly criticizing President McKinley on a variety of hot-button issues. At a Boston meeting of the Afro-American Council in January of 1899, he reportedly said, “I want the man whom I fought for to fight for me, and if he don’t I feel like stabbing him.”⁹¹ Sent to that meeting to *quell* radical black Bostonians, Fortune ended up *congratulating* Washington’s detractors for their willingness to break black America’s unquestioning loyalty to the Republican Party in the wake of McKinley’s refusal to take steps to counter Southern disfranchisement and lynching.⁹² Fortune’s public criticism of McKinley soon became a consistent source of tension between Washington and himself. Evidently Washington had urged a rapprochement, for Fortune later wrote to his friend, “I don’t see how the President and I can ‘make up and be good friends.’ There is not an honest bone in him... I shall soon open the editorial battery upon him.”⁹³ In this sense, Fortune is indicative of the widening split during the years of the Philippine insurrection between the conservative Tuskegee machine and more radical black activism.

For some time, Fortune had pressed for the inclusion of African-Americans in the burgeoning imperial project. In early 1900 he had suggested to Washington that he should “take some advantage of the commercial and other opportunities which are opening to the youth of the country in the enlargement of our National domain and the incorporation into our citizenship of a large alien population which must be educated in the ways of the Republic.”⁹⁴ There had even been some talk that Fortune would receive

⁹¹ Louis R. Harlan, ed., *The Booker T. Washington Papers: Volume 5*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972-1981, 3.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁹³ Fortune to Washington, June 23, 1899. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁹⁴ Fortune to Washington, May 5, 1900. *Ibid.*, p. 498.

either a diplomatic appointment to one of the black independent states or a colonial appointment as part of the Philippine Commission.⁹⁵

In December of 1900, Fortune was involved in a major scandal at a dinner in Washington that may have helped precipitate his departure to the Philippines. J.M. Holland, a reporter in the women's department of the *New York Tribune*, wrote to Washington that Fortune had engaged in inflammatory rhetoric at the reception. "It has spoilt his prospects politically. Politicians... were all urging Roosevelt to do something for him in the way of office and from what Roosevelt said to me he expected to do so but now of course it is ended."⁹⁶ Holland reported that Calvin Chase of the *Bee* got Fortune, "so drunk and talked this incendiary stuff to him until when he got up to speak he could not separate his own ideas from the others."⁹⁷ It was not Fortune's last scandal involving alcohol. Washington began to question Fortune consistently on his alcohol consumption. "I take a glass when I want to but I have stopped lushing and shall not begin again," wrote Fortune to his friend, "I know I have injured myself in this manner and I regret it."⁹⁸ In early November of 1901, Fortune had run an article in the *Age*, "on the wisdom of employing Afro-American labor in the Philippines," suggesting to General Clarkson, "that I would go as a commissioner on the part of the Government to study the labor and trade conditions in the Philippines and the Far East" in the interests of, "shunting... our surplus labor to the Orient if I found the conditions such as to warrant such

⁹⁵ Washington *Colored American*, October 27-1900; Indianapolis *Freeman*, January 19, 1901; Washington *Colored American*, "The Political Horoscope," June 21, 1902. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁹⁶ J.M. Holland to Washington, December 21, 1898. *The Booker T. Washington Papers: Volume 4*, 543-44.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 543-44.

⁹⁸ Fortune to Washington, May 9, 1900. *Ibid.*, *Volume 5*, p. 245.

recommendations.”⁹⁹ Fortune also reported to Washington that he had not drunk anything in a very long time and was completely cured of his desire for alcohol.

However, in December of 1901 he was involved in yet another scandal that may have sealed his fate as a political exile to the Philippines. He reportedly made such a drunken “spectacle before the Bethel Literary... that Dr. Grimke left in disgust as soon as he realized the man’s condition.”¹⁰⁰ Whitefield McKinlay, a prominent black real estate broker in D.C., advised Washington, “that for the sake of the race whose hopes are centered in you- you must diplomatically cut loose from these fellows and that at once.”¹⁰¹ Edward E. Cooper, editor of the *Colored American Magazine*, reported to Washington that Fortune and the poet laureate of black America, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, had “got on a ‘holy terror’” during their stay, and that by the time it was Fortune’s turn to discourse before the literary club, he was “in no condition to speak.”¹⁰² After this, Fortune and Washington’s relationship became strained by clashes over politics and embarrassment over Fortune’s alcoholism. Their correspondence lost both frequency and depth.

It may be that Fortune’s appointment to a position as a special commissioner in the Philippines was thus an expedient way for Booker T. Washington, the black elite of the District of Columbia and the Republican Party to usher him out of the political and social limelight. After the incident at the Bethel literary society, Washington wrote to Whitefield McKinlay that, “I am trying to make a plan by which some of our strong

⁹⁹ Fortune to Washington, November 3, 1902. *Ibid.*, *Volume 6*, p. 571.

¹⁰⁰ The same Grimke who would secure Chaplain Steward’s position in the 25th regiment.

¹⁰¹ Whitefield McKinlay to Washington, December 14, 1901. *Volume 6*, p. 347-48.

¹⁰² Edward E. Cooper to Washington, December 12, 1901. *Volume 6*, p. 345.

men... will secure judicial positions in the Philippine Islands.”¹⁰³ On November 20, 1902, James Sullivan Clarkson of the War Department wrote to Washington that he had secured a place for Fortune as part of a special mission to the Philippines and Hawaii, and in December Fortune began the long journey toward the Pacific. It seems that Senator Morgan’s and Booker T. Washington’s interests and lobbying efforts conveniently overlapped in such a way that the Republican administration could hit two very different birds with the same stone in appointing Fortune to study the prospects for black colonization, a fact that Fortune seems to have been aware of judging by the language of his letter to General Clarkson.

Thus it was that T. Thomas Fortune, the fiery radical and in many ways the least likely of candidates for the job, was sent as part of the most serious policy effort to enact the colonization fantasy that had taken shape over the previous four years. The plan could draw support from the more benign views of the black upper class and white progressives like General Morgan, but also lent itself easily to various racist projects. In much of the rhetoric of both black and white supporters, the black man began to slip into the figure of the Filipino savage; both were creatures of the tropics. Indeed, many arguments in favor of the Black Imperial rested on a literal, genetic slippage of the two populations into one another, a “harmonious mixing” that would create an outpost of Americanism in the Pacific and solve the “Negro problem” all in one fell swoop.

¹⁰³ Washington to McKinlay, January 22, 1902. *Volume 6*, p. 378.

Section 2: Black Imperials in the Philippines

Service in the Philippines, as already suggested, was a highly politicized prospect for black men. By December of 1900 there were 6,000 black regulars and volunteers scattered from northern Luzon to the island of Samar in the eastern Visayas.¹⁰⁴ Both white officers and an interested national audience scrutinized their every move. The occupation and counter-insurgency campaign were a grueling ordeal. Long periods of dreary boredom in isolated posts were punctuated mostly by arduous hikes through the wilderness in search of weapons and insurgents and the occasional ambush by enemies who would quickly blend into the local population. On top of these grinding conditions, soldiers had to contend with officers who constantly watched for any sign that a black soldier was a “rascal” who would “go native.” These fears soon caused deterioration in relations between the white officer corps and the black soldiers. Racism in turn encouraged soldiers to shirk their duties, retroactively confirming the racist suspicions of the colonial government that black troopers were rascallions who would take the first opportunity to desert. The colonial state and the military structure became riddled with white supremacy in its appointments and in the actions of its police, a fact that could hardly be ignored by the African-American men who had agreed to help heft the white man’s burden in the name of patriotism and race uplift.

For many soldiers, life in the islands opened up new life-paths far afield from the bourgeois familial and sexual norms upheld by black and white proponents of the “Black Imperial” ideal. In the remote stations, black soldiers often escaped oppressive military discipline by arranging various kinds of informal domestic arrangements with Filipino women. In many cases, housing had not been prepared for the black troops by the

¹⁰⁴ Gatewood, *Black Americans and the White Man’s Burden*, 263.

military authorities, and so housing requisitioning and informal domestic accommodations with natives became common features of the occupation.¹⁰⁵ These arrangements undermined Anglo-Saxon Empire building to the extent that they often went hand in hand with insubordination and even desertion, eventually causing widespread fears in powerful quarters of the colonial state over African-American collusion with the insurgency. At the same time, flights from military discipline also tended to confirm the racist ideology that undergirded the logic of the “white man’s burden”; black sexuality was a threat to bourgeois familial norms and must be civilized by Anglo-Saxon leadership. The connection between desire, domesticity, race-making and anti-imperialism demonstrates the importance of the “domains of the intimate” to both the consolidation of colonial power and the opening up of avenues of resistance to that very power.¹⁰⁶

These power struggles were communicated back to the United States in the form of newspaper reports, letters from soldiers circulated in periodicals, and returning officials like T. Thomas Fortune. Bureaucratic pilgrimages from metropole to colony and back in the colonial government as well as print circuits between the Philippines and the U.S. undercut the optimistic predictions of conservative black leaders that the black imperial could become a seamlessly sutured “hand of power” for America in the Orient. The black press on the one hand and the bureaucratic pilgrimages of black appointees like T. Thomas Fortune came to shape how black political communities understood events in

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¹⁰⁶ Ann Laura Stoler ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. Please see Stoler’s introduction to the volume and her essay “Tense and Tender Ties,” for more on the importance of studying the bedroom when thinking about imperial histories.

the Philippines.¹⁰⁷ Benedict Anderson's work on nationalism provides a useful starting point which demands some revision in light of the racial dynamics of American Empire. Whereas Anderson tends to view the technological processes that produce nationalism - particularly print media and bureaucratic pilgrimages - as creating monolithic national communities, the differential relations of power involved in the creation of the Black Imperial tended to produce a nation within the nation. Anglo-Saxonism viewed the world within a racialized hierarchy that was in part premised on the extent to which black imperials adhered to bourgeois sexual and domestic ideals. Within this hierarchical relation existed distinct print communities, bureaucratic pilgrimages and national communities. Reporting in both mainstream and black print on events surrounding the black imperial in the Philippines produced the imagined community of the black Nation within a nation. Gradually, a consensus began to develop that the black imperial, the avatar of Tuskegee uplift, was apparently still shut out of full membership in what was evidently an Anglo-Saxon Empire. This impression had indelible ramifications for the course of American politics, which witnessed increasingly fractious and radical black politics in the years and decades following the period under study.

Difficulties began almost as soon as the two regular black regiments, the 24th and the 25th, arrived in the islands in July and August of 1899. With the onset of the dry season in November, General Otis launched a large campaign in northern Luzon in an attempt to capture Aguinaldo. Both the press and officers lauded the many daring feats of the black troops during this campaign.¹⁰⁸ However, problems with discipline were already becoming apparent under the surface of the highly censored military reporting on

¹⁰⁷ The theoretical background for this insight is drawn from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, New York: Verso, 1991.

¹⁰⁸ Gatewood, *Black Americans and the White Man's Burden*, 266-69.

the events of the campaign. The intellectual ferment within the black regiments is well represented by the Frederick Douglass Memorial Literary Society of the Twenty-fourth Regiment.¹⁰⁹ Letters in the national military archives reveal that this society distributed copies of John Mitchell Jr.'s highly political black weekly, the *Richmond Planet*. Many of the soldiers who were part of the society also made a point of writing letters back to Mitchell about the situation in the Philippines which were then reprinted in the paper. These organizations discussed the issue of Jim Crowism in the Philippines, which, as one black private commented, "had followed the Negro to the Philippines, ten thousand miles from where it originated."¹¹⁰ Whites of all classes referred to Filipinos as "niggers," "black devils," and "gugus."¹¹¹ Black troops on the other hand, had a much easier time forming amicable relations with Filipinos, in large part because of the contempt with which they were both treated by whites.¹¹² The resulting situation was a difficult one for black soldiers who were often fiercely dedicated to the ideals of race uplift; as Sergeant Major John Galloway of the Twenty-fourth put it, he and his fellow soldiers were "between the devil and the deep sea" on the war.¹¹³ They were in a situation in which

¹⁰⁹ *Richmond Planet*, Oct. 20, 1900, SCRBC and April 27, 1901; Captain James A. Moss to John Mitchell Jr., *Richmond Planet*, July 23, 1902, Press Copies of Letters Sent, 24th Infantry, NA, RG 391.

¹¹⁰ Army and Navy Journal, XXXVI (April 13, 1901), 797. Quoted in Michael C. Robinson and Frank N. Schubert, "An Afro-American Rebel in the Philippines, 1899-1901," *The Pacific Historical Review* 44, No. 1 (Feb., 1975): 71.

¹¹¹ Eda Funston (wife of General Frederick Funston) to "Darling Mother," Oct. 2, 1899, Funston Papers; William R. Smith, diary, 59, 71, Kansas State Historical Society; also T. Thomas Fortune, "The Filipino; The Filipinos Do Not Understand the Prejudice of White Americans against Black Americans," *Voice of the Negro*, I (May 1904), 203; Henry C. Rowland, "The Seamy Side in the Philippines," *Century Magazine*, LXIII (April 1902), 864; Rowland, "The Fighting Life in the Philippines," *McClure's Magazine*, XIX (July 1902), 247; Senate Committee on the Philippines, "Hearings on Affairs in the Philippines Islands," *S. Doc. 331*, 57 Cong., 1 sess. (1902), 216, 884, 969, 2669-2670; *San Francisco Chronicle*, Nov. 19, 1899, and Feb. 18, 1902. Citation taken from Michael C. Robinson and Frank N. Schubert, "An Afro-American Rebel in the Philippines, 1899-1901," *The Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Feb., 1975), 71.

¹¹² T. Thomas Fortune, "The Filipino, A Social Study in Three Parts," *Voice of the Negro*, I (March, 1904), 97; Fortune, "The Filipino, Some Incidents of a Trip through the Island of Luzon," *ibid.*, I (June 1904), Chaplain T. G. Steward, letter to the *Independent*, LII (Feb. 1, 1900), 312-314.

¹¹³ *Richmond Planet*, Sept. 30, 1899, SCRBC; Sergeant Major John W. Galloway to Thomas Consumji, Feb. 4, 1900, Adjutant General's Office (hereafter AGO) file 356799, NA, RG 94.

they were asked to enforce a racist caste system on a people fighting for political independence.

One remarkable result of the situation was defections of black soldiers to the Filipino cause. Although certainly not widespread, regimental records reveal that there were twenty-nine desertions among the four regiments of black regulars, out of which nine were defections to the Filipino army. On November 17, 1899, corporal David Fagan of Company I of the 24th infantry deserted his garrison at the town of San Isidro in Nueva Ecija to a troop of *insurrectos* in the area.¹¹⁴ Personal difficulties with his place in the company likely played a role in his decision to desert, since we know from subsequent accounts that he experienced difficulties with both his non-commissioned and commissioned superiors.¹¹⁵ His skill in leading *insurrecto* units in attacks on the U.S. army eventually secured him a promotion to the rank of lieutenant-colonel by General Jose Alejandrino, the commander of the insurrection in Nueva Ecija.¹¹⁶ According to army accounts he was eventually killed by a hunter, who brought his severed head to Manila in 1902 in return the 600 dollar reward that General Frederick Funston posted for his capture, “dead or alive.”

Reports on Fagen’s activities began to surface in the press in the fall of 1900 and he increasingly gained a larger-than-life reputation. Early that year, insurgent tactics began to change following the reversals of Otis’ campaign. The insurgent army adopted

¹¹⁴ For detailed accounts of Fagen, see Michael C. Robinson and Frank N. Schubert, “David Fagen: An Afro-American Rebel in the Philippines, 1899-1901,” *The Pacific Historical Review* 44, no. 1 (Feb., 1975): 68-83; and also Scot Ngozi-Brown, “African-American Soldiers and Filipinos: Racial Imperialism, Jim Crow and Social Relations,” *The Journal of Negro History* 82, no. 1 (Winter, 1997): 42-53. The information slip on David Fagen in the National Archives in Washington D.C. contains a wealth of information on this figure, it is located in AGO file 431081, Record Group 94.

¹¹⁵ Robinson and Schubert, “David Fagen,” 74.

¹¹⁶ The packet on Fagen in the National Archives includes his officer’s commission from Alejandrino bearing the seal of the Malolos Republic.

hit and run tactics, forcing the black regiments to engage in long patrols across the islands and in tedious garrison duty in far-flung stations. During the lead up to the 1900 presidential elections, insurgent activity increased in a bid to affect the outcome of the race, leading to an increase in casualties. During this time, the press portrayed Fagen as a skilled guerrilla leader who would harass and ambush American units, and between August 1900 and January 1901, he reportedly clashed eight times with the U.S. army, prompting the *New York Times* to dub him “General Fagen.”¹¹⁷ Fagen received substantial attention in white newspapers but very little in black weeklies, a fact that some scholars explain with the argument that they may have felt uncomfortable that their print materials which were critical of imperialism may have contributed to disloyalty on the part of black soldiers.

Fagen’s story raised fears in the white officer corps of widespread defections among the ranks of the black regulars, leading to an atmosphere of mistrust and repression that further harmed the morale of the black regiments. The regimental records of the 24th infantry regiment are rife with examples of racial tension and violence. By October of 1900, reenlistment rates of privates at the end of their service in the Twenty-fourth infantry regiment had fallen to just 17 percent-- a fact that colonel H.B. Freeman explained was a result of General Order #76, which cut off travel allowances for soldiers, likely because of fears of desertion. The same report revealed systemic problems in the military justice system also contributed to rising tensions. When soldiers were brought to trial in a Summary Courts Martial for petty offenses, the same officer that preferred the charge was most often the presiding officer on the case, causing a lack of faith among the

¹¹⁷ *Manila Times*, Oct. 12 and 27, Dec. 8 and 14, 1900, and Jan. 18, 1901; *New York Times*, Oct. 29, 1900. Quoted in Robinson and Schubert, “David Fagan,” 75-76.

enlisted men in the military justice system. The report also referenced rumors circulating in the regiment that innocent black soldiers had been sent to the notorious Bilibid prison in Manila by a General Courts Martial, a rumor Freeman called “both false and ridiculous.” Referencing an anonymous letter of complaint, Freeman wrote that, “there seems to be nothing tangible in the written statement,” and that, “the best of feeling exists between the officers and men.”¹¹⁸

As the occupation drew on, conditions in the islands for black soldiers continued to deteriorate. On August 4th, 1901, the Adjutant of the regiment, JA Moss, a Louisianan, wrote to headquarters regarding a letter of complaint by a soldier.¹¹⁹ He referred to the letter of complaint, which alleged that a white officer used the term “nigger” and “struck a soldier with a six-shooter,” as a “malicious prevarication.”¹²⁰ He also explained the large number of soldiers locked up in the guardhouse and tried by general courts-martial with the argument that the regiment, “contains a large number of scoundrels... it is suggested that... this anonymous writer belongs to the former class.”¹²¹ Indeed, the general courts martial records for the regiment show that harsh punishments were consistently meted out by the all white judicial boards for minor offenses.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Report dated October 29, 1900, Letters, Orders, and Reports Received Relating to the 24th Infantry Regiment, NA, RG 391.

¹¹⁹ Press copies of Letters Sent, 24th Infantry Regiment, Entry Number 1752, Record Group 391, National Archives. For example, in early September, 1901, yet another anonymous complaint was stamped by three officers and a surgeon “as a malicious fabrication- in all probability written by some disgruntled scoundrel. The administration of the company and post, as shown by the reports, returns, requisitions and other papers passing through this office, is considered excellent. Lieutenant Taylor is, in the opinion of officers in a position to know, an excellent officer.” Of course, the “reports, returns, requisitions, and other papers,” in question were all written by white officers.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Letters, Orders, and Reports Received From or Relating to Members of the 24th Infantry, 1899-1901, Entry #1763, Record Group 391, NA RG 391.

Black soldiers faced racism not only from their own officers but even more frequently from contact with white enlisted men from other units. A one report from Lieutenant-Colonel Markley logged on April 13th, 1901, bears witness to the charged and hostile atmosphere obtaining between black and white units. “Owing to the prejudice against the men of this regiment because they are colored men, much difficulty, discomfort and inconvenience has been for some time endured by them at Rosales and Bautista.”¹²³ There was reportedly so much open discrimination against black soldiers at outposts manned by white soldiers that the troops had difficulty acquiring food when passing through, which “caused them often to sleep in corrals or native shacks and to go to restaurants to buy meals.”¹²⁴ Segregation thus drove black soldiers into the arms of Filipinos for multiple reasons – not only did it degrade moral and create disaffection with the civilizing mission, it also quite literally forced them to seek housing alongside “natives” in order to acquire food and shelter.

As discipline deteriorated and black soldiers increasingly fraternized with the “natives,” officers became increasingly concerned with policing the behavior of the enlisted men. One circular from the regimental headquarters at Tayug, Pangasinan, directed that “soldiers in the immediate vicinity of barracks must be neatly dressed in regulation uniform and behave at all times properly,” noting that “the Commanding Officer has observed soldiers slovenly and dirty, lolling around, pawing over native women on the street and in *tiendas* exposed to view. This is indecent. The same behavior expected in an American town, is required here.”¹²⁵ Although it is difficult to speculate too much about the motivations and thoughts behind such terse writing, the frequency of

¹²³ Press Copies of Letters Sent, 24th Infantry, on April 13th, 1901, NA RG 391.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Circular #13 dated February 6th, 1901, General and Special Orders Received, NA RG 391.

such reports as well as the strong language with which they described the threat posed by disorderly behavior speaks volumes about the dynamics at work in the colonial occupation. It is doubtful indeed that very many American towns at the time did not see their share of slovenly behavior and male harassment. Rather, the idea of a moral distinction between just any “American town” and Tayug was a rhetorical device that contrasted a bourgeois, orderly metropole against the alleged chaos and moral depravity common to colonial spaces. The circular concluded that, “it behooves all self-respecting men for their own protection, to assist in... suppressing indecency on the part of the degraded.”¹²⁶ Black imperials often found themselves in a precarious position - placed between the metropole and the colony, they were at once expected to help suppress indecency and were seen as constantly at risk of falling into depravity themselves. The black imperial became the battleground over which the line between civilization and savagery was continually redrawn.

The regulation and demarcation of this line frequently occurred on the terrain of two issues: loyalty to the counter-insurgency cause on the one hand and cohabitation and sex with native women on the other. A pertinent example is the story of John Galloway, a sergeant and clerk with Company H who was also stationed at San Isidro and ended up under suspicion of disloyalty by the white officers of his regiment. As Galloway became disillusioned with the imperial mission, he also began a relationship with a Filipino woman. Each of these developments precipitated a harsh reaction from the white colonial authorities. In a letter dated November 16, 1899 that was printed in the *Richmond Planet* on December 30, Galloway wrote that, “The whites have begun to establish their diabolical race hatred in all its home rancor in Manila... so as to be sure of

¹²⁶Ibid.

the foundation of their supremacy when the civil rule... is established.”¹²⁷ Galloway had questioned “intelligent, well-educated Filipinos” on their thoughts on African-Americans, and was reportedly told that between the white man and the black, the Filipino viewed the former as “the devil,” and the latter as, “the angel.” In an interview with a physician named Señor Tordorica Santos, Galloway learned that due to their membership in an occupying army, Filipinos could not look upon African-Americans as friends. Nonetheless, Filipinos differentiated between blacks and whites, for the darker soldiers “did not push them off the streets, spit at them, call them damned “niggers,” abuse them in all manner of ways, and connect race hatred with duty.”¹²⁸ All of this was going on at exactly the same time when “General Fagen” was the talk of the army, and it was Galloway’s open discussion of racial hatred in the islands likely set off the suspicion of white authorities. These suspicions were bolstered when he began living with a Filipino woman in April of 1900. He was charged by the white officer corps with adultery, but although, “his occupying the same house and living in illicit cohabitation with this native woman was a matter of common knowledge at the station, he was acquitted by [the] court on account of lack of technical proof.”¹²⁹ After some time, Galloway, however, was discharged without honor for adultery and sent back to the U.S. Apparently, however, he left his wife in the States and returned to the Philippines to father a child with his Filipino paramour.

Galloway’s actions became an opportunity for colonial authorities to expand upon which domestic arrangements best supported colonial rule. After Galloway took a

¹²⁷ Letter from John Galloway to John Mitchell Jr., published in the *Richmond Planet*, December 30, 1899. SCRBC.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Press copies of Letters Sent, 24th Infantry Regiment, Entry Number 1752, NA RG 391.

clerical job for the colonial administration in Manila, news of his return made its way to Lieutenant Kerwin Arthur of the 24th infantry, who reported him to the Superintendent of Police in Manila. An investigation by the Chief of Detectives concluded that Galloway was “an exceedingly dangerous man, whose presence here is a menace to the tranquility of these Islands.” When asked for a second report pending a decision on a second deportation, Captain J.A. Moss wrote that Galloway was, “a thorough scoundrel,” who “shamefully abandoned his American wife, who from all accounts is a very respectable and worthy woman.” Furthermore, there was “no doubt” in the minds of the white officer corps that, ‘in case of future trouble over here, Galloway would at once join the Insurrectos – his heart is unquestionably with them.’¹³⁰ Galloway’s shameful conduct was thereby part and parcel of his questionable political allegiances; Galloway was a rogue black imperial who had “gone native.” Moss concluded that, due to his intimate knowledge of American military tactics and bureaucracy, he was one of the most dangerous men in the Philippines and should be deported immediately.

Nor is this point about the regulation of black desire limited to a few exceptional cases. One weakness in historical scholarship on African-Americans in the Philippines up to this point has been its tendency to focus on a few exceptional cases of men like David Fagen or John Galloway at the expense of assessing broader trends. At worst, scholars of this history have even risked idealizing the black regulars as anti-imperial heroes who underwent some sort of moral epiphany, resulting in a principled stand against white racism. This view utterly distorts our understanding of the systemic dynamics of the colonial situation that produced cases of overt anti-imperialism.

¹³⁰ J.A. Moss to the Headquarters of the Provost Marshall General, dated August 4th, 1901, Press Copies Letters Sent, 24th Infantry Regiment, NA RG 391.

Deserters were not the super-human subaltern heroes that some have made them out to be; desertion did not occur in a social vacuum or as a sudden flight after an epiphany about the injustice of Empire. Desertions were merely the most visible and shocking form of a much more general discontent that germinated and flourished in black regiments as they assimilated into an emergent colonial Filipino society. Discontentment went hand in hand with extended absences, often in the company of Filipino women. These relationships along with disciplinary grievances, frequently led black soldiers to simply disappear, often taking work in another town. Most desertions were not *to* the enemy but rather merely *away* from the army. There were many more cases where soldiers were simply absent without leave; sometimes soldiers returned after prolonged dalliances while at other times these absences would stretch into outright desertions. However, we should not take the prevalence of these smaller acts of disobedience as evidence that discontent with the racist character of the colonial situation was not widespread - quite the contrary. The specific difficulties faced by African-American regiments serving in the occupation, caused resentment and even created ideological opposition.

Absenteeism was the most prevalently employed vehicle through which soldiers distanced themselves from the disciplinary structure of the army. As soon as the regiment settled into a garrison pattern in the interior of Luzon after the end of major offensives, absences without leave became frequent occurrences in the summary courts martial records. On November 28th, 1900, 2nd Lieutenant Ira F. Fravel leveled charges against Private James J. Buford under the 33rd Article of War that he, “not being prevented by sickness or other necessity, did fail to repair at the fixed time to the place of

guard mount appointed by his commanding officer.”¹³¹ On December 12th, 1900, Fravel charged Private Cato Moore of Company D of the same charge.¹³² Only three days later on December 15th, he charged Private Robert F. Brooks, also of Company D, “being on sick report and marked quarters, did fail to appear at sick call.”¹³³ Court documents indicate that such incidents were very frequent.

Many of these absent men were in cohabitation with Filipino women, a fact viewed with mounting fear and frustration by white officers. On February 21st, 1901, Sergeant Samuel Cook, “being on guard, did leave the guard house without leave from the officer of the day and was found after “taps” sitting in the house of a native woman.”¹³⁴ Cohabitation and absenteeism became so endemic and problematic as far as discipline was concerned, that on February 23rd, 1901, Lieutenant Colonel Markley, the officer in charge of the station, issued a statement on the subject to be read in front of all enlisted men.¹³⁵ The public announcement called attention to Corporal William W. Green’s alleged seduction of Maria Eufenia Ampon, “a girl of the age of fourteen,” whom he enticed to “leave her home and live in illicit cohabitation with him.” Markley first pointed out that “his act is but one instance of a most pernicious custom that has already taken deep root in the territory occupied by this regiment, and which, if permitted to continue and increase unbridled, can but lead to a deplorable end.” He concluded that, “in the name of civilization, morality, ordinary decency and interest of the service, the regimental commander enjoins all officers and self-respecting enlisted men of the

¹³¹ Letters, Orders, and Reports Received from or Relating to Members of the 24th Infantry, 1899-1901, Entry # 1763, NA RG 391.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ General and Special Orders Received, Entry #1757, NA RG 391.

regiment to use their efforts in checking this custom.”¹³⁶ Evidently, the practice had taken on significance above and beyond a threat to good military discipline and order; civilization itself was at stake, demonstrating the threat that black desire in the colonial situation represented to the project of Empire. If the soldiers of Empire could not be relied upon to uphold bourgeois standards of sexual decency and normative domesticity, then the whole project could come crashing down.¹³⁷

The situation in the islands when T. Thomas Fortune arrived for his ill-fated bureaucratic pilgrimage early in 1903 was very tense indeed. Black men were constantly under surveillance for signs of disloyalty that could be manifested through fraternization with Filipinos. Upon his return, Fortune reported that, “the Filipino and the negro get along splendidly in a social way. It seems that the white and the negro cannot, and it is just as much a matter of general knowledge that the white man and the Filipino cannot agree.”¹³⁸ This observation apparently gave him hope for the success of the colonization plan.

Yet pervasive white supremacy in the colonial state quickly dashed Fortune’s hopes for the imperial opportunities that black accommodationists had so vociferously predicted. During Fortune’s visit to Manila, he and his party were detained and assaulted by white municipal police, resulting in a nation-wide flurry of press coverage of the incident. In May, 1903, the *New York Times* ran a story which reported that, “A companion of Mr. Fortune was arrested for a petty offense, and Mr. Fortune accompanied

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Of course, it was completely hypocritical for the white officers to level this charge against the Black soldiers who cohabited. First, many of these cohabitations resulted in later marriage and seemed to be consensual, if complicated, affairs. More importantly, white officers were by no means asexual themselves; one white officer of the 24th seems to have racked up a tab worth several thousand dollars at a high class brothel in Manila- see Press copies of Letters Sent, 1901, NA RG 391.

¹³⁸ *Springfield Daily Republican*, June 27, 1903; “Negroes should go to the Philippines,” *Trenton Times*, June 26, 1903. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

him to the police station, where an argument led to a fight, during which the police clubbed Mr. Fortune's secretary and charged Mr. Fortune with resisting officers of the law."¹³⁹ Fortune made counter-charges but they were apparently later withdrawn. The *Times* reported that Fortune had been sent in order to open up an inquiry into the possibility of "colonizing the archipelago with negroes," a plan that was "brought forcibly to the attention of the War Department by the recent agitation in the South of the matter of negro representation and suffrage." "Negro labor with American capital, it was thought, would make a success of our occupation of the islands." Fortune subsequently packed up and left the islands quickly. It was an inauspicious end to a mission that had started out with so many high hopes for what the Philippines could mean for the future of Afro-Americans.

In fact, it was not the first time that incidents of racist violence involving the municipal police occurred. Almost a year earlier over a dozen members of the Twenty-fourth infantry were detained and assaulted by municipal police while on leave in Manila. In a report on the event, which bears quoting nearly in full in order to demonstrate the pervasive racism of the Manila municipal police, Colonel Chambers McKibbon of the Twenty-fourth infantry regiment wrote:

About 12:30 A.M., June 19th, 1902, privates Howard Beck and Zack Ewing, Band, 24th Infantry, who had participated in the performance given by the 24th Infantry Minstrels that night, left the Zorilla Theatre in a caromata for their quarters... 130 yards from the Zorilla theatre, a Metropolitan policeman, with revolver in hand, grabbed the pony by the reins, exclaiming, "I want you damn niggers to go with me" whereupon private Beck replied, "What's the matter? What has happened?" to which the policeman replied, "I don't want any talk out of you damn niggers, I've already killed about twenty of you tonight." Private Beck then

¹³⁹ "T. Thomas Fortune in Row with Police; Negro Labor Commissioner Involved in a Free Fight in Manila- His Secretary Clubbed," May 14, 1903, the *New York Times*. Accessed through ProQuest historical newspapers.

replied “We’ll go with you, but we haven’t done anything.” They were then taken to the police station. While en-route the policeman several times called them “you black sons-of-bitches,” remarking, “If I were sure you sons-of-bitches had a hand in that riot, I’d hang you both.” Private Beck asked the policeman his name and number, but was refused them. Upon reaching the police station, private Beck asked the Sergeant on duty why he was being confined, to which the Sergeant replied, “About 10 o’clock tonight some of you fellows started a riot in this district, and I have orders to confine all 24th Infantry men found on the streets of Manila.” Whereupon Private Beck replied, “I have done nothing- at 10 o’clock tonight I was on the stage at the Zorilla Theatre,” The Sergeant then replied, “We now have the upper hand on you damn niggers and we intend to keep it.” Privates Beck and Ewing were then placed in a cell with about 12 other colored soldiers. Private Beck states that a number of times during the night, Metropolitan policemen walked up to the door of the cell, calling the men “you black sons-of-bitches,” etc. One policeman walked up to the door of the cell, pointed his revolver through the bars and remarked “If I hear a murmur in there, I’ll shoot you black sons-of-bitches full of holes.”... I would also state that I have been reliably informed that Corporal Emmett Hawkins, Musician Frederick A. Thomas, privates Thomas Carr, Chesterfield Butcher, Edmund Grace and Arthur J. Robinson, all of the 24th Infantry, were arrested by Metropolitan policemen while they were peacefully returning to their quarters, from the Zorilla theatre.¹⁴⁰

The incident bore many of the markings of the kind of extra-judicial violence that was then so common in the South as Jim Crow developed; racist identification of suspects, collective punishment and brutality. This was the Manila police department that confronted Fortune a year later.

Pro-segregation newspapers in the United States quickly picked up on the story of Fortune’s arrest, using it as an opportunity to once again draw the line between the upstanding Black Imperial and the racially suspect insurgent sympathizer. A week later after the *New York Times* ran its piece, the *Saint Louis Palladium* carried an excerpt of the *Times* article, adding that “some time ago we stated through the columns of the *Palladium* that Thomas T. Fortune was a dangerous leader and should keep in the

¹⁴⁰ Colonel McKibbon to the Regimental Headquarters at Manila, June 21, 1902. Press Copies of Letters Sent, NA RG 391.

background. We received information some time ago that he was connected with a paper in Manila. We knew then that the climax would soon come. So it has, just as we predicted.”¹⁴¹ The *Palladium* seemed to hint that Fortune was connected to a subversive Manila publication, raising the specter of David Fagen. Fortune’s presence in the colonial periphery was an opportunity for these papers to separate the dangerous black leaders from the acceptable, and the upstanding from the radical. An article in the *Tuscon Citizen* went even further, writing in colloquial and satirical style that,

Some time ago President Roosevelt sent a professional negro called T. Thomas Fortune as a “special commissioner” to Hawaii and the Philippines to report on something or other, probably on the beauty of receiving six dollars per diem and expenses... Fortune is one of the negroes who would “sell his coat to buy a gun”... We haven’t the slightest doubt that a translation of all our Afro-Americans of T. Thomas Fortune’s class to Luzon, or Sulu would be attended by the happiest results... We are satisfied that the Filipinos and the Fortune school of Afro-Americans were made for each other. It is our profound conviction that out of the fine ferment created by the contact of these two energetic civilizations the world would get a prize.¹⁴²

Given the deepening dissatisfaction within black America with what was perceived from many quarters as the pusillanimity of the black Republican and Tuskegee leadership, the *Tuscon Citizen*’s message was deeply political. It singled out Fortune as part of a “class” of dangerous black agitators who the nation would do well to be rid of.

White racists capitalized politically on the failure of Fortune’s visit, contributing to the failure of the black imperial plan and discrediting black accommodationists. Upon returning from the islands in 1903 he published a piece in the *Springfield Daily Republican* in which he held up the Filipino rebel as an ideal, arguing provocatively that “had the negro instituted the same mode of conduct and retaliation 20 years ago as the

¹⁴¹ T. Thomas Fortune Gets into Trouble; Arrest of Companion of the Editor the Clubbing of His Secretary Causes Him to Leave Manila and Sail for Home,” *St. Louis Palladium*, May 23, 1903.

¹⁴² “A Race Merger Suggested,” *Tuscon Citizen*, August 19, 1903. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

Filipinos did two or three years ago, things would be vastly different to-day. If you step on a Filipino's corn he will step on yours; if you pop him in the jaw he will pop you on the same place. And in this way he has earned the respect of the whites."¹⁴³ Fortune, though he already displayed radical tendencies, seems to have been radicalized by his experience in the Philippines. The language of the *Palladium* is telling: Fortune was one of a "professional" class of Afro-Americans who constituted a "Fortune school," a radical vanguard of trouble-makers who would "sell [their] coat to buy a gun" – a sentiment far afield from Booker T. Washington's emphasis on thrift and practicality. Along similar lines, the *Daily Picayune* reported that Fortune had returned from the islands, "under a cloud, he having been, it is said, particularly obnoxious in his conduct at Manila, where he was taken up bodily and packed on board a Government transport, with instructions to sail for the United States without stopping."¹⁴⁴ Though certainly untrue, this rendition of the story successfully played upon racist notions of wild black masculinity that suggested a violent and segregationist response. The article concluded that, "the race problem would be greatly improved by sending Fortune to the Cannibal Islands or some other out-of-the-way spot, where he will be unable to thrust himself and his opinions upon a long-suffering public."¹⁴⁵ For the editor of the *Picayune*, the savage tropics were a place to relocate not upstanding black imperials, but instead "obnoxious" black radicals. News of the incident made it into national black press as well, though of course without the

¹⁴³ "In Hawaii and the Philippines; A Negro's Observations – The Latter a Good Place for His Race; Remarks of T. Thomas Fortune at a New York Reception," *Springfield Daily Republican*, June 27, 1903.

¹⁴⁴ "Tafts Successor; Latest Candidate for Governor of the Philippines is Thomas Fortune," July 23, 1903. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

flourishes rendered by the *Palladium* and the *Picayune*.¹⁴⁶ The racism in the colonial state against both black soldiers and members of the commission like Fortune soon filtered back into the pages of black newspapers and the consciousness of black intellectuals. Despite the readiness of black soldiers to serve their flag, it seemed that the situation for black Americans was worsening. Some black intellectuals soon identified a connection between the Empire and the development of increasingly pernicious forms of racism.

¹⁴⁶ See, "T. Thomas Fortune Gets into Trouble; Arrest of a Companion of the Editor and the Clubbing of His Secretary Causes him to Leave Manila and sail for Home," May 16, 1903, Baltimore *Afro-American*, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

Epilogue: The Shadow of Shadows

In “The Negro Mind Reaches Out,” published as part of Alain Locke’s *New Negro* anthology in 1925, W.E.B. Du Bois reflected on the prediction he had made at the dawn of the century.¹⁴⁷ He concluded that, just as in 1899, the problem of the twentieth century was still the problem of the Color Line, for the “fruit of the bitter rivalries of economic imperialism,” - “world dissension and catastrophe,” - “still lurk[ed] in the unsolved problem of race relations.”¹⁴⁸ Global Empire’s emphasis on the savagery of the darker peoples had duped the white workers, who had become enthralled by the false proposition that they stood guard over something precious, a nebulous “civilization” that was perpetually at risk of falling to the dark savages. “Color hate,” in these circumstances, “easily assumes the form of a religion and the laborer... votes armies and navies for “punitive” expeditions; he sends his sons as soldiers and sailors; he composes the Negro-hating mob, demands Japanese exclusion and lynches untried prisoners.”¹⁴⁹ In this sense, it was the global periphery - civilization’s “shadow” - that told the secrets of seemingly national race hatred. Yet Du Bois also predicted, in the final section of the essay entitled “The Shadow of Shadows,” that Empire would spawn another reaction in the form of a revolt of the darker peoples that would also obliterate the false consciousness of the white laborer.

Developments in the United States during the twenty years since the failure of the Black Imperial plan, Du Bois thought, were particularly indicative of the changing global situation. He noted that, “for the first time in America, the American Negro is to-day

¹⁴⁷ W.E.B. Du Bois, “Worlds of Color: The Negro Mind Reaches Out,” in *New Negro*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Atheneum, 1980).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 385.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 407.

universally recognized as capable of speaking for himself.”¹⁵⁰ This was an important shift since, “less than twenty-five years ago a conference of friends of the Negro could meet at Lake Mohonk to discuss his problems without a single Negro present.” He also credited the antagonistic tactics of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People with the drop in lynching rates since 1923.¹⁵¹ Du Bois hailed the new internationalism of labor and anti-racist efforts with joy, noting that, “Negroes of the world are reaching out hands toward each other to know, to sympathize, to inquire.”¹⁵² Implicit but unnamed within Du Bois analysis of colonialism and racism was the spectre of the “Black Pacific” experience.

This experience was distinctly disillusioning for the black actors who observed and participated in it, which discredited Tuskegee and convinced many that the fight for freedom would need to be fought and won at home. Shipped off with hopes of uplifting the race and winning the full rights of citizenship at long last, black soldiers met with the same racist treatment abroad that they experienced domestically. Indeed, in late 1902 when the black regiments returned to the U.S., the domestic situation had deteriorated even further. Indicative of the atmosphere was the effort by the white leadership of the Spanish-American War Veterans Association to exclude black veterans from the organization.¹⁵³ At the emancipation celebration ceremonies that year, Bishop Alexander Walters spoke about the plight, counseling steadfastness but not hesitating to point out that, “the laws are growing more stringent and the lines tighter. There [are] many places in the North forbidding the colored man’s entrance. Southern ideas are making their way

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 411.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 414.

¹⁵² Ibid., 412.

¹⁵³ Indianapolis *Freeman*, September 27, 1902. Quoted in Gatewood, *Black Americans and the White Man’s Burden*, p. 293.

northward.”¹⁵⁴ The regiments were sent back to desolate forts in Montana and Oklahoma, far from the explosive atmosphere of more populated areas.

The stories these soldiers told contributed to the rapid discrediting of the colonization scheme, contributing to a movement away from a politics that accommodated itself to the “color line.” In 1903 Rienzi B. Lemus, a veteran of the Philippine campaign who had reported regularly to the *Richmond Planet* on conditions in the islands, wrote a comprehensive critique of Senator Morgan’s proposal for the *Colored American Magazine*. He reported in this article that proponents of the plan had exaggerated the economic opportunities in the islands and had also grossly miscalculated the willingness of the Filipino people to accept such mass immigration peaceably. Lienzi also noted that racism had followed the flag.¹⁵⁵ As one young black businessman named Harry H. Pace put it, “the task at hand then is not to hunt a new home, but to make the present one more comfortable.”¹⁵⁶ The involvement of the Tuskegee machine in the colonization plan ultimately backfired on their political credibility. Asking whether it was, “possible, and probable, that nine millions of men can make effective progress in economic lines if they are deprived of political rights,” and answering with an, “emphatic *No*,” W.E.B. Du Bois took a strong stand against the accommodationist position.¹⁵⁷ In “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others,” Du Bois lambasted colonization schemes, arguing that, “by the irony of fate, nothing has more effectually made this programme seem hopeless than the recent course of the United States toward weaker and darker

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., quoted in Gatewood, *Black Americans and the White Man’s Burden*, p. 294.

¹⁵⁵ Lemus, “The Negro and the Philippines, 314-318. Quoted in Gatewood, *Black Americans and the White Man’s Burden*, 312.

¹⁵⁶ Pace, “Philippine Islands and American Negro,” 482-485. Quoted in Gatewood, *Black Americans and the White Man’s Burden*, 316.

¹⁵⁷ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 17.

peoples in the West Indies, Hawaii, and the Philippines.”¹⁵⁸ This course, premised on the fantasy of a color hierarchy, had been made quite clear to black Americans in the letters home from black soldiers and reporting on T. Thomas Fortune’s trip to the Philippines.

As the Tuskegee machine reached a height of power and clamped down on an increasing number of black print voices, one of the issues that resistance gathered around was the anti-imperialist cause in the Philippines. In 1904, J. Max Barber founded a militant black magazine, the *Voice of the Negro*. W.E.B. Du Bois, who was just starting to publicly outline his differences from the sage of Tuskegee, would write for it frequently during the next few years. In 1904, the *Voice* published a series of three articles by Fortune on the basic findings of his mission to the Philippines. However, the time for that plan had passed, and with the promotion of the notoriously racist Luke E. Wright to governor of the Philippines following Taft’s departure, the prospects for a successful Afro-Filipino republic were dimmer than ever.¹⁵⁹ After the founding of the Niagara movement in 1905 largely through the efforts of Du Bois and the radical Boston journalist and anti-Bookerite William Monroe Trotter, the *Voice* would carry two essays on the movement by Du Bois.¹⁶⁰ The *Voice* also gave Fortune much wider reign to speak his mind about the situation in the Philippines than he was allowed in a Tuskegee periodical.

The *Voice* was also the organ that published a series of articles by Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins, a novelist and journalist, called “The Dark Races of the Twentieth Century,” in which she criticized Anglo-Saxonism and urged ties of international

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁵⁹ *New York Times*, February 2, 1904. Gatewood, *Black Americans and the White Man’s Burden*, 317.

¹⁶⁰ “The Niagara Movement,” Sept. 1905, *The Voice* Vol II, pp. 619-622; “The Growth of the Niagara Movement,” Jan. 1906, *The Voice* Vol. III. Pp. 43-45.

solidarity between the darker races.¹⁶¹ Hopkins, while at times betraying a missionary uplift sentiment, also displayed a certain Marxist sensibility. She wrote that Afro-Americans must, “take a stand with the vast human tide and ‘sink or swim’... with the great majority” when the “great labor contest” inevitably comes about.¹⁶² “In such circumstances,” she continued, “we want men... who will teach the Anglo-Saxon that ‘all men were created equal’ and that ‘*all men*’ are not *white* men.”¹⁶³ Hopkins had written for the *Colored American*, but when it was taken over by “Washington and his men,” she left for the *Voice*. In a letter to none other than William Monroe Trotter, she explained Tuskegee editorial directive to her had been: “‘not a word of complaint,’ no ‘literary’ efforts, ‘no talk of wrongs,’ or of a ‘proscribed race,’ no ‘glittering generalities,’ no ‘international aspect’ of the Negro question, no talk of ‘Filipinos.’”¹⁶⁴ Hopkins was by no means the only black Marxist to be affected by the loud debate on the place of Afro-Americans in the new empire.

The matter had already come to a head in 1903, when radicals led by William Monroe Trotter disrupted a meeting in Boston intended as a platform for Booker T. Washington and newly returned T. Thomas Fortune. Though it is difficult to ascertain from second-hand print sources exactly what transpired at the meeting, the *Boston Globe* ran a fairly detailed account.

¹⁶¹ For more on Hopkins, see Lois Brown, *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins: Black Daughter of the Revolution*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008. Ira Dworkin, ed., *Daughter of the Revolution: The Major Non-Fiction Works of Pauline E. Hopkins*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007; John Cullen Gruesser, ed., *The Unruly Voice: Rediscovering Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996.

¹⁶² From “The Darker Races of the Twentieth Century,” published in five installments in *Voice of the Negro* between February 1905 and July 1905. Quoted in Colleen C. O’Brien, “‘Blacks in all Quarters of the Globe’: Anti-Imperialism, Cosmopolitanism, and International Labor in Pauline Hopkin’s Literary Journalism,” *American Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (June 2009): 247.

¹⁶³ “The Dark Races of the Twentieth Century VI: The North American Indian – Conclusion,” *Voice of the Negro* 2.6 (July 1905): 330. Taken from Ira Dworkin, *Daughter of the Revolution*, 330.

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in O’Brien, “Blacks in All Quarters of the Globe,” 260.

Surrounded by a struggling mass of angry people of his own race, in the confusion of fainting women and fighting men, unable to address his audience or to persuade them into a state of sanity, Booker T. Washington met his first really hostile demonstration in Boston last evening at the Zion A.M.E. church... The church was packed to its doors with colored people. They fairly swarmed inside, and there was not an inch of standing room to spare... A wave of anti-Washington sentiment was unmistakably abroad.¹⁶⁵

T. Thomas Fortune, “an appointee by President Roosevelt to investigate the labor problems of the Philippines... opened his address with a loyal and eloquent support of Booker Washington, in which he arraigned his people for some of their faults in a manner that plainly did not take well with the audience.” Fortune was forced to stop because of a coughing bout. Apparently members of the audience sprinkled the platform with cayenne pepper, making the rest of Fortune’s speech very uncomfortable indeed. By this time, “every available police officer in division 5 and many of division 16 were hurried to the church, prepared for harsh measures.” At this, all hell seemed to break loose; people rushed for the stairways to the door and Trotter was forcibly ejected.¹⁶⁶

Washington apparently still attempted to deliver a speech that showed how out of touch he seemed to be with the concerns of black Bostonians. He began by addressing the peculiar difficulties of black life in northern cities where “the number of colored people... is constantly increasing.” He urged young black men in cities to fortify themselves, “with the best education, and with a strong moral and religious sense of responsibility, and with the earnest cultivation of habits of industry and thrift.”

Washington showed himself to be outside of the mainstream; people had heard enough

¹⁶⁵ “Negroes Make Riotous Scene; Booker T. Washington was Speaking to Them; His Opponents Sought to Have Him Answer Certain Questions; Large Force of Policement Called to Zion A.M.E. Church—One Man Stabbed and Had to be Sent to the Hospital—Three Persons Arrested, One of Them William M. Trotter,” *Boston Globe*, July 31, 1903. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

about uplift- they wanted to hear about action. Washington presented absolutely no program for tackling racism head on, and that was what the Bostonians wanted to hear. Their concerns took the form of a series of questions that they had written for Washington before hand, but which he refused to answer during the course of the meeting.

These questions bear witness to the ideological contest going on at this moment in black history. The first read, “In your letter to the *Montgomery Advertiser*, Nov. 27, you said, ‘Every revised constitution throughout the southern states has put a premium upon intelligence, ownership of property, thrift and character.’ Did you not thereby indorse the disfranchising of our race?” Another read, “When you said, ‘It is not so important whether the negro was in the inferior cars, as whether there was in that car a superior man, not a beast, did you not minimize the outrage of the insulting jim-crow car discrimination and justify it by the bestiality of the negro?’ Trotter later explained that the riot was caused by the refusal of Washington to take the questions, and the fact that “T. T. Fortune... make an attack on the New England representatives to the recent Afro-American council which was called to protest against disfranchisement, but was turned into a republican rally.” The public had all it could stand of T. T. Fortune the Bookerite/Republican attack dog - they wanted T.T. Fortune the radical.¹⁶⁷

Part of the axis along which Fortune began to forge a more independent path was his vocal criticism of the colonial state. He denied, “ever having said that negroes should emigrate to the Philippines.”¹⁶⁸ He specified that, “The most that he said or wished to convey, in those addresses was that the Philippine Islands all things being equal, would

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ The *Montgomery Advertiser*, August 11th, 1903.

be a good place for the negroes... But he did not say that all things are equal; he does not say so now, because they are not, and 'will not be as long as Southern rebel sentiment is allowed to dominate the social and political life of the Philippine Islands.'"¹⁶⁹ In 1904 Fortune wrote an article that was reprinted in the *Springfield Daily Republican* in which he again thoroughly excoriated the racism of the colonial state. He began by pointing out that though the War Department reported, "there are not a sufficient number of applicants for the position of teacher in the Philippine islands... In making application for teachers' certificates, applicants have to send their photographs [and] if the applicant is an Afro-American he does not hear any more from his application."¹⁷⁰ He continued that, "The Philippine commission do not want Afro-Americans in the Philippine islands in any capacity whatever, and those who are in the Philippine civil service have not and do not get the advancement in the service to which they are entitled, inexperienced white men being jumped over their heads every day." "Some bureau chiefs," he wrote, "flatly refuse negroes sent to them from the eligible list by the civil-service commission." Singling out Secretary Taft, Fortune accused him of having knowledge of this, "since the writer saw several indorsements [sic] made by him on such rejected papers." Fortune lamented the fact that the Philippine commission continually overlooked black teachers, since white teachers "have very little social intercourse with the natives... [and] get out of the work as soon as they can," while "the negro teacher enters into the spirit of his work and into the social life of the natives, gaining the confidence of the parents and thus leading the children easily in the ways of American educational methods and living." Indeed, white

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ "Negro Teachers in the Philippines," T. Thomas Fortune, *The Springfield Daily Republican*, August 8th, 1904. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

authorities may have viewed this social amicability fearfully, as a seedbed for internationalist anti-imperial alliances.

In 1909 Fortune issued another “Scathing Rebuke to the Government for its Unfair Consideration of Afro-American Labor in Insular Possessions.”¹⁷¹ Fortune found that, “at every move... the local federal authorities were opposed to the purposes of my investigation and did what they could to make them of no effect... They persecuted, especially in the Philippines, the agent commissioned... and were not punished by the Washington authorities.” Apparently, “the plea was that the Negro and the Filipino got along too well together and thus endangered the well being of the government.” Evidently, as with cohabitation and desertion in the regiments, white bureaucrats were paranoid about the prospects for political solidarity between African-Americans and Filipinos resulting in a challenge to white supremacy in the islands. Whereas at the outset the notion of the Black Imperial had viewed the ability of the African-Americans and Filipinos to mingle socially as a chance to more effectively rule by encouraging “benevolent assimilation,” that prospect had quickly become a cause for fear and violent reaction.

Indeed, the ramifications of the Black Imperial experience for black politics went far beyond the contest between Booker T. Washington and the New England black radicals and continued to influence black intellectuals for decades. In his later years, Fortune joined the editorial staff of Marcus Garvey’s *Negro World* and achieved considerable notoriety in 1925 for publicly splitting with Garvey over the question of the association between the Garveyite movement and the Anglo-Saxon Club of Virginia.

¹⁷¹ Unfairness of United States; Former Treasury Agent’s Scathing Rebuke to the Government For Its Unfair Consideration of Afro-American Labor In Insular Possessions-Panama Canal Case an Example,” The *Baltimore Afro-American*, November 13th, 1909.

Garvey had been sentenced to a five year term in an Atlanta Federal Prison, and was nevertheless attempting to run operations from his cell. Under the rubric of “America for the white man and Africa for the black man,” Garvey had opened up lines of communication and cooperation with white supremacist groups like the Anglo-Saxon Club and the Ku Klux Klan. Fortune, in an editorial in the official organ of the Garveyites, wrote that,

Mr. Garvey does not stand for anything that would degrade the Negro in his manhood or citizenship, and the White American Society, the Anglo-Saxon Clubs and the Ku Klux Klan stand for nothing, in the last analysis, that would re-organize the manhood and citizenship of the American Negro in law. They simply use the ‘race purity’ and ‘Africa for Africans’ terms to drive the American Negro out of his social and economic rights and we are against them because they are against us and we protest that they have no authority to use Mr. Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement association to further their infamous propaganda of isolation and degradation of the Negro in American life.¹⁷²

Fortune’s thinking suggests that he learned some very important lessons from the Black Imperial episode. He was now able to recognize plans to separate races with oceans as little more than excuses to justify racism and disfranchisement.

Hubert Harrison, the indefatigable black Marxist and also an editor of the *Negro World*, was another poignant example of how America’s relationship to the Philippines resonated within black politics. Later described by A. Philip Randolph as the “father of Harlem radicalism,” Harrison emigrated to that city from his native Danish West Indies in 1900 at the age of 17. In 1911 he wrote a series of articles on the “Black Man’s Burden” which were published in the *International Socialist Review*, a publication owned by Charles H. Kerr that opened its pages to discussions of “the Negro Problem.” Printed

¹⁷² “A Split Seems Imminent in Garvey Forces; Editor of Negro World Criticised Anglo Saxon Club of Virginia; Garvey From Pen Repudiates Article; Doesn’t Retract, Says T. Thomas Fortune, Who Wrote the Editorial,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, September 5, 1925. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

in 1912, the articles posed a challenge to socialists preparing for the party convention in Indianapolis. “The Black Man’s Burden” directly challenged Rudyard Kipling’s famous *McClure*’s poem, standing that poem on its head and simultaneously challenging Eugene Debs, who in 1903 had made a reference to “the white burden bearer” in his article on “The Negro in the Class Struggle.” “Providence, according to Mr. Kipling,” Harrison wrote,

Has been pleased to place upon the white man’s shoulders the tremendous burden of regulating the affairs of men of all other colors, who, for the purpose of his argument, are backward and undeveloped... But it does not seem to have occurred to the proponents of this pleasant doctrine that the shoe may be on the other foot so far as the other twelve hundred million are concerned... I have no doubt but that the colored peoples of the world will have a word or two to say in their own defense... I am not speaking here of the evidences of Negro advancement, not even making a plea for justice. I wish merely to draw attention to certain pitiful facts. This is all that is necessary – at present. For I believe that those facts will furnish such a damning indictment of the Negro’s American over-lord as must open the eyes of the world.¹⁷³

He went on to list in painstaking detail the various political and social disfranchisements perpetrated on black Americans by white Americans, and the rhetorical techniques used to rationalize these actions. Harrison uses the language of the “white man’s burden,” which was originally intended to urge uplift in the Philippines, as an opportunity to criticize the way the doctrine was instantiated in North America against blacks. For it was not just Filipinos or black Americans who faced the pernicious effects of the self-serving argument of racial backwardness, but rather “Men of all colors.”

In fact, Harrison was writing within a black literary tradition that had already sprung up over the previous decade; since 1899 many Afro-Americans had been writing

¹⁷³ “The Black Man’s Burden [I]” *International Socialist Review* 12 (April 1912): 660-63; reprinted with slight changes in *The Negro and the Nation*, 2-11; reworked as “The Real Negro Problem.” *Modern Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (September-December 1926): 314-21. Taken from Jeffrey Perry, ed., *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, Wesleyan University Press, 2001.

“Black Man’s Burden” literature and poetry that satirized Kipling’s original.¹⁷⁴ In a poem that was eventually published in the volume *When Africa Awakes* in New York in 1920, Harrison contributed his own version to this tradition. In words that may best sum up the politics that arose in the historical context of the failed Black Imperial plan, he wrote in the first stanza:

Take up the Black Man’s burden---
Send forth the worst ye breed,
And bind our sons in shackles
To serve your selfish greed;
To wait in heavy harness
Be-devilled and beguiled
Until the Fates remove you
From a world you have defiled.

Hidden in the shadows of the white man’s burden, there was a heavier burden yet: the burden of being black. It was a burden that the Zorilla minstrel players in Manila had to bear; it was a burden that T. Thomas Fortune had to bear; and it was a burden that black soldiers and black people in both the Philippines and the United States had to bear. And so, just as with W.E.B. Du Bois, “there surges in me a vast pity” for the souls of white folk, and the world that they defiled.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Gatewood, *Black Americans and the White Man’s Burden*, 184-185.

¹⁷⁵ Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*, 19.

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