The New Negro
Explorations in Identity and
Social Consciousness,
1910–1922

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The world of the future will look upon the world of today as an essentially new turning point in the path of human progress. All over the world the spirit of democratic striving is making itself felt. The new issues have brought forth new ideas of freedom, politics, industry and society at large. The new Negro living in this new world is just as responsive to these new impulses as other people are.

—HUBERT HENRY HARRISON, 1917

True, among New Negro radicals was to be found the general belief that art should support progressive social change. However, even black radicals tended to harbor an overwhelming desire for the projection of idealized, genteel “Negro types” in literature, and their interest in African American theatre stemmed more from the desire to steer existing productions from the realm of slapstick, vaudevillean entertainment to more serious theatrical efforts, rather than toward the kinds of radical experimentation that such drama groups as the Provincetown Players were seeking to accomplish.2 Similarly, the subjects of Freudianism and the New Woman found few echoes within the ranks of black economic or political radicals, or the later New Negro culturalists. Moreover, except perhaps as exotic other, African Americans distinguished themselves by their relative absence from the discourse of white radicals of the period. Undeniably influenced by, but temporally lagging behind the radical political trends among whites, the New Negro movement followed its own, relatively autonomous social dynamic.

If social developments just prior to and during World War I ushered in the era of the New Politics, the New Sexuality, the New Woman, and the New American Culture, it also gave rise to the New Negro, whose relationship to these other, pioneering social trends proved to be rather problematic. The greatest parallels and intertwinings between black and white developments of the era are to be found in the New Politics where, in New York City especially, a small but fervent number of native-born black Americans and recently arrived West Indians were to cast their lot with the Socialist or Communist parties. On the other hand, within the New Culture movement, whose “participants were bound by a common commitment to demolish the genteel tradition in order to create a new American culture in its place,” there were few echoes to be found among blacks.1

In the late nineteenth century, desires for economic stability and economic democracy on the part of black tenant farmers and agrarian and industrial wage earners alike found wide, organized expression in groups such as the Colored Farmers’ Alliance and the Knights of Labor. Among the masses of working-class African Americans, issues concerning oppression and the lack of formal political democracy (the right to testify in court or to vote, for example), while
certainly not ignored, tended to remain sub-
ordinate to more pressing economic and
directly allied political questions. Agrarian
protest by blacks after the 1890s would
prove sporadic. And aside from pockets of
organizing by the Industrial Workers of the
World (IWW) and federal American Feder-
ation of Labor (AFL) unions, the proletar-
ian impulse among the African American
working masses would have to wait for the
industrial unionism of the 1930s to discover
organizational bedrock. Second, among the
working masses was to be found a sense of
black group identity and of a collective
black group culture existing apart from that
of the dominant American identity and
culture. While entertaining regional vari-
ations, this sense of group identity func-
tioned as a strong force in the collective
African American consciousness, man-
ifesting itself in cooperative enterprises
such as mutual-aid or insurance societies, or
other all-black institutions such as churches
and lodges.

On the other hand, within the African
American “middle class” just prior to
World War I, there existed two predominant
ideological tendencies, two “clusterings” of
ideological elements, if you will, both of
which ultimately drew upon opposing no-
tions of African American social identity
and of African American social justice. Dat-
ing from the early nineteenth century, the
older tendency clustered around notions of
immediate assimilation, political agitation,
and demands for full civil rights, and was so-
cially anchored in the educated strata of
African American professionals such as
doctors, lawyers, ministers, and teachers.
The more recent tendency revolved around
an emphasis on race pride, solidarity and
self-help, on inner-group economic and
moral improvement, and was rooted in the
growing entrepreneurial strata of the post-
Civil War era. The latter, of course, was the
black worldview identified with and popular-
ized by Booker T. Washington. Consis-
tent with the class formation of the African
American business-oriented strata was the
notion that the road to black political libera-
tion could be reached through existing
portals of economic opportunity: the learn-
ing of skilled trades and the securing of
land and business ownership. Once African
Americans had made themselves indis-
ensable to the dominant economy, they
believed, there was no way that their par-
ticipation in the realm of politics could be
denied.

From the latter part of the nineteenth cen-
tury onward the struggle between these two
worldviews—the assimilationist-oriented
protest tradition and the more nationalist
and economically oriented one—represented
a struggle for ideological and political he-
ghemony among the dual social fractions
comprising the black middle class. That
clash was personified in the rift between
W.E.B. Du Bois and members and followers
of the Niagara Movement on the one hand;
supporters of Booker T. Washington and the
“Tuskegee Machine” on the other. But the
social impact of World War I, coupled with
the death of Washington in 1915, resulted
in immediate as well as long-term trans-
formations of the ideological landscape of
African America. Economically, the result-
ing South-to-North black migration of
some one-half million souls during the war
brought multitudes of blacks not only into
compact, urban communities, but also for a
great many of them, into a cash economy for
the first time. The war itself resulted in the
army service of some 380,000 black soldiers,
11 percent of whom were actually assigned
to combat units. Their novel experiences—
especially of those men who saw actual
combat—instilled in them a determination
to bring back to American shores a little of
the democracy for which the United States
had supposedly fought overseas. Most im-
portantly, the spatial and political configu-
ration of northern, urban centers offered
possibilities for self-organization and physi-
cal self-defense—a potential not unnoticed
by blacks during the ensuing race riots that
rocked the North especially.

In formal political terms, black male mi-
grants of voting age were now able to
exercise the franchise; in a larger political sense, the availability of relative freedoms of expression and of association in the North allowed for participation in independent trade unions, protest groups, and the like, which (theoretically, at least) need not confine themselves to the sphere of reformism alone. And finally, the existence of relatively large and compact, black urban communities allowed for the flowering of commercially viable, black cultural expressions (from which black folk themselves did not always cull the principal economic rewards to be had). These included the production of books, magazines, and especially newspapers; a “race record” industry in the form of “separate but equal” talent recruitment, recording, and distribution of black musical forms by dominant recording companies, black theatre, with its popular but (as black “middle-class” commentators would complain) excessive emphasis upon vaudevillian forms; as well as numerous restaurants, cabarets, and notorious “buffet flats” where one might sample all possible varieties of African American life. Recently arrived southern migrants constituted a formidable political and cultural force which, in the teens and twenties, had yet to determine its own, independent voice apart from the black petit bourgeois elements which sought to direct its formidable energies. Their sudden presence during the war transformed the face of the northern metropolis. Here was the source of the New Negro, or as A. Philip Randolph defined him, the “New Crowd Negro”:

As among other peoples, the New Crowd must be composed of young men who are educated, radical and fearless. Young Negro radicals must control the press, church, schools, politics and labor. The conditions for joining the New Crowd are: ability, radicalism and sincerity. The New Crowd views with much expectancy the revolutions ushering in a New World. The New Crowd is uncompromising. Its tactics are not defensive but offensive. It would not send notes after a Negro is lynched. It would not appeal to white leaders. It would appeal to the plain working people everywhere. The New Crowd sees that the war came, that the Negro fought, bled and died, and he is not yet free. The New Crowd would have no armistice with lynch-law; no truce with jim-crowism, and disfranchisement; no peace until the Negro receives his complete social, eco-

FORCE, FORCE TO THE UMBOSF--FORCE WITHOUT STINT OR LIMIT

THE "NEW CROWD NEGRO" MAKING AMERICA SAFE FOR HIMSELF

nomic and political justice. To this end the New Crowd would form an alliance with white radicals such as the I.W.W., the Socialists and the Non-Partisan League, to build a new society—a society of equals, without class, race, caste or religious distinctions.6

In a 1923 issue dedicated to the “New Negro Woman,” a Messenger magazine editorial heralded her arrival: “In politics, business and labor, in the professions, church and education, in science, art and literature, the New Negro Woman, with her head erect and spirit undaunted, is resolutely marching forward, ever conscious of her historic and noble mission of doing her bit toward the liberation of her people in particular and the human race in general.”7 Of the seven essays written by women for this special number, six pertained to the specific roles of women; and of those six, five were addressed to the problems and possibilities of working women. Only one, which took up the question of segregation, could be said to have expressed strong feminist content.

It has been noted that “the difference between the modern woman, and the suffragist or feminist of the nineteenth century, was her insistence on the right to self-fulfillment in both public life and in relationships with men.”8 To what extent this was true for the heterosexual, middle-class African American woman of the postwar era remains to be seen. In a great many cases it was not just a question as to whether or not she desired a separate career, since the need to work outside the home was for most black women a necessity and not a luxury: “Because the Negro mother must work outside of the home to supplement the Negro father’s earnings, the Negro woman teacher must must needs be mother and guide, as well as class-room instructor.”9 But most of all the New Negro Woman faced disabilities of both race and gender:

In the Negro world there is one figure the victim of a two-fold segregation and discrimination—the New Negro Woman. Woman’s emancipation is strangely parallel with the Negro’s struggle. Inferiority is the reason given for her oppression. She has been considered as a mere chattel, cowed and subdued, taught that she, like children, must be seen and not heard. Pented as an ornament of the home, a plaything for the male, producer of a line of warriors and race builders. Lacking all chance for development she is called inferior because she hasn’t developed. The Negro woman falls heir to all these prejudices, and to add injury to distress she is a Negro. If there is any one person against whom the doors have been closed it is the New Negro Woman. As a woman she was outside her sphere. As a Negro woman she was impossible. In industry, education and politics she is gradually coming into her own. But remember her closed doors are the thickness of two—she is first a woman, then a Negro. May the fates be kind to her!!10

While elements of the new feminism were certainly embraced by a large number of New Negro women, for them, as for New Negro men, the question of overt racism is what tended to capture their political attention.

The political and cultural impact of the newly arrived migrants to the North, the mass activity and social upheavals engendered by the war, and the occurrence of race riots in which blacks vigorously fought back, introduced a more “radical” perspective into the dualistic thought patterns of the African American petite bourgeoisie. Writing in the late 1940s, Harry Haywood spoke of the resulting emergence of a “breakaway strata” of black petit bourgeoisie elements during the World War I era.11 Ideologically speaking, this heterogeneous “breakaway” was of multiple minds. For example, the protest tradition of the assimilationist-oriented, professional class fraction, held somewhat in check under Washington’s influence, was accorded added momentum, with politics for some no longer merely signifying the politics of reformism.
Moreover, where the rising black entrepreneurial strata of the late nineteenth century placed emphasis upon individual economic gain, New Negro radical intellectuals overtly concerned themselves with the economic plight of the masses of black folk—but without ceasing to support black economic entrepreneurialism. And finally, by the mid-1920s, in contrast to the traditional assimilationism of the black-educated strata, a fresh stream of African American artistic and intellectual thought emerged in the form of a reform-oriented, cultural nationalism. The development and refinement of literary black culture, New Negro culturalists believed, was the intellectual wedge par excellence which would eventually force open the door to black social equality. But the main significance of this latter trend was that the culture of the African American masses was to be taken as the base from which the new “high culture” would extend. However the presence of the awakening mass of African Americans might be interpreted by New Negro culturalists or politicos, its activities remained central to the concerns of both.

From 1900 onward, powerful ideological tendencies in the form of progressivism, socialism, and nationalism offered potential alternatives to Americans in general. With respect to African Americans, however, turn-of-the-century progressivism was a self-contradictory movement. On the one hand, it contributed to the spread of reform sentiments, such as that marked by the formation of the all-black Niagara Movement in 1905. The interracial National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, formed in 1909, whose white founding members tilted toward either progressive or socialist sentiments, was also a product of this development. On the other hand, the reform spirit of most white progressives balked at any suggestion of African American civic equality. In the South, moreover, the leaders of progressive reform and of the segregationist impulse against blacks were often identical. For these latter reasons, progressivism was never truly able to gain a secure foothold among African Americans.

Yet another alternative lay in the embrace of Socialist party doctrine, which viewed the solution to the evils of modern, capitalist society in the construction of a cooperative commonwealth where the basic means of production, agrarian as well as industrial, would be in the hands of those who themselves were the producers. Blacks such as A. Philip Randolph who embraced socialism saw in the coming of the cooperative commonwealth the eradication of racism’s raison d’être. Fundamental social conflicts within American society, they believed, were based principally upon the existence of class divisions. Racism was something that the capitalist class fostered among working-class whites in order to politically divide workers as a whole, all the better to exploit them. Consequently, the transformation of the American economic structure from one based upon capitalist exploitation to one based upon principles of socialist cooperation would destroy the foundation upon which racism’s existence was predicated.

Consistently, the assertion of social identities other than those of social class—for example, those of an ethnic, racial, or national bent—were considered aberrations, obfuscations. The growing militancy and social questioning of at least some members of the “breakaway” entrepreneurial strata merged with socialist tendencies already grown popular in many avenues of American society. But in appropriating these arguments as their own, Harlem radicals were led to bend and ply the strict economic determinism of the Socialist party to the complexities of black economic and political life. This they accomplished with varying degrees of success.

Political self-determination in one form or another was seen by more nationalistically oriented African Americans and West Indians as a means of addressing the social ills incurred by black Americans as a whole.
As far as nationalism was concerned, there existed, to be sure, an African American tradition extending back to the free black population of the late eighteenth century. This trend to nationalism was given greater impetus during the war by demands for self-determination occurring within Europe: in the east, among Poles, Serbs, Croatians, and others; and in the west, the armed struggle for the political independence of Ireland. But African American and African Caribbean nationalists—who should really be called Pan-Nationalists since what they sought was the political liberation of both Africa and her dispersed descendants of the New World—were further divided according to visions of the social configuration of new societies they sought to bring to fruition. For example, “Left nationalists” like West Indian–born Cyril Briggs of the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB) tended to view black self-determination in socialist terms, in terms which sought to place black laborers in control of their economic destinies, thereby ensuring them political control over their own lives.¹⁴ His own nationalism tempered more by bourgeois influences, Marcus Garvey, of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA and ACL), was much more traditional in economic outlook. Acknowledging the existence of social problems within capitalist society, Garvey did not view capitalism itself as the principal culprit, but instead advocated the capping of individual accumulations of wealth at one million dollars in order to keep exploitation and consequent class divisions from getting out of hand.

Hence we see that among political New Negroes of the aspiring black middle class there existed numerous competing ideologies, although they had some common bases. First, the similarities between these tendencies, and their ruptures with more conservative black petit bourgeois elements, lay in the relative social identification of their proponents with black laborers: a position which hovered somewhere between authentic “class suicide,” where claims to privileged social insight based upon upper-class status would be relinquished, and a traditional penchant for radicalized, middle-class individuals to view themselves as natural leaders of the masses. Second, the differing political trends operated from the same premise: now was the moment for Africa’s descendants to “have their place in the sun,” to seize control over their own political destiny. If the League of Nations found self-determination for eastern European nations an appropriate course of action, then self-determination for people of African descent was equally valid. Variations upon this common theme were to be found among African American and African Caribbean nationalists, communists, and socialists.

Third, this sense of self-determination among political New Negroes found echo in the expressed need for at least some degree of independent black self-organization. This was true even for those allied with the Socialist and early Communist parties, for whom the foreign language federations of both organizations served as models of relative ethnic autonomy within larger political structures. Fourth, despite the socialist proclivities of some, the activities of all were thoroughly imbued with the entrepreneurial spirit of the era: for instance, West Indian food import projects, restaurants, steamship lines and the like, as well as magazine and newspaper publishing efforts which, in themselves, constituted petty economic strivings. Upon arriving in New York, for example, the poet and future political radical Claude McKay tried his hand as a restaurateur, and failed. More economically successful was his Jamaican compatriot and Socialist party member, Wilfred A. Domingo, who imported Caribbean food delicacies for a transplanted West Indies clientele living in New York City. The centrality of economic entrepreneurialism in Marcus Garvey’s vision of a free and independent Africa goes without saying, but no less a commitment to black businesses in general could be consistently found in the pages of
Owen and Randolph’s socialist-oriented *Messenger* magazine.

Finally, it is impossible not to remark upon the internationalist outlook of political New Negroes, their refusal to view the African American struggle for self-dignity and social justice in the United States in isolation from similar struggles occurring throughout the globe. It would be difficult to overestimate the impact of these anti-colonial struggles, and especially the Russian revolution, on New Negro radicalization. Black Harlem radicals, for example, were quite taken with the support for colonial independence contained in the Manifesto of the Communist International issued at its first congress in March 1919: “Colonial slaves of Africa and Asia: the hour of proletarian dictatorship in Europe will sound for you as the hour of your deliverance.”

Aside from the five factors noted above, generally speaking, differences were profound. Torn between bourgeois nationalist and bourgeois assimilationist proclivities, the principal tension among political New Negroes lay along a nationalist/socialist divide in which questions of social identity and of envisioned social structure both played a role.

The existence of separate organizations and applied publications (*The Negro World, The Crusader, The Messenger, The Emancipator*) belies a relatively high level of cooperation between them at various points and junctures. The interaction, much of which logically revolved about the only mass-based organization among them, the UNIA, is quite revealing: Black Socialist party members A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen shared at least some of the goals of the early UNIA, speaking from Garvey’s platform in 1918 and also, as is much better known, bitterly opposing the policies of its founder from 1922 onward. Wilfred Adolphous Domingo, also a Socialist party member and a boyhood friend of Garvey from their early Jamaica days, was the editor of Garvey’s *Negro World* from its inception in 1917 to Domingo’s resignation from the paper the following year. In the wake of the decline of political radicalism in Harlem, Domingo would also become a contributor to Alain Locke’s classic volume, *The New Negro*. Garvey himself attended several meetings of the short-lived League of Darker Peoples sponsored by *The Messenger* group and Madame C. J. Walker of black hairdressing fame—in part a political response to the League of Nations, which had for the most part ignored the international voices of peoples of color in its dispensing of postwar territorial claims. And Cyril V. Briggs and Richard B. Moore worked together on *The Emancipator*, edited by Wilfred A. Domingo, who in turn wrote occasional articles for *The Messenger*.

Playing a singular ideological role among the developing New Negro intelligentsia from approximately 1910 to 1920, Hubert Harrison served as an early mentor for both the African American socialist and nationalist (or “Pan-Africanist”) ideological camps, which would find themselves in unyielding opposition to one another by early 1920. Born in Saint Croix, Virgin Islands, in 1883, Harrison arrived in New York in 1900—over a decade prior to the migrations of most other West Indians destined to play a radical political role on American political terrain. Possessing a store of knowledge many described as “encyclopedic,” Harrison assumed a kind of father role with regard to his contemporaries—this despite his youth. Several years prior to the war’s outbreak, he had joined the Socialist party, contributing review essays and articles to the *Call, International Socialist Review*, and *Masses* magazines, in addition to many non-Left publications. But in uptown Harlem, Harrison was perhaps best known for his street-speaking at the intersection of 135th Street and Lenox Avenue, a tradition for which he was the originator. It was through such street oratory that Harrison instructed a generation of Harlemites—Randolph and Owen included—in the superiority of socialism over capitalism, helping to win a small number of converts from the black
community to the Socialist party even as he contemplated plans to leave it.

Prior to the war, Harrison once explained the genesis of American racism in the following way. During the period of slavery blacks constituted “the most thoroughly exploited of the American proletariat” and the “most thoroughly despised.” The necessary contempt on the part of the ruling class toward blacks was diffused among all classes of Americans until they were supposedly saturated with it: there existed an unavoidable correlation between the dominant class and the dominant ideas of society. For Harrison, like Eugene Debs, race prejudice was a direct product of economic forces, “the fruit of economic subjection and a fixed inferior economic status.” He wrote, “It is the reflex of a social caste system. That caste system in America is what we roughly refer to as the Race Problem, and it is thus seen that the Negro problem is essentially an economic problem with its roots in slavery past and present.”19 But the critical shortcoming of the Socialist party’s economic determinist arguments, within which framework Harrison was attempting to argue, was that it disallowed the recognition and consequent targeting of any specific group among the proletariat for direct organizing efforts. In other words, no direct Socialist party appeal to black workers was doctrinally permissible. On the other hand, without such a special appeal, it was clear to Harrison that the attraction of African Americans to the party would be nil. Under such conditions, how would it be possible to extend the party’s appeal to blacks?

In order to convince the party of its duty toward African Americans, it would be necessary to argue outside the determinist parameters of “straight socialism.” First of all, argued Harrison, since the mission of the Socialist party was “to free the working class from exploitation, and since the Negro is the most ruthlessly exploited working class group in America, the duty of the party to champion his cause is as clear as day.” Second, “The mass of the Negro people in America are ignorant of what socialism means. For this they are not so much to blame. Behind the veil of the color line none of the great world movements for social betterment have been able to penetrate.” Clearly, special educational efforts were needed here. Third, “the Negroes of America—those of them who think—are suspicious of Socialism as of everything that comes from the white people of America. They have seen that every movement for the extension of democracy here has broken down as soon as it reached the color line.” Only special efforts could overcome such a history of distrust. And fourth—doctrinal purity aside—the party had already “carried on special propaganda work among recently arrived immigrant Poles, Slovaks, Finns, Hungarians and Lithuanians.”20

Harrison’s four arguments added up to the need for a special Socialist party appeal to African Americans. But if the party could not be swayed on this organizing issue through positive argument, perhaps it could be convinced through an evoking of a counterrevolutionary potential on the part of blacks: “Here are ten million Americans, all proletarians, hanging on the ragged edge of the impending class conflict. Left to themselves they may become as great a menace to our advancing army as is the army of the unemployed, and for precisely the same reason: they can be used against us, as the craft unions have begun to find out.”21 Mindful to take into account the party’s right wing as well as its left, Harrison also noted the support which blacks could bring to the ballot box (but also the need for the party to take a stand against their disfranchisement in the South), as well as to industrial unionism. For neither Harrison nor later black converts to socialism would it be possible adequately to address the economic and political status of African American toilers solely from within the strictures of economic-determinist dogma.

Increasingly disenchanted with the existence of racism within the Socialist party, Harrison states that 1916 was the year “that
I gave up my work as a lecturer and teacher among white people to give myself exclusively to work among my own people."

And it was this very same year of Harrison's break with the Socialist party that Randolph and Owen enrolled in its ranks—partly a result of Harrison's proselytizing efforts.

Unsuccessful efforts had already been made by Harrison to organize black Harlemites into a Socialist party branch around 1910. Provided with a formidable mass base accruing from the "great migration," that task was accorded greater feasibility under the wartime leadership of Chandler Owen and A. Philip Randolph. According to Randolph's biographer, in late summer of 1917 the Socialist party assigned the future Messenger's editors the task of coordinating Morris Hillquit's mayoral campaign in Harlem: "The two editors had done this by organizing the first Socialist club in the area—the 21st A.D. Club—made up largely of their fellow radicals. This group also fanned out through the community, canvassing in Hillquit's behalf and heckling the meetings of the regular-party candidates."

Early the next year, black Socialist party organizer Helen Holman was put in charge of naturalization work in the 19th and 21st Assembly Districts, wherein resided the majority of West Indian immigrants in New York City. An attempt was also made to establish a branch in the "colored" section of the 19th AD, but little success appears to have come of this venture. Randolph was assigned the task of organizing the "colored section" of the 21st Congressional District, which included both the 21st and 23rd ADs. The greatest flurry of activity for the year was reserved for fall, when Randolph and Owen ran for assembly seats in the 19th and 21st ADs respectively, and Rev. George Frazier Miller sought the post of U.S. representative from the 21st CD. Against the overwhelming pro-Republican sympathies of northern black voters of the era, Randolph captured a mere 7.5 percent of the vote from his district, the highest percentage showing among the three party candidates.

Socialism offered a solution to the exploitation of blacks, the majority of whom were agrarian or industrial laborers. Once the social question of race was introduced, however, the rigid economic determinism of its adherents robbed the doctrine of its full, explanatory power. The hard fact was that a large segment of white American workers, both native-born and nouveaux venus, had succumbed to racist backwardness. This racism on the part of white laborers had its subjective as well as objective aspects, the economic essence of the latter finding itself intimately bound to the question of competition within the ranks of the working class itself. For in order to carry out effective "competition" with the capitalist class for the maintenance of wages, workers must first eliminate competition among themselves.

This postulate is virtually axiomatic.

The means by which such competition within labor's ranks could be eliminated, however, was quite another question: was it to be accomplished through "combinations" that included all laborers within a given branch or branches of industry, or by other means of self-regulating practices that excluded significant numbers of workers from the shops and factories? Historically, skilled workers in the United States responded to the threat of their own intergroup competition through the establishment of craft unions. This in itself was a positive historical phenomenon, one which ultimately found itself dwarfed by the negative "economist" practices of the American Federation of Labor. For through the formation of such craft institutions, in effect, "monopolies" were formed over determinate skills, the number of workers permitted into a given craft being regulated through apprenticeship programs controlled by craft union members themselves. In this way, internecine competition was met, but through a policy of institutional restriction. As is well known, this is the main process by which
black laborers have been barred from practicing skilled trades in the United States.

Possessing no such indispensable craft with which to bargain with employers, unskilled industrial workers frequently resorted to violent means for the purpose of regulating competition among themselves. Numerous "race riots," such as those which occurred during the World War I era in Chicago and East St. Louis, provide vivid examples of social phenomena in which the question of labor competition was found to be at the core.30 So whether through organized "ritual" or constitutional provision, work stoppages, strikes, or unrestrained violence, the intended result of each of the above practices on the part of workers was the same: a curbing of job competition within their respective domains of labor.31 These practices, then, did represent forms of class struggle, albeit not in the long-range interests of the American working class as a whole, retarding as they did any formation of mass proletarian consciousness. In the elimination of blacks and other national minorities as economic competitors, such actions on the part of white American laborers often led as much to a structural "racializing" of production relations and consequent division of the American working class as a whole, retarding as they did any formation of mass proletarian consciousness. In the elimination of blacks and other national minorities as economic competitors, such actions on the part of white American laborers often led as much to a structural "racializing" of production relations and consequent division of the American working class as a whole, retarding as they did any formation of mass proletarian consciousness. In the elimination of blacks and other national minorities as economic competitors, such actions on the part of white American laborers often led as much to a structural "racializing" of production relations and consequent division of the American working class as a whole, retarding as they did any formation of mass proletarian consciousness. In the elimination of blacks and other national minorities as economic competitors, such actions on the part of white American laborers often led as much to a structural "racializing" of production relations and consequent division of the American working class as a whole, retarding as they did any formation of mass proletarian consciousness.

It was precisely the racial segmentation described above—the specific structuring of social relations whose result was a special oppression of African Americans above and beyond the political oppression and economic exploitation endured by white laborers in general—that the Socialist party preferred to ignore. "We have nothing special to offer the Negro," admitted Eugene Debs, "and we cannot make separate appeals to all the races. The Socialist Party is the party of the working class, regardless of color—the whole working class of the whole world."32 The practical implications of such an apparently democratic and international stance (but one which masked a reality of systematic special privileges accorded a certain stratum of white labor) were that scores of black laborers thus barred from employment would be forced into strikebreaking just in order to survive. To the barriers imposed upon them under the veil of "class first," numerous black toilers responded with an equally dogmatic, but ineluctable policy of "race first," placing their interests as an oppressed nationality above all else. It is thus important to understand that this ideology of "race first," far from constituting a manifestation of petit bourgeois nationalism alone, possessed a decided material base among vast strata of black workers during the World War I and postwar periods.

The almost simultaneous departure of Hubert Harrison from and the entry of Chandler Owen and A. Philip Randolph into the Socialist party in 1916 failed to cause any immediately visible rupture between Harrison and his former "followers." For example, as late as November 1917, The Messenger carried Harrison's glowing review of the small book, Terms of Peace and the Darker Races, written by Owen and Randolph.33 The following month, however, battle lines had been drawn: in a debate at the Palace Casino on 23 December Chandler Owen, according to Harrison's account, "fiercely maintained 'that the doctrine of race first was an indefensible doctrine'; Mr. Harrison maintaining that it was the source of salvation for the race. Both these gentlemen have run true to form ever since."34 His belief in socialism as fervent as ever, Harrison meanwhile was imparting to this basic conviction an increasingly nationalist interpretation. In the United States, the social effects of the war had unleashed the northward migrations of blacks and the
“red summers” which resulted; abroad, the “colored” world was partially stirred into action against the occupying colonial powers. Whereas such events demonstrated to Owen and Randolph the necessity of white, working-class allies for the black struggle, they strongly suggested to Harrison the necessity of “colored” allies on an international scale. Hence to the slogan of “class first,” that rigidly determinist formula of the Socialist party to which he had formerly subscribed, Harrison posed an equally dogmatic “race first,” never fully understanding the dialectic of “race” and class as they occur in the national question.35 Whereas “class first” ignored the special oppression which blacks qua blacks suffered above and beyond that borne by white laborers, “race first” obliterated the class aspects of the African American struggle, resulting in the ideological effacement of the class character of oppression and of “movement” goals, tending to place this struggle under the tutelage of petit bourgeois political and ideological hegemony. Harrison’s ideological metamorphosis culminated in a double irony, however: first, that he would be led to attack his former followers of African descent who “erringly” continued down the socialist path; second, that his immense efforts would soon be eclipsed by the success of a young man from Jamaica who had gained a start with Harrison’s own organization, the Liberty League.

The Liberty League of Negro-Americans was formed by Hubert Harrison in June 1917. The organization’s stated purpose was “to take steps to uproot” the two evils of lynching and disfranchisement and “to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”36 Given Harrison’s commitment to socialism, one can be assured that more radical goals were involved as well. It was at the first meeting of the league that Marcus Garvey is said to have made his first positive impression upon a Harlem crowd. For all who had heard Harrison speak, the general consensus was that he was a keen and highly skilled orator.37 Not nearly as charismatic a figure as Garvey however, Harrison’s organizational abilities were also evidently somewhat less than satisfactory. As one observer of the Harlem scene remarked,

Garvey publicly eulogized Harrison, joined the Liberty League and took a keen interest in its affairs. Harrison blundered fatally. His errors were so evident that his followers could not but observe them, so costly that interest in the Liberty League waned and Harrison’s deserters soon became enthusiastic admirers of Garvey, and accordingly joined the New York branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League which Garvey, in the meantime, had formed. His failure and the dissatisfaction of his followers notwithstanding, Harrison rendered memorable educational and constructive community service to the Negroes of Harlem. It may be truly said that he was the forerunner of Garvey and contributed largely to the success of the latter by preparing the minds of Negroes through his lectures, thereby moulding and developing a new temper among Negroes which undoubtedly made the task of the Jamaican much easier than it otherwise would have been. In justice to both and with equal truth, it may be declared that the success of Garvey was built on the ruins of Harrison’s failure. The popularity of the former increased immeasurably...as he became a potent factor, his predecessor became a negligible unit.38

The irony of his standing in the full shadow of a Garveyism, which he himself had helped in formulating, would not escape Harrison, a fact upon which his former comrades would lightheartedly play.39 Harrison’s now open attack upon black socialists and his concomitant support for Garvey in 1919 appear to be partly motivated by an attempt to reestablish in the public domain a knowledge of the “origins” of Garvey’s ideas:
One of the most taking enterprises at present is the Black Star Line, a steamship enterprise floated by Mr. Marcus Garvey of New York. Garvey’s project (whatever may be its ultimate fate) has attracted tens of thousands of Negroes. Where Negro “radicals” of the type known to white radicals can scarce get a handful of people, Garvey fills the largest halls and the Negro people rain money on him. This is not to be explained by the argument of “superior brains,” for this man’s education and intelligence are markedly inferior to those of the brilliant “radicals” whose “internationalism” is drawn from other than radical sources. But this man holds up to the Negro masses those things which bloom in their hearts—racialism, race consciousness, racial solidarity—things taught first by The Voice and the Liberty League. That is the secret of his success, so far.

In his autobiography, poet Claude McKay noted that when he began his new job as assistant editor of the left-wing Liberator magazine in April 1921, Hubert Harrison, “the Harlem street-corner lecturer and agitator,” visited the magazine’s 14th Street headquarters to tender his congratulations:

I introduced him to Robert Minor, who was interested in the activities of the advanced Negro radicals. Harrison suggested a little meeting that would include the rest of the black Reds. It was arranged to take place at the Liberator office, and besides Harrison there were Grace Campbell, one of the pioneer Negro members of the Socialist Party; Richard Moore and W. A. Domingo, who edited the Emancipator, a radical Harlem weekly; Cyril Briggs, the founder of the African Blood Brotherhood and editor of the monthly magazine, The Crusader; Mr. Fanning, who owned the only Negro cigar store in Harlem; and one Otto Huiswoud, who hailed from Curacao, the birthplace of Daniel DeLeon. Perhaps there were others whom I don’t remember. The real object of the meeting, I think, was to discuss the possibility of making the Garvey Back-to-Africa Movement (officially called the Universal Negro Improvement Association) more class-conscious.

From recently published correspondence between McKay and Max Eastman we know there was at least one other such meeting in 1921 as well. But far from being a mere neutral observer of these events, as his autobiography especially indicates, Claude McKay was an active leader of the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB) at the time. Moreover, the meetings held in the Liberator office were precursors to the entry of ABB leadership into the American Communist party.

In late May or early June, according to Bureau of Investigation reports, Rose Pastor Stokes, a key liaison between the Communist party and early black Harlem radicals, hosted a dinner party for ABB leaders Cyril V. Briggs, Wilfred A. Domingo, and Claude McKay, as well as Hubert H. Harrison and Edgar M. Grey of the Liberty League of Negro-Americans, at her Greenwich Village home. There, according to Grey (who was doubling as a government informant), Mrs. Stokes offered “Russian gold” to the two organizations if they would be willing to support the Communist party’s position. Harrison and Grey declined, at least partly out of commitment to Pan-nationalist ideals. Brotherhood leaders, already in harmony with the Comintern’s general outlook, and with a devotion to clandestine organization as zealous as that of the then existing American Communist party, readily accepted. According to one account, those several meetings between black and white radicals in the Liberator office led to the incorporation of four key leaders of the Harlem-based African Blood Brotherhood into the American Communist party by early fall. That August the ABB, with vigorous backing of the party, did attempt, albeit unsuccessfully, to influence the outcome of the second annual convention of the Universal Negro Improvement Association.
But the secret organization known as the African Blood Brotherhood did not begin life as the principal recruiting arm of the Communist party among potential black constituents. Like Harrison’s Liberty League of Negro-Americans and Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association, the African Blood Brotherhood was founded mainly in the spirit of Pan-Africanist solidarity. Ideologically closer to Harrison, however, the ABB welcomed political alliances with class-conscious white laborers. Despite the existence of contradictory dates in the historical record, it appears that the ABB was formed in the latter part of 1919.\(^{48}\) Its nine-point political program, adopted in 1920, reflected the following concerns: 1) a liberated race in the United States, Africa, and elsewhere; 2) absolute race equality; 3) the fostering of racial self-respect; 4) organized and uncompromising opposition to the Ku Klux Klan; 5) a united Negro front; 6) industrial development along genuine cooperative lines; 7) higher wages, shorter hours, and better living conditions for Negro labor; 8) education; and 9) cooperation with other darker races and with class-conscious white workers.\(^{49}\)

By mid-1920, the ABB boasted “over 1,000 men and women of African blood,” with post commands in “various cities of the United States, in the West Indies, Central and South America and in West Africa.”\(^{50}\) And by the following year several of its principal leaders—notably Claude McKay and Cyril V. Briggs—joined the American Communist party.

However impressive their programs on paper or in practice, the organizational efforts of the Liberty League, the African Blood Brotherhood, black Socialists, and lesser lights would rest in the shadow of the greatest mass movement of the early twentieth century among peoples of African descent: the Universal Negro Improvement Association—or “Garvey movement” as it was popularly known. Although the UNIA did not possess the millions of members that it claimed—the best evidence comes from Wilfred A. Domingo who estimated some 100,000 members at its height\(^{51}\)—there is no question that the organization’s social vision was shared by millions of adherents both within and without the United States. Among the many, complex, and often mutually contradictory ideological strands of which Garveyism was comprised, the unwaivering political ideal of independent African nationhood lay at its core. Garvey’s vision, moreover, was not that of a narrow nationalism, but of a Pan-nationalism: a vision which sought to politically link peoples of African descent who were part of the western diaspora with those of their continental motherland of Africa.

The initial strands of that link were to be forged in the establishment of a UNIA colony on the African continent: Liberia was the principal object of UNIA efforts in this regard, but the former German territories of Southwest Africa, the Cameroons, and Tanganyika, then under the protection of the League of Nations, were also the targets of UNIA lobbying energies. Once the colony was well established, Garvey envisioned the formation of an African empire modeled on the most powerful empire of the time—that of the British. The means by which this empire was to be established and supported, was that of mercantilism: the establishment of trade between the African continent, abundant in mineral wealth, the West Indies, rich in agrarian produce, and peoples of African descent in industrialized North America, where processing of such raw commodities would take place.\(^{52}\) From a social standpoint, this global self-help enterprise would provide employment and economic security for people of African descent. And by virtue of the powerful army, navy, and air force of a politically unified Africa, it would afford them political protection as well, reaching as far as the American diaspora.\(^{53}\)

Initially a Jamaican-based organization, the UNIA was established by Marcus Garvey in 1914 along the lines of Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Institute, and was trans-
planted by Garvey to its Harlem, New York City, headquarters in 1917. Following several false starts, Garvey was able to recruit a core of adherents around which an international organization would take form. Its widely influential newspaper, *The Negro World*, was established the following year, and enjoyed an uninterrupted run until 1933, when it ceased production. One of the UNIA's most spectacular successes was demonstrated in its ability, through a separate corporate entity known as the Black Star Line, to successfully launch its own steamship enterprise in the fall of 1919. Other enterprises quickly followed in New York City: the Universal Millinery Store; the Universal Steam Laundry, and several grocery stores. Clearly seeking wider horizons was the Negro Factories Corporation, the ostensible purpose of which was to "build, own and operate factories all over these United States, the West Indies, Central and South America and Africa," but which existed mostly on paper.54 Launched in the midst of a relatively prosperous wartime economy, the UNIA's ambitious pecuniary undertakings quickly succumbed to the postwar recession. Financial difficulties during the UNIA's first International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World, held throughout the entire month of August 1920 in New York City, almost led to its premature cancellation.

The deterioration of the UNIA's internal economic affairs, triggered not only by unsound steamship acquisitions and abysmal management, but also by the growing inability of UNIA adherents, under depressive economic conditions, to continue making further cash contributions to, or stock purchases from the organization, was a principal factor prompting Garvey's February 1921 speaking and fund-raising tour of Panama, Costa Rica, and the West Indies. Upon completion of his successful journey, Garvey attempted to reenter the United States, only to find himself barred as an undesirable alien.

Here lies a crucial turning point in Garveyism as an ideology. When finally admitted into the country at New Orleans, Garvey began a backtracking on the question of black American civil rights. Failing either to stem the zealous desire on the part of federal government agencies to prosecute him, or to secure material support for the UNIA from either liberal or conservative whites for his program, he did manage to galvanize a ferocious opposition to his plans from black middle-class elements. In early 1922, Marcus Garvey was indicted for using the mails to defraud—more specifically, for selling fraudulent Black Star Line stock through the mails. It was true that Garvey had proved himself thoroughly incapable of separating the business practices of the UNIA from its promotional activities, and had thereby left himself open to valid charges of mismanagement. But the charge of "stock fraud" seems to be little more than a manipulative effort on the part of federal prosecutors to conveniently rid themselves of a "foreign-born agitator" who, notwithstanding his recent compromises on the question of African American domestic rights, still represented a potential threat to domestic tranquility—not to mention western colonial interests in Africa and the West Indies. Lack of evidence on the prosecution's part may account for the year-long delay between Garvey's indictment (mid-May 1922) and the commencement of his court trial (mid-May 1923). In the meantime, Garvey's black political opposition outside the UNIA was goaded into action by his visit with the Imperial Giant of the Ku Klux Klan in Atlanta; the receipt of a human hand by Garvey political foe A. Philip Randolph in the mail; and, in New Orleans in early 1923, the assassination by Garveyites of a former UNIA official.55

To be sure, Marcus Garvey's court trial of 1923 in no way marked the end either of the indomitable leader or of his organization. For example, he managed to stun his opposition with the purchase of yet a fourth ship the following year. Yet troubling economic conditions within the United States and
growing realization that one of his most central political goals—the establishing of a beachhead on the African continent—had moved beyond his reach, seems to have propelled Garvey into an increasingly untenable ideological partnership with right-wing reactionaries.

The full story of the UNIA’s decline has been told many times, and will not be repeated here. Its poorly conceived and executed economic policies, made worse by cases of internal sabotage as well as by the post-World War I recession, served mainly as negative example. The UNIA’s economic nationalism, while as attractive to black entrepreneurs as that of Booker T. Washington, remained only a dream. One can only speculate what might have occurred had the UNIA established a secure foothold in Liberia or elsewhere in Africa, but the truth is that the history of modern settler colonies, however noble the initial intentions of settlers, has tended to prove disastrous to the indigenous population—Liberia offering a case in point. The organization’s—and Garvey’s—most positive legacy lies, on the one hand, in its inspirational effect upon the post-World War II generation of African leadership, which, following the war, found itself in a position to transform the desire of African political independence into a reality. On the other hand, there is the equally unquantifiable, but nonetheless significant and lasting impression which Garveyism lent to the cultivation of positive self-image among peoples of African descent. Garvey’s admonishment, “Up you mighty race, you can accomplish what you will,” served as a source of inspiration not only to black folk of his own era, but to those of generations hence.

Political New Negro-ism rode the crest of urban black migrations during the war as well as the attendant prosperity ushered in by the war economy. It was that relative prosperity which, for example, afforded working-class blacks the luxury of being able to pump some $600,000 into Garvey’s sadly mismanaged Black Star Line over a period of four or five years. By 1922 the postwar recession had undermined the economic dreams of the UNIA and eroded the political strength of the union movement and hence the political base of the Socialist party as well—which had ignored most blacks anyway. Hubert Harrison’s Liberty League of Negro-Americans never really got off the ground, a victim of internal disputes which led to a fatal split in its ranks. The Crusader, organ of the African Blood Brotherhood, ceased publication with its January-February 1922 number. By that time, too, The Messenger had begun to resemble more and more a black society rag, with little meaningful to say concerning political radicalism. Into this political vacuum rode the cultural New Negro, proclaiming a newly discovered truth that America’s racial problems would be resolved through black artistic expression.

The difference between this cultural orientation to social questions and that of New Negro political radicals seeking redress within the United States was striking. In their heyday, New Negro radicals had sought to modify American social relations directly and qualitatively. Their goal was a new economic and political order in the United States, which aim would be achieved through the political solidarity of the working class, black and white. In contrast, cultural New Negroes such as Alain Locke and James Weldon Johnson felt that, once convinced of the artistic abilities of blacks, the political sympathies of the white middle-class could be tapped. From that well-spring would flow the support for an end to color-coordinated social inequality in America.

Radical New Negroes held that widespread notions of alleged black genetic deficiency were a product of a social order based on economic inequality, used by capitalists to divide, and hence to better
James Weldon Johnson undoubtedly spoke for the majority of Harlem Renaissance promoters when he stated, rather idealistically, in 1921 that “the status of the Negro in the United States is more a question of national mental attitude toward the race than of actual conditions. And nothing will do more to change that mental attitude and raise his status than a demonstration of intellectual parity of the Negro through the production of literature and art.”

Despite general agreement, the more detailed social (and artistic) views of cultural New Negroes proved no more homogeneous than those of their more politically oriented progenitors. Paradoxically, many—like Langston Hughes, Alain Locke, J. W. Johnson, and others—would proclaim the virtues of climbing the “racial mountain,” yet still be committed to the long-term assimilation of blacks into American society. Others, like staunchly assimilationist-oriented critic George Schuyler, who denied the very existence of any uniquely black artistic expression, would see no need for any intermediate stage of cultural nationalist expression. Finally, aside from the ever-present question of social identity, there was, again and always, that of social justice. One one side were partisans such as James Weldon Johnson who, along with Du Bois, saw no fundamental contradiction between propaganda and art. From this perspective protest was seen, in fact, as one of the most valuable components of black artistic expression. On the other were those such as Alain Locke and Charles S. Johnson, determined to wrest black artistic expression from the employ of propaganda—that is, to ostensibly remove artistry from the employ of politics and to concentrate more on questions of craft and form. The truth, however, was that black art was to be placed in the service of a quieter political movement that viewed long-term mediation and education as the solution to the “Negro problem.” Novel though such an approach may have appeared at the time, it was in essence the...
solution to the “race problem” proposed some nineteen years earlier by W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk*, whose own panacea was that of “education.”

Much more politically conservative in general than their first-wave counterparts, cultural New Negroes rode the hegemonic crest until the economy bottomed out in the early thirties. They would be supplanted by a movement that was as strong on social protest as had been the socialist-oriented New Negroes, but much weaker on the question of African American social identity than had been their more nationalist-oriented counterparts of the teens and early twenties.

NOTES


3. Federal unions were local unions for which a charter was directly granted by the national body of the AF of L. In general this was for expediency, in instances where a group of skilled workers wanted to unionize, but where a national union for that particular craft did not exist. If and when such a national union came into being AF of L headquarters would dissolve the federal charter, and cede jurisdiction over that local to its national union. When dealing with black workers, however, the formation of federal unions became standard policy, and black workers were not usually allowed to join the national unions where their respective crafts were represented.


14. In the years prior to his joining the Communist party, Briggs vacillated between calls for a geographically based black self-determination both within and external to the United States, on the one hand, and a unified struggle for socialism in which blacks would play a role.

15. “Manifeste de l’Internationale Com-
muniste aux prolétaires du monde entier!,” in Manifestes, thèses et résolutions des quatre premiers congrès mondiaux de linternationale communiste 1919–1923 (Paris: Bibliothèque Communiste, 1934), 32; facsimile edition reprinted by François Maspero (Paris: 1970). Author’s interview with Richard B. Moore, 1978. Later generations of colonial peoples would contest the established order of priority between the two struggles, but that was not the question here. In contrast to the more conservative positions of the Second International, what was of note was that “colonial slaves” were considered worthy of the Comintern’s political attention.


24. See Foner, American Socialism and Black Americans, 211.

25. Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, 94.

26. Holman’s labors—essential to the success of Socialist party electoral campaigns in these districts—do not seem to have been limited to immigrants of West Indian extraction. Both Holman and Emily Jones, described as “black female socialist organizers,” participated in Socialist party electoral activities in Harlem that fall. Minutes of Executive Committee of Local New York, 6 February 1918; New York Call (4 November 1918).

27. Randolph informed the executive committee that “a number of Negroes” there were anxious to form such a branch, to which efforts the committee decided to donate fifteen dollars monthly. But in contrast to the 21st AD, few political activities among blacks in the 19th were ever reported in the Socialist press. Minutes of Executive Committee of Local New York, 27 February 1918. Owen was drafted in late August, and thus missed the most important period of campaigning. Minutes of Executive Committee of Local New York, 4 September 1918.

28. New York Call (4 November 1918); Report of New York City Board of Elections, 31 December 1918.


34. Harrison, When Africa Awakes, 87. Harrison mistakenly placed the year of the debate as 1918. Jeffrey Perry, Harrison’s biographer, states that Harrison’s ideas on “race first” emerged during a series of outdoor and indoor
lectures given by the latter in the 1914–1916 period; Perry, "Hubert Henry Harrison," 403–404.

35. Characteristically, the biological aspects of "race" and their social aspects as manifested in the structuring of social relations were constantly confused with one another.


40. Hubert Harrison, "Two Negro Radicalisms," New Negro (October 1919), cited in Emancipator, 1:4 (3 April 1920): 3. The Emancipator reported that portions of the cited article had also been reprinted in the 27 March 1920 edition of the Negro World. Harrison's monthly, The Voice, launched simultaneously with the founding of the Liberty League in 1917, ceased publication in March 1919. In its stead appeared the ephemeral New Negro magazine, edited by Harrison and August Valentine Bernier (whose political identity is now obscure).

41. Claude McKay, A Long Way from Home (New York: L. Furman, 1937), 109. Background information on these individuals, while for the most part incomplete, can be found in Harry Haywood, Black Bolshevik (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1978); Foner, American Socialism; Theodore Draper, American Communism and Soviet Russia (New York: Viking, 1960). Joseph P. Fanning, a West Indian, was proprietor of Harlem's only black-owned cigar store, located on 135th Street. According to informant Edgar Grey, Fanning was an officer of the ABB; he died unexpectedly on 10 August 1921. Reports of
wrote fairly regularly for the New York *Amsterdam News*. Harrison, *When Africa Awakes*, 9–10. E. David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955), 76–77; here Grey’s name is misspelled “Gray.” Reports of Agent P-138, 26 August 1921, BS 202600-2031-9; 6 August 1921, BS 202600-667-76; Edgar M. Grey to United States Department of State, 8 August 1919; L. Lamar Winslow [Winston], Department of State, to Frank Burke, Bureau of Investigation, 13 August 1919, OG 258421, DNA; *Amsterdam News* (17 November 1926); *Messenger* (March 1923); 640. Harrison, who does not seem to have been aware of the intelligence connections of his organizational secretary, had not lost his earlier pro-Left sympathies. Several weeks earlier he participated in a May Day celebration at the Peoples’ Educational Forum. Radical Activities, 7 May 1921, BS 2026001628-20, DNA.


46. From Martin Luther Campbell, Socialist party and ABB member, and owner of a tailor shop on 135th Street, an undercover agent extracted the information that by July there were two full-fledged black CP members functioning in Harlem; Campbell declined to mention them by name, but implied that one might be Richard B. Moore. (In his 1958 correspondence with Theodore Draper, Cyril Briggs mentioned Otto Huiswoud and one Hendricks [unidentified] as having already been party members when he entered the organization in 1921. Since available intelligence sources mention neither of them among those who frequented Campbell’s shop, it appears safe to conclude that they were not the persons Campbell had in mind.)


50. *Crusader* (June 1920); 7.


52. Here I may be guilty of bringing more coherence to a UNIA economic policy that was more sloganized than carefully thought out.

53. The UNIA has often been called a “Back-to-Africa” movement, and scholars and critics even today continue to debate whether Garvey’s *intent* was a wholesale “return” of Afro-Americans to the African continent or simply the transporting there of a relatively small number of blacks with skills sufficient to transform the established UNIA colony into a cornerstone for African political sovereignty. The historical record in fact supports *both* interpretations, and it may be less relevant to seek out “what Garvey really thought” on the matter of African American expatriation—a goal that becomes cloudier as each new piece of historical evidence is added—than it is to understand the political opportunism, the expedient circumstances that led Mr. Garvey to take one side, then the other.

54. *Negro World* (19 February 1921); 3.

55. Cronon, *Black Moses*, 189; 109. In an accompanying note ostensibly signed by the Ku Klux Klan, but which could have been sent just as easily by a UNIA fanatic (or, for that matter, an operative of a “dirty tricks” division of government), Randolph was warned to either join the “nigger improvement association” or risk having his own hand sent to someone else, p. 110.


57. The founding of the colony of Liberia in 1821 and its settlement by black American former
slaves the following year, resulted in the political subjugation of the indigenous population of the region and the establishing of slavery. It is somewhat startling to consider that UNIA success in Liberia would have meant the establishing of a settler colony within a settler colony.

58. This quote appeared prominently in every issue of The Negro World.


60. The Liberator also lost momentum in this period; see Daniel Aaron, Writers on the Left: Episodes in American Literary Communism (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), 93.

61. Initially, and especially at their first international convention in 1920, Garveyites expressed great interest in fighting for African American rights within the U.S. But after 1921 this demand seems to have gotten lost in their efforts to secure the political and economic independence of the African continent, and as a result of his alien political status, in Marcus Garvey’s apparent fear of being seen as a domestic, political threat to U.S. authorities.

62. In practical terms the more conservative elements within this political group, such as Randolph and Owen of The Messenger, saw the new socialist order emerging by means of the ballot, or parliamentary route. Those further to the left, Wilfred A. Domingo, for instance, tended to see this taking place through general strikes in the manner of the IWW, combined with clandestine political activity. However, this right/left polarity within the small group of socialist-oriented New Negroes—mirroring that within the Socialist party in general—was obscured by the fact that both wings embraced the IWW on account of its color-blind union activities.
