

MIXED MESSAGES:
THOMAS CALLOWAY AND THE "AMERICAN NEGRO EXHIBIT" OF 1900

by
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of
Master of Arts

in
History

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

April 2004

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Miles Everett Travis

April 19, 2004

This thesis is dedicated to Brooklynne Arcadia the love of my life,
my help and my partner together before God and His creation.

The author of this thesis was born, Miles Everett Travis, son of Larry Everett and Beverly Holleman Travis, on the sixth of March 1978, in Fayetteville, North Carolina. He grew up with his sister, Elizabeth, and brother, Evan, in Durham where he attended Riverside High School. He then enrolled at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, and earned the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Biology and American Studies. He began school at Montana State University while waiting to marry the love of his life, Brooklynne Arcadia. The two were happily joined on the fifth of July, 2003 at the Mesa Hills Bible Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Miles hopes to pursue a Ph.D. at George Mason University, raise a family, and serve God well.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank Professors Robert Rydell, Mary Murphy, Billy Smith, and the rest of the MSU History Department who have contributed to this work. Professors Amy Thomas and Monica Wright also helped with certain parts of the writing, and Dr. David Cherry and Diane Cattrell were incredibly helpful with the details of the graduate process. Finally, I would like to thank my wonderful wife for her patience and encouragement to get this done.

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INTRODUCTION

The “American Negro Exhibit”

During the summer of 1900, Paris invited the world to join in welcoming the arrival of a new century at its Exposition Universelle. Nations from across the globe gathered to display their commercial, colonial, and cultural wealth on the banks of the Seine. Among these countries, the United States attempted to carve out a new and prominent place, seeking to claim the status of a first-class international power, an equal to Britain, France, and Germany.

Everywhere visitors turned, the American presence was close at hand. “Les Etats-Unis exposent en effet dans presque tous les groups. ...dans chaque Palais du Champ-de-Mars et de l’esplanade de Invalides, la section americaine est clairement identifiable.”¹ Amid this saturation of displays and exhibits, gestures of friendship between the U.S. and France added to the notion that Paris was briefly “Americanized.” A statue of Washington was erected in the city, as well as a sculpture of Lafayette standing on a pedestal donated by the Daughters of the American Revolution. The most remarkable symbol of the Paris world’s fairs, the Eiffel Tower itself, was crowned for a few incredible hours with an enormous American flag. Visitors to the fair could buy souvenir pins decorated with symbols of America from countless street vendors.²

¹ Hélène Trocmé, “Les Américains a l’Exposition universelle de Paris,” *Revue Française d’Études Américaines* 59 (1994): 39. My own translation: “The United States displayed, in effect, in nearly every category. ...in each Palace of the Champ-de-Mars and the esplanade de Invalides, the American section was clearly identifiable.”

² *Ibid.*, 40.

Yet, to many European observers, the Americans' pretensions were dismissed without real concern. The French were especially blind to the early signs that the United States had the potential to become an equal world power. Their rivalry with Germany took precedence over concerns with the U.S. The Germans had recently taken Alsace-Lorraine from the French in the Franco-Prussian War, and had almost beaten the French in a bid to host the fair in 1900. On top of this, German domination of the technological displays compounded the insults to French national pride.³ These more urgent issues meant the French regarded the Americans as a distraction, who they watched with the same bemused curiosity which led them to gaze at the exotic casts of the colonial exhibits. The Americans were hardly impressive with their strange mannerisms, constant spitting, and puritanical stiffness.⁴

While the French and other international powers seemed to miss the significance and meaning of the American presence at the fair, many Americans were blinded in much the same way towards another group of exhibitors, African Americans, whose presence and voice would become increasingly influential during the next century. The "American Negro Exhibit" at the Paris Exposition, housed in the Hall of Social Economy and organized by black representatives, demonstrated African Americans' continued appeals for respect, their rejection of the pseudo-scientific racial hierarchy popularized by a white establishment, and their claims for equal citizenship in the United States. In one sense,

³ Ibid. , 36. See also Richard D. Mandel, *Politicians Intellectuals, and the Universal Exposition of 1900 in Paris*. Ph.D. Thesis (University of California, Berkeley, 1965) and "Some Impressions from the Paris Exhibition," *Literary Digest* 21, (Sept. 1, 1900) Reproduced in Jim Zwick *World's Fairs and Expositions: Defining America and the World, 1876-1916*, online and available from <http://www.boondocksnet.com/expos/>.

⁴ Trocmé, 39, 43. Mandel, 139.

these claims were understated, communicated through the exhibit's continuation of a mild, and largely accommodationist tradition of Negro Exhibits at U.S. fairs. But the Paris exhibit moved beyond the educational, agricultural, and industrial showcases that had appeared in previous African American exhibits, and offered a more aggressive effort to challenge racial stereotypes and discrimination. These additional features, including photo-essays, population statistics, examples of the growing black code in America, literature, and patents, attempted to address and debunk specific myths concerning American Blacks that the exhibit organizers identified as particularly pertinent and degrading.

Ultimately, the "American Negro Exhibit" in Paris foreshadowed a split among black leaders regarding the strategy of improving racial conditions in America. This nascent divide in philosophies signified the past and future work of the most prominent contributors to the exhibit. On one hand, the displays dealing with the many normal and industrial institutes reflected the influence of Booker T. Washington, and the philosophy of the Hampton-Tuskegee model of racial uplift. This mode focused on technical training, emphasized material and economic gain, and sacrificed African Americans' individual racial identities in favor of a shared identity as a monolithic race of laborers.

On the other hand, the hundreds of portraits and charts, compiled by W. E. B. Du Bois and his students, expressed growing dissatisfaction with Washington's system. Du Bois's contributions demonstrate a conflicting strategy; he aimed to blur the color-line in order to represent blacks as significant individuals, challenge racial discrimination, and

place blacks immediately on the same plane as whites. The displays of African American literature and patents also lent overwhelming support to Du Bois's position.

Thomas Calloway, the instigator of the project and recognized Special Agent to the Negro Exhibit, equivocated between these philosophies. Calloway was a colleague, and in some ways a protégé, of Washington. He was deeply convinced of the effectiveness of the Tuskegee method of uplift and committed to instilling this racial philosophy in the black community. However, Calloway was also a classmate of Du Bois at Fisk University and a long-time friend, and he resonated with the desire to protest negative racial stigmas. As the Paris fair wound to a close, Calloway even dreamed of bringing the assertive racial representations pioneered by Du Bois back to an exhibition in Charleston, South Carolina. But once back in the States, his passions cooled and his initiative fizzled. Therefore, Thomas Calloway represented an interesting embodiment of an African American community increasingly characterized by internal conflict. Calloway's efforts to bridge these philosophies were apparent within the Paris exhibit, even though the conflict continued to plague black community for years afterward.

This study's purpose is to demonstrate that the conflicting racial representations displayed in the 1900 "American Negro Exhibit" reflect the negotiations within the U.S. black community regarding identity and place in American society. In some ways, the exhibit borrowed from and perpetuated representations of blacks at earlier American fairs—as laborers or producers—and advocated a slow, self-help approach to improving racial conditions. These themes of past Negro exhibits promoted an economic and industrial racial theory identified with Washington. These representations are the focus of

the first chapter. However, the Paris exhibit also broke this tradition and offered an alternative racial strategy that demanded immediate equal political and social rights. This break signaled Du Bois's developing racial philosophy that came to prominence just a few years later. The second chapter will demonstrate how Calloway worked with Du Bois to incorporate into the exhibit his new, aggressive approach to confronting racial identity. The third chapter will show that the unique international venue, outside the racial context of the U.S., facilitated the incorporation of Du Bois's innovative materials, and the new strategy they expressed promised to transform the role of Negro displays at U.S. fairs. Unfortunately, the exhibit was wrongly taken to Buffalo, rather than Charleston as planned, and this detour robbed the Paris Exhibition's momentum and power to affect racial discourse in the south.

Historical Background and Context

During the second half of the nineteenth century, African Americans found themselves locked in a system of institutionalized racism and white supremacy, which was nearly as degrading, demoralizing, and lethal as chattel slavery, especially after 1876. In that year, a controversial presidential election led to a compromise in which Rutherford B. Hayes was elected after promising to end federal occupation of the South and the period of military reconstruction following the Civil War. With the departure of federal troops, southern whites began a program of systematically denying blacks the rights promised them in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments to the U.S. Constitution. Black codes, which imposed a strict racialized class system, appeared across the South. Not long after, Jim Crow laws drew a sharp racial line in almost every

aspect of daily life. All of these factors created a system whose purpose was to exclude blacks from political expression and suppress their opportunities in favor of whites. Blacks in the South and elsewhere also became the target of smoldering white anger. Terrorist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan appeared during this period and lynchings became so widespread that “these ritualistic acts of murder and physical mutilation had become public spectacles often witnessed by entire communities of whites.”⁵ In one year, 1892, 161 blacks were lynched by white mobs.⁶

However, while these manifestations of racism threatened the lives and livelihoods of African Americans, another trend within the white establishment threatened to justify these actions in such a way that many whites were able to rationalize the violence and mistreatment. This movement became known as Social Darwinism, a movement that appropriated Darwin’s evolutionist language and applied it to human society. According to Social Darwinists, the races of the earth had progressed through differing stages of evolution to achieve varying degrees of development. Whites had achieved the ultimate advancement and stood at the top of a social and cultural hierarchy, while darker-skinned peoples formed a spectrum of lesser stages of development. In *The MisMeasure of Man*, Stephen Gould describes the testimony of an American anthropologist, D.G. Brinton, which was typical of educated opinion. In 1890, Brinton stated,

The adult who retains the more numerous fetal, infantile or simian traits, is unquestionably inferior to him whose development has progress beyond

⁵ Robert Rydell, introduction to *The Reason Why the Colored American is not in the World’s Columbian Exposition* by Frederick Douglass et al., ed. Robert Rydell (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), xx.

⁶ *Ibid.*, xiii.

them.... Measured by these criteria, the European or white race stands at the head of the list, the African or negro at its foot.... All parts of the body have been minutely scanned, measured and weighed, in order to erect a science of the comparative anatomy of the races.⁷

While southern whites were harassing and murdering blacks, Social Darwinists were seeking to give scientific credence to claims of black inferiority.

Many African Americans recognized both the absurdity of these racial slurs and how readily whites accepted the myths as truth. In the face of this scientifically-sponsored threat to the safety and well-being of African Americans, black leaders sought forums through which they could mitigate negative racial stereotypes. World's Fairs became an important venue both for proponents of Social Darwinism and for African Americans' counter-efforts to prove the positive qualities of their race.

By the beginning of the twentieth century and the opening of the Paris Universal Exposition, a world's fair movement had swept across Europe and the United States. The first of the great modern fairs was the Crystal Palace Exhibition, which was held in London in 1851 and celebrated the Great Britain's leading place in the industrial age. In addition to the 1851 exhibition, England staged fairs in 1874, 1884, 1887, and 1888. Taking the lead from the British, many other nations decided to hold similar expositions, intending to flaunt their own industrial and economic power. France held fairs in 1855, 1867, and 1889. The US presented major expositions in 1876 and 1893, along with many smaller fairs. Germany, Belgium, and others also followed suit. Hardly a year went by without an exhibition staged to bolster the prestige of one or more powerful nations. These fairs became competitive venues that promoted competition between nations.

⁷ D. G. Brinton quoted in Stephen Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1996), 145.

Furthermore, the fairs became enormous popular events, attracting millions of visitors each year. The 1889 Paris Exposition boasted 39 million attendees. The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 brought 27.5 million visitors to its White City in Chicago. With 50 million visitors, the Paris Exposition Universelle was by far the largest ever when it closed its doors in the fall of 1900. By the turn of the century, the fairs' unparalleled popularity transformed the events into "a vehicle that, perhaps next to the church, had the greatest capacity to influence a mass audience."⁸ At the 1901 Buffalo Pan-American Exposition, shortly before he was assassinated, President William McKinley expressed the influence of the fairs when he commented, "they go into the home. They broaden and brighten the daily lives of the people."⁹

Just as merchants and inventors sought to sell their wares at fairs, Social Darwinists sought to shape representations of race and culture at the expositions. One of the early champions of Social Darwinism, Francis Galton, coined the term eugenics in 1883, and then set up a laboratory at the 1884 International Exposition in London, where he charged a fee to assess visitor's evolutionary credentials through a series of tests and measurements.¹⁰ Other fairs continued and elaborated Social Darwinist themes and tied the theory to arguments for imperialism and white domination of other races. "What made these fairs such important cultural institutions was their ability to represent the

⁸ Robert Rydell, "Souvenirs of Imperialism: World's Fair Postcards," in *Delivering Views: Distant Cultures in Early Postcards*, ed. Chistraud M. Geary and Virginia-Lee Webb (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 48.

⁹ William H. Loos, Ami M. Savigny, and Robert M. Gurn, "The Forgotten 'Negro Exhibit': African American Involvement in Buffalo's Pan-American Exposition, 1901," (Buffalo: Buffalo and Erie County Public Library), 4.

¹⁰ Gould, 107, 108.

world by putting people and their cultures on display....”¹¹ The 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago and the 1901 Exposition in Buffalo featured cultural and racial exhibits that communicated a hierarchy of peoples and culminated in the ultimate expression of white supremacy. In Chicago, the White City stood for this pinnacle in human advancement; Buffalo’s central expression of this arrangement of power was its Electric Tower, a 375-foot building covered with light bulbs illuminated by the power of Niagara Falls. At the 1900 Paris Exposition, “French anthropologists, like their counterparts in England, Germany, and the United States, had attested to the truth of categories of “Savagery” and “Civilization.” After the publication of Charles Darwin’s findings, they took it upon themselves to apply Darwinian ideas about evolution and natural selection to human beings.”¹²

Significantly, whites were not alone in seeking access to fairs. Blacks sought to lend their own voice to the representations of their race. As already mentioned, the “American Negro Exhibit” in Paris was not the first or last time that African Americans sought representation on the stage of a world’s fair. At the earliest American fairs, blacks were conspicuously absent from the organization and execution of displays and attractions. This was the case at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. A few African Americans may have been included on committees that designed local exhibits, and after initial pressure, black women were equally included in fundraising efforts.¹³ Yet, beyond these auxiliary roles, blacks were almost entirely excluded from any

¹¹ Rydell, “Souvenirs of Imperialism,” 47.

¹² Ibid., 48.

¹³ Philip S. Foner, “Black Participation in the Centennial of 1876,” *Phylon: the Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture* (winter 1978): 286-287.

significant participation. During the Centennial's massive construction project, "not a single black worker appears to have been employed ... at a time when perhaps seventy percent of the blacks of Philadelphia were unemployed."¹⁴ According to one African American observer, the fair included no exhibit devoted to American blacks besides one statue commemorating the emancipation of the slaves.¹⁵ For African Americans, the most visible display of their race occurred on the occasion of the opening of the Centennial Exposition when Frederick Douglass climbed the platform to join other high-ranking white officials including the President, Ulysses S. Grant. However, he was not permitted to speak and was almost denied access to the platform by white policemen, despite presenting a valid pass.¹⁶

Although blacks were denied significant participation in the Philadelphia Exhibition, when planning began for the 1884-1885 World's Cotton Exhibition in New Orleans, the U.S. government decided to grant African Americans a "Department of Colored Exhibits" among the federal exhibits, through which they could represent their race and the progress that the American black had made in the short time since the end of institutional slavery in the South. The Negro exhibit included examples of "arts, invention, and many lines of handicrafts."¹⁷ But, "the Colored Department seemed to suggest that blacks were lending their tacit endorsement to the new social arrangement"—legislated segregation.¹⁸ Despite this awkward semi-inclusion, the

¹⁴ Ibid., 288.

¹⁵ Ibid., 288-289.

¹⁶ Ibid., 283.

¹⁷ John Wesley Cromwell quoted in William Ziegler Schenck, *Negro Participation in Three Southern Expositions*, Master's Thesis (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1970), 6.

¹⁸ Rydell, *The Reason Why*, xvi.

superficial success of the Colored Department in New Orleans paved the way for aspirations of more elaborate exhibits at fairs to come.

The next major U.S. exhibition following New Orleans was the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago. Hopes for increased roles for blacks, inspired by the World's Cotton Exhibition, were shattered when President Benjamin Harrison appointed U.S. Commissioners to the fair from every state and territory, but not a single African American.¹⁹ White organizers answered protests of exclusion by saying that blacks would be virtually represented by whites who held official positions. In this sense, blacks would only be allowed to exhibit individually and with the approval of white overseers.²⁰ These exclusionary policies and the degrading racial and ethnic displays planned for the fair promised to sustain and validate racism in the U.S. rather than alleviate racial tensions.

In response to this unacceptable arrangement, Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, Irvine Penn, and Ferdinand Barnett produced a pamphlet of protest, *The Reason Why the Colored American is not in the World's Columbian Exposition*. Marred by financial shortfalls, the pamphlet's success was limited. White authorities sought to pacify would-be black protesters by declaring a "Colored Peoples' Day" at the fair. The celebration became known as "Jubilee Day," and it divided the black community between those who were eager to take advantage of even so small an opportunity for inclusion, and those who felt the inadequacy of the measure amounted to a slap in the face of the African American community. Even the writers of *The Reason Why* were divided, with Wells

¹⁹ Rydell, *The Reason Why*, xvi.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, xviii.

advocating a boycott of the fair, and Douglass taking center stage in the activities.²¹ The Chicago fair and *The Reason Why* demonstrated the difficulties of African American's struggles to find an unhindered stage from which they could participate in constructing representations of their own race.

Unlike the 1893 Chicago fair, organizers of the 1895 Atlanta Cotton States Exposition and Nashville's Tennessee Centennial Exposition did follow the example pioneered by the federal government at the 1885 New Orleans fair and allowed African Americans their own exhibits, although unlike New Orleans, these exhibits were housed in separate, segregated buildings. Yet, despite this arrangement, white organizers of the Atlanta exhibition hoped to avoid the racial controversy of the Chicago fair, so they enlisted Booker T. Washington, an educator from Alabama, along with other black leaders to help lobby for funding of the Atlanta fair. In return, they were rewarded with an independent black exhibit. The segregation of the exhibit from other buildings was initially a source of controversy; however, the "black building" became a source of pride for the African American community.²² A writer for the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* opined, "there has never been a better opportunity furnished for the exhibits of the literature, handicraft and skill of our people than is now offered them."²³ The exhibits included displays of black technical and agricultural work, as well as materials from African American schools and colleges. The Tennessee Centennial also offered a separate Negro Building funded by the state. Again, the building's purpose was to allow blacks to "show what he could do and what he had done toward the intellectual and industrial

²¹ Ibid., xxvi-xxvii, xxxi-xxxiii.

²² Schenck, 15. *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, 27 June 1895. quoted in Schenck, 21.

²³ *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, 27 June 1895. quoted in Schenck, 21.

progress of the country.”²⁴ However, the Atlanta and Nashville exhibits focused primarily on black industrial and agricultural achievements within the white-dominated social order.

At both the Atlanta and Nashville fairs, as well as in New Orleans, blacks demonstrated their educational, industrial, and agricultural accomplishments, but did not oppose white conceptions of blacks’ racial inferiority. This inadequacy would be addressed, however, at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1900. In his “American Negro Exhibit,” Thomas Calloway sought to infuse the old race-progress displays with a new, more assertive collection of materials that would challenge the conventional view of whites toward African Americans.

²⁴ Norman Barton Wood quoted in Schenck, p. 6.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE “AMERICAN NEGRO EXHIBIT”

When the United States began to organize exhibits to send to Paris for the 1900 exposition, African Americans once again sought opportunities to construct their own representations of race. It is unclear exactly where the idea for a Negro exhibit at the Paris Exposition originated, but Thomas Julius Calloway provided the initiative for the scheme. Calloway, a clerk in the War Department, had worked as agent of the Tuskegee Institute in the past and had kept in contact with his former supervisor, and the principal of the school, Booker T. Washington. On October 4, 1899, Calloway wrote to Washington,

...Europeans think us a mass of rapists, ready to attack every white woman exposed, and a drug in civilized society. This notion has come to them through the horrible libels that have gone abroad whenever a Negro is lynched, and by the constant reference to us by the press in discouraging remarks....

How shall we answer these slanders? Our newspapers they do not subscribe for, if we publish books they do not buy them, if we lecture they do not attend.

To the Paris Exposition, however, thousands upon thousands of them will go and a well selected and prepared exhibit, representing the Negro's development... will attract attention... and do a great and lasting good in convincing thinking people of the possibilities of the Negro.”²⁵

Calloway's persuasive and impassioned tone in this letter implied that Washington was not yet aware of his colleague's plans or intentions. Calloway informed the principal that he was “compiling arguments to present to the management of the United States Exhibit at the Paris Exposition to provide for a Negro Exhibit... .” Not only

²⁵ Thomas Julius Calloway to Booker T. Washington, *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, ed. Louis R. Harlan, Raymond W. Smock, and Barbara S. Kraft. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), vol. 5, 227.

did Calloway want to inform Washington of the action he was preparing to take, but to convince the prominent educator that a Negro exhibit in Paris was both appropriate and necessary. Furthermore, Calloway wanted to procure an endorsement of the plan because his “principle argument” insisted “that the leading members of our race desired” an exhibit. Calloway ended his correspondence by urging Washington to respond immediately by sending his thoughts on his official letter-head.²⁶

Calloway succeeded in gaining Washington’s endorsement for the project, and with the blessings of leading blacks, his petition for the Negro exhibit was favorably received by the United States Commission, charged by the President with organizing the American exhibits. The Commission named Calloway Special Agent for the Negro Exhibit and designated a portion of its space in the Hall of Social Economies for the African American display. Calloway now faced two important challenges. On the one hand, the nature and content of the display itself still had to be settled. On the other hand, the exhibit could not move forward without a source of significant financial support.

Past Negro departments at U.S. fairs had relied on the financial provision of the exposition organizations as well as funds raised from local communities. This time, there would be no local African American communities to support a display and French organizers could hardly be expected to subsidize a foreign exhibit. Calloway determined to petition Congress for the necessary financial backing. The last remaining African American congressman of the time, George Henry White of North Carolina, introduced Calloway’s funding proposal as part of the urgent deficiency bill. Lawmakers were surprisingly receptive to the project and approval of its funding met little opposition. On

²⁶ Ibid., 226.

January 17, Calloway wrote again to Washington, this time to inform him of an impending allocation that had already cleared the House of Representatives.²⁷ By January 25, an appropriation of \$15,000.00 had cleared both houses of Congress and only needed to be signed by the President. A jubilant Calloway wrote, “Public sentiment was so unanimous in its favor that the only questions asked me have been ‘Is it enough?’ The exhibit is under excellent way.”²⁸

The eager reception of the exhibit proposal may have been a sincere gesture of good will affected by the benign successes of black participation in the Atlanta and Nashville fairs. Alternately, imperialists and white-supremacists probably viewed such an exhibit as an opportunity to prove the paternalistic power of America to civilize inferior races.

The position of blacks in American Society at the turn of the twentieth century was, after all, roughly analogous to that of blacks in the African colonies. Both groups were politically disenfranchised, socially subordinated, and economically exploited. ... The Darwinist mode of social thought supported both European colonialism and proscriptive American racial practices.²⁹

In fact, European colonialists were impressed by the apparent progress of the African American community, and they were already looking to the American South as a resource for agricultural technology and assistance with racial concerns in their African possessions. Prior to 1900, a private German group, the Kolonial-Wirtschaftliches Komitee, visited the South to solicit expert assistance in cotton

²⁷ Calloway to Washington, *The Papers of Booker T. Washington*, microfilm collection (Washington, D.C. : Library of Congress, Photoduplication Service, 1981), reel 34, frame 253. Hereafter, this microfilmed collection will be referred to as the *BTW Papers*, while the edited volumes by Harlan, Smock, and Kraft will be denoted by the editors' names.

²⁸ *BTW Papers*, reel 34, frame 253.

²⁹ Louis Harlan, *Booker T. Washington in Perspective*, ed. by Raymond W. Smock (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988), 68.

growing, a venture they hoped would bolster their colonial opportunities in Togo, Morocco, and East Africa. However, rather than approaching white Southern agriculturalists, the Komitee visited the Tuskegee Institute. The Komitee was looking for “expert and practical cotton farmers,” but also farmers who could work with and instruct native African laborers. Apparently, the Komitee deemed that African Americans would have an advantage in this respect, although there were still some misgivings. One of the Komitee organizers wrote to Washington asking whether American blacks would be able to accept German colonial rule.³⁰

American investors were also eager to cash in on a supposed racial advantage in Africa. American businessman Leigh Hunt worked with British partners to cultivate a section of land along the Nile river, asking rhetorically in a letter to Washington “what race of men” was best suited to train and model for Africans the best use of the land. Hunt answered his own question proposing that “the American Negro” would work best with the African natives.³¹

Washington saw incredible opportunities for blacks in Africa, and Tuskegee’s leading role in these ventures explains why the principal was so supportive of Calloway’s project in Paris. By promoting the technical, industrial, and agricultural progress of the African American people in Europe, colonialists would be encouraged to continue seeking partnerships with Tuskegee and other Hampton-style schools.

The white lawmakers who voted enthusiastically to support the “American Negro Exhibit” may have had more condescending, yet similar motives, for their approval of the

³⁰ Ibid., 69-70.

³¹ Ibid., 73.

African American initiative. A display of the progress of African Americans would serve well to prove America's abilities to develop "primitive" peoples and manage resources analogous to the colonial holdings of Europeans. If America's benevolent paternalism could uplift the descendants of Africans over just a few generations, they reasoned, then why not extend America's influence in South America, the Philippines, or even China. The African American exhibit would give evidence of the United States' ability to perform in a new imperialist role.

Calloway's concept for the exhibit was larger than either of these rationales, yet acting as an opportunist in Washington's own mold, the astute organizer capitalized on these sentiments. Calloway stated in his proposal for the exhibit that "Since most of the countries of Europe are now engaged in colonizing Africa, it is the opportunity of the United States to show the lines upon which it is attempting racial adjustment. To the statecraft of Europe the 'Negro Problem' is destined to become a burning reality in their African colonies... ." Calloway continued to advocate "equal chance in the race of life without regard to 'color, race or previous condition,'" but his allusion to America's racial experience as an advantage over European colonial powers was enough to ensure that African Americans would be included in the Paris exhibits.³²

Despite the potential flaws in this reasoning, the Negro exhibit's funding proposal passed, and only five days later, Calloway had already submitted at least one initial entry for the French Official Catalogue. The entry described a Tuskegee exhibit containing "shop work, agricultural products," and "photographs of Negro pupils."³³

³² *BTW Papers*, reel 35, frame 315.

³³ *Ibid.*, reel 34, frame 254.

Calloway had not waited for the monetary request to pass before working to secure exhibit materials. Soon after the Commission named him Special Agent, Calloway distributed a circular calling for submissions and contributions of materials representing “any phase of Negro life.” The circular, printed on the US Commission’s letterhead and dated December 21, 1899, specifically requested photographs, but also provided for small models, and invited interested parties to “write concerning the nature of other articles you can furnish.” The early outline of the exhibit contained in this advertisement emphasized thirteen subject categories that would be addressed in the display: education, homes, farms, skilled trades and organized labor, domestic service, business, professions, military life, politics, churches, literature, arts, and women. As an incentive to lure submissions for display, Calloway promised that “all exhibits will be labelled [sic], catalogued and entered for award under the regulations of the French Exposition authorities.”³⁴

The response to the solicitation of materials probably exceeded Thomas Calloway’s expectations. The densely organized materials grew to comprise a full quarter of the allotted American space in the Hall of Social Economies.³⁵ The exhibit included displays of various black schools and colleges, displays of agricultural and industrial products, statistical charts examining almost every aspect of African American life, a multitude of photographs, a transcribed copy of the black code of Georgia, hundreds of volumes of black literature, lists of African American patents, and dioramas of black history built by schoolchildren. Among these numerous presentations, two divergent

³⁴ Ibid., reel 35, frames 315-316.

³⁵ *Cleveland Gazette*, 1 September 1900, 1.

strategies of racial dialogue emerged. One system advocated slow, but deliberate racial uplift through industrial education and labor, a method that did not challenge discrimination, but strove for success despite of it. The other system sought to challenge and erase myths of empirical racial differences. This strategy demanded inclusion for African Americans and an immediate recognition of equality. The inclusion and juxtaposition of these two radically different racial philosophies made the Paris exhibit an enormously significant barometer of the racial attitudes of black Americans.

In this respect, the Paris Negro exhibit borrowed some aspects from old formulas for its substance. Washington's Atlanta Address at the opening of the Cotton States Exhibition epitomized the philosophy of self-help, racial accommodation, and an economic and industrial means of racial improvement, which were the most prominent features of Negro exhibits at American fairs. The Paris display continued these themes, and promoted the idea that blacks were first and foremost laborers and producers. Only by embracing these roles could African Americans find equal access to American society.

In other ways, the Paris exhibit demonstrated a significant departure from the one-dimensional, Tuskegee-style character of Negro departments and exhibits at past American fairs. The international location and the distance that separated the exhibit from the everyday context of the display were significant in empowering the creators to experiment with new content and tone. In one sense, the organizers understood the urgency of the opportunity; this was perhaps the only chance they would have to influence so large a foreign audience. Besides this exhibition, the only impressions of African Americans for the French and other Europeans would likely come through the

reports of American whites, whose representations of blacks were often less than desirable. More importantly, the organizers recognized that their claims at this fair would be largely uncontested. They no longer were constrained by the opinions and reactions of white Americans; they were safe to tear down racial barriers that were ferociously defended by whites inside the United States. In this sense, the truest voice of African American racial identity could only be expressed outside of the racial context of America. The melding of this new, urgent, and uninhibited approach with the familiar, pragmatic rhetoric of progress produced a display that revealed multiple racial identities.

Finally, this multi-faceted concept of identity promised to affect future Negro exhibits in America and become a more direct force in shaping the racial discourse in the States. However, when the exhibit returned to the U.S., the newer, more aggressive segments were disassociated with their original compilers; they became watered-down, and buried by the prevailing acceptance of the Tuskegee idea, which still exerted hegemony over racial strategy in America.

THE HAMPTON-TUSKEGEE PHILOSOPHY

The Origin of the Hampton Idea

In 1900, the prevailing concept of racial adjustment promoted by whites and blacks, and represented most prominently at world's fairs, equated technical and industrial training with the improvement of the black race. This idea was not a new solution and traced its history to before the American Civil War. But especially after the war, blacks and whites alike realized the paradox that freedom posed for the African American population in the racist south. Freedom meant liberation from the brutality and degradation of slavery, but as Du Bois described it, a black person "felt his poverty; without a cent, without a home, without land, tools, or savings, he had entered into competition with rich, landed, skilled neighbors. To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships."³⁶ Although the end of slavery was the inevitable result of the Union victory, less obvious was the fate of millions of penniless blacks in the South. Former abolitionists and white philanthropists quickly focused their energies on stabilizing the black community, assisting the newly freed blacks to become independent, positive contributors to their community, helping them improve their race and encouraging them to strive toward a standard put forth by American whites.

One instrument through which this process of racial uplift could take place was schools such as the Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute. The Hampton Institute, founded in part by the American Missionary Association and originally established

³⁶ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: First Vintage Books, 1990) 12.

specifically for the improvement of blacks, exemplified the paternalistic attitudes of whites who felt it was their duty to develop the lesser races. General Samuel Armstrong, the first principal of the school, molded the curriculum to reflect his background as both a wartime abolitionist and the child of white missionaries to Hawaii. Armstrong believed that slavery had left blacks in an inferior moral state and only whites could help them develop to the point of American civilization. “The solution lay in a Hampton-style education, an education that combined cultural uplift with moral and manual training, or as Armstrong was fond of saying, an education that encompassed ‘the head, the heart, and the hands.’”³⁷ The general insisted that blacks should refrain from voting and politics because their long experience as slaves and, before that, pagans, had degraded the race beyond responsible participation in government. “Armstrong maintained that it was the duty of the superior white race to rule over the weaker dark-skinned races until they were appropriately civilized. This civilization process, in Armstrong’s estimate, would require several generations of moral and religious development.”³⁸ The primary means through which white civilization could be instilled in African Americans was by the moral power of labor and manual industry.³⁹

At the heart of the Hampton-style education was this emphasis on labor and industry. However, teaching blacks to work was a tool—not the primary goal—of the Institute. Rather than producing classes of individual craftsmen and labors, Hampton was ultimately a school for future black teachers. In theory, these black teachers would then

³⁷ David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 45, 326.

³⁸ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 38.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 33-47.

apply the Hampton idea of self-help and industry at schools throughout the U.S., especially the South. To this end, a prerequisite for admission to Hampton was the intent to become a teacher. In fact, “approximately 84 percent of the 723 graduates of Hampton’s first twenty classes became teachers.”⁴⁰ Armstrong strove to instill in these disciples the moral value of manual labor. This concept became the crucial component of Hampton’s training of black educators.

Perhaps the best student of Armstrong’s Hampton-style education was Booker T. Washington. After coming to the school in 1872, Washington immediately began to adopt Armstrong’s teaching and philosophy. Washington described Armstrong as “the most perfect specimen of man, physically, mentally and spiritually....” Washington also quickly learned the aim of the Hampton Institute. After leaving Hampton, he recalled being admitted to the school, despite his ragged appearance, due to how well he demonstrated sweeping and dusting a room. From his first day at Hampton, Washington embraced the Hampton idea of black education.⁴¹

Washington graduated from Hampton in 1875, but returned after a few years to take a position as a part-time teacher and graduate student. He stayed at Hampton until General Armstrong recommended him to be the first principal of the newly chartered Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama. Under Washington’s direction, the Tuskegee educational plan closely resembled that of the Hampton Institute. After a year without a permanent campus or building, the Tuskegee Institute procured a farm and Washington quickly incorporated farm duties and facility maintenance with the regular

⁴⁰ Ibid., 34.

⁴¹ Booker T. Washington, *The Story of my Life and Work* printed in Harlan, Smock, and Kraft, vol. 1, 21.

academic lessons. Students were required to perform work in addition to their studies, regardless of their families' financial standing. Washington developed this work-study into a full industrial curriculum and devoted the institution to the technical and industrial education of blacks.⁴²

Washington taught that protesting discrimination and complaining loudly of the African American's adverse conditions would only bring more resentment and malice from whites. Instead, he advocated praising the benefits blacks received from living in partnership with whites while working separately and independently to secure a stable economic future for the race. He argued that African Americans should become laborers and work to establish a strong economic foundation within their community. As blacks gained material wealth, they would also gain their respect. Washington condemned blacks who clamored for immediate political and social equality and downplayed the importance of higher education for blacks. Because this position was attractive to whites who also begrudged black competition and petitions for equal treatment, Washington gained notoriety and support among whites, which he skillfully translated into power among blacks. The strategies of such a prominent black man who commanded so much respect in white society, were alluring to many African Americans.

The Hampton and Tuskegee plan was a convenient compromise between blacks who would accept any plan to improve their conditions and whites who believed the black race should be developed, but felt threatened by more aggressive attempts at power. Of course, this racial uplift would take time since, in their opinions, blacks were naturally and inherently inferior. Meanwhile, whites could maintain their position of power in

⁴² Ibid., 28-35.

society. After all, by their reasoning, why should an inferior race be granted equal status and power? For now, blacks' best contribution to American society would be as subordinates to their racial superiors. White America prided itself in mentoring this lesser race, while also working to ensure that blacks remained in a submissive position.

The Hampton-Tuskegee Philosophy at the World's Fairs

With the support of whites and blacks, this concept of industrial racial improvement became the backbone of African American participation in the world's fairs. This was the concept of the 1885 New Orleans Fair. When blacks were essentially denied participation in the 1893 Columbian Exposition, the Hampton Institute still contributed a display. And when the 1895 Atlanta fair opened its doors to the world, none other than Booker T. Washington, one of the chief architects of the plan, gave the opening address. The address, which became known as the "Atlanta Compromise," basically spelled out the philosophy that the Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes, and other schools like them, had promoted for years.

Washington filled his address with arguments supporting Tuskegee's Hampton-style program of racial adjustment. In a nod to General Armstrong, his Hampton background, and the financial supporters of Tuskegee, Washington thanked his audience for "the constant help that has come to our educational life, not only from the Southern States, but especially from Northern philanthropists who have made their gifts a constant stream of blessing and encouragement." To whites, Washington was a living example of the improving racial conditions in the South. For some blacks, the philosophy Washington advocated was a hard pill to swallow, but apparently there was something to

be said for Washington's apparent success. The Tuskegee principal argued that "the wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle...." He called black politicians "ignorant and inexperienced" for demonstrating that "a seat in Congress or State Legislator was more sought than a real estate or industrial skill." Finally, Washington insisted, "no race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as writing a poem."⁴³

While Washington's speech is important in itself, even more important was the fact that his understanding of racial identity was being accepted, at least in most part, by the large majority of African Americans. Washington's ideas were not only being accepted, but they were being repeated, replicated, and reproduced in schools and in world's fairs exhibits. A major component of the Atlanta exhibit, and later the Nashville display, was the economic and industrial labor of blacks. For thousands of viewers of these exhibits, white and black, laborers and craftsmen were the primary identities presented in the exhibit.

Tuskegee's Influence on the Paris Exhibit

The "American Negro Exhibit" at the Paris Exposition borrowed much of its material and its approach from these past Tuskegee-style black exhibits in the United States. The Special Agent to the exhibit, Thomas Calloway, was an ardent believer in the Tuskegee plan for racial improvement. Washington himself noted that Calloway

⁴³ Washington's Atlanta address reprinted in *The Story of my Life and Work* in Harlan, Smock, and Kraft, vol. 1, 73-76.

“believes thoroughly in the industrial work, and would push that side in connection with the literary work.”⁴⁴ In fact, Washington was so convinced of Calloway’s confidence in the Tuskegee model, when he declined the presidency of Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College, he recommended Calloway for the job noting,

He has great executive ability: sees right through things and sees them in all their relations. He also understands the South, its needs and the relations of the races. I believe that industrial education is to be the salvation of our people. Book education alone increases their wants, without increasing their ability to supply these wants. It is my opinion that if Alcorn College could be brought to the point where more attention could be given to the industrial side, it would result in much more good for the masses of our people. Most of the institutions with which I am acquainted fail to make their industrial work a success for the reason that it seems that they do not know how to divide the time between the literary and industrial work. If Mr. Calloway is appointed to the position, I feel quite sure that I can give him such help as will enable him to overcome this difficulty.⁴⁵

In Washington’s estimation, Alcorn needed a man dedicated to the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education and Calloway was “the best qualified man in the country for this position.”⁴⁶ Washington’s trust in Calloway was not ill founded. Calloway had already expressed his devotion to the Tuskegee philosophy in a letter to Washington. “The presidency of Alcorn I shall accept if offered, not so much because of my confidence in myself but rather because of my faith in the work... My only ambition will be to get Alcorn in to the Tuskegee idea of education.”⁴⁷ Calloway was given the job at Alcorn, but later left the position and became a northern agent and fund-raiser for Washington and the Tuskegee Institute.

⁴⁴ Harlan, Smock, and Kraft, vol. 3, p. 419.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 418.

⁴⁷ Ibid., vol. 3, 415-416.

Although Calloway's desire to "answer these slanders" was not completely congruent with the main thrust of Washington's racial strategy, Calloway's involvement in the planning of the exhibit ensured him that a certain degree of Tuskegee's philosophy would be preserved in the Paris project.⁴⁸ Washington gave his blessing to the proposed display and Calloway immediately gave the display a Tuskegee flavor.

Although the bill appropriating funds for the exhibit was not introduced until December 17, 1899 and not passed for more than a month, Calloway wasted no time inviting submissions to the exhibit. After all, the Exposition would begin in less than five months and materials had to be shipped overseas. On December 21, Calloway sent out a circular outlining the exhibit's purposes and calling for support. In the circular, Calloway identifies himself as the "Special Agent on Negro Education." As this representative of Negro education, Calloway's primary focus was technical training and material production, highlighting his acceptance of Washington's ideas. Calloway notes that African Americans need to demonstrate their "material progress," and stresses that "it is due to the United States that proof be furnished that all classes of its population are prosperous, progressive, and valuable citizens." Of thirteen classes of displays Calloway outlined in the paper, six directly relate to industrial or agricultural production.⁴⁹

Besides tailoring the exhibit to reflect the Hampton-Tuskegee racial philosophy, Calloway's lobbying nearly won Washington's philosophy an even greater and more direct influence at the Paris Exposition. Just before Calloway sailed for Europe, Ferdinand Peck, the American Commissioner General to the fair, confidentially informed

⁴⁸ Calloway asks, "How shall we answer these slanders?" in reference to American blacks portrayed as rapists and "a drug in civilized society." *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 226.

⁴⁹ *BTW Papers*, reel 35, frame 315, 316.

Calloway that Washington would be made a juror on the international committee that would award prizes in June. However, Calloway wrote Washington two months later to tell him the Jury appointments were still “hanging fire,” and by May 1, it was apparent that Washington had been slighted for the position. Although Calloway had been assured that “the appointment was fixed,” the situation changed when the number of American jurors was reduced. A debate ensued between the appointment of Washington or a woman, and under heavy political pressure to appoint at least one woman, Washington’s juror position evaporated. Howard J. Rogers, the American Director of Education and Social Economies, also had protested Washington’s selection because it was in his own area that the Tuskegee principal was considered to be a juror. Under French regulations, if Washington had been appointed, any exhibits to which he had contributed or had personal interest would have been disqualified for awards.⁵⁰

Calloway was very disappointed with this turn of events and regretted that he had not applied “strong political pressure and had [Washington’s] appointment announced early as was done in some other cases.” The special agent confessed, “this may be a greater disappointment to me than to you, for I had been developing some plans to have grow out of your coming here, a congress or public meeting in which a statement might be presented to the public.” Again Calloway lamented, “had the difficulties materialized while I was in the United States, I could have met them, but from this point I was helpless.”⁵¹ Calloway’s disappointment was a testament to his belief that Washington’s leadership was a key to African American advancement.

⁵⁰ Ibid., reel 34, frame 258.

⁵¹ Ibid., frame 257.

Despite this set-back to Calloway's plans for the exhibit's greater impact, he did receive an enthusiastic response from several of the leading African American schools and colleges. These institutions sent materials to be displayed that largely reaffirmed the importance of the Tuskegee philosophy in blacks' representation of themselves and their race. At least eleven African American schools, colleges, and universities sent material for the display in Paris. Among these were the Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes, as well as Fisk University, Howard University, Claflin University, the Agricultural and Mechanical College of North Carolina, and Atlanta University. Besides Atlanta University, whose students worked under the tutelage of W. E. B. Du Bois, the materials that were sent were largely agricultural, industrial, and vocational.

In a series of cases, situated meaningfully under a large portrait of Booker T. Washington, were "displayed samples of industrial work and agricultural products furnished by the Tuskegee institute." These materials represented the Tuskegee plan in action: "wagon making, shoemaking, harness, all sorts of skilled wood work, machine shop work, casting, forging, tailoring and dressmaking."⁵² Beside these industrial materials were boards displaying "agricultural products cultivated by the colored people of the south. Grasses, seeds, cotton and sugar cane products, etc., are wrought into fancy shapes so that they attract the eye and call the attention to how much a Negro is producing."⁵³ These displays demonstrated that since the end of slavery, American blacks embraced a struggle to improve their race through agriculture and industry; African Americans were focused on gaining the technical skills to become economically

⁵² *Cleveland Gazette*, 1 September 1900.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

independent and essentially middle-class. These men and women were too busy helping themselves climb out of poverty to be hindered by adverse racial conditions in America.

Under these industrial and agricultural items were large cases containing the displays of individual schools and colleges. The majority of material from these institutions was comprised of photographs. Many of these pictorial displays reiterate the emphasis on industrial and vocational uplift, and deemphasize the individual, visual racial identities of the blacks within the pictures. People in the pictures are often parts of larger groups or a small part of a larger scene. By mainly focusing on the activities and products of blacks, rather than African Americans' racial features that were so important to the Social Darwinists, these school displays demonstrate the importance of Washington's agenda in their representations of race. Blacks in these photographs are first and foremost craftspeople, producers, and laborers.

The Tuskegee model of education reached all the way into the elementary and public schools. The public school children of the District of Columbia contributed nine models to the Paris exhibit, which show the influence of the Tuskegee philosophy even on younger students. The eighth and ninth models depict the actual students of the Washington, D. C. colored high school, but the first seven models form a series that told the story of "the development of the public schools among our race." The first model illustrated "a family of ex-slaves in 1865, homeless, hungry and in despair." The next four models showed this family in various stages of starting a school and building a schoolhouse. The sixth model, however, showed "a view of the same farmer's family, as shown so despairingly in the first group, only now it is ten years later, and you see his

farm well laid out, his tasty home, wagon loaded with produce, horse, hogs, and chickens.” Although this model may not have much to do with education in itself, the idea it communicated was that the development of schools resulted in more productive laborers. Rather than showing a child reading or writing, or other academic activities, the results are agricultural. Once again, the message was clear: black schools do not primarily produce scholars; they first produce farmers. Therefore, in the seventh and last model of the series, when the family’s young child finally left his farm to become the principal of the school, the audience could only assume he would teach other children to work and be productive also.⁵⁴

Besides these dioramas, the photographs from the Tuskegee Institute are the most obvious and direct examples of this industrial, and agricultural emphasis. The Tuskegee photographs were organized into large photo-montages giving an overall picture of the school. Harry Shepherd, who was eventually expelled from the Exposition, contributed at least some of the Tuskegee photographs.⁵⁵ Many of these pictures illustrate the agricultural products of the school farm. One picture shows a full field of healthy-looking corn. Another photograph shows well-laid rows of short vegetables (figure 1). But these photos exclude African American people. In the pictures that do include people, the student-workers are small and faceless. In one picture, a man stands in a large yard, with a chart and a large group of pigs (figure 2). The man is so far from the photographer, that the viewer is barely able to make out the man’s clothing, not to mention his facial expression, or more importantly, his racial identity. The same is true of a group of women

⁵⁴ *Cleveland Gazette*, 1 September 1900.

⁵⁵ Bettina Berch, *The Woman Behind the Lens: the Life and Work of Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1864-1952* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 49.

pictured standing in a vegetable patch (figure 3). The eight women are posed with tools in hand, ready to work, but besides slightly darker complexions, their racial features are unidentifiable. They are faceless laborers, with only vague racial identities. The emphasis communicated by these depictions is industry and the products of industry. The primary identity of the African Americans represented in these pictures is not as members of a race scientifically defined by certain features or traits, but as laborers. This was the crux of the Tuskegee philosophy: blacks would earn membership in American society by first becoming producers, and only secondarily redeeming their racial identity.



(figure 1)



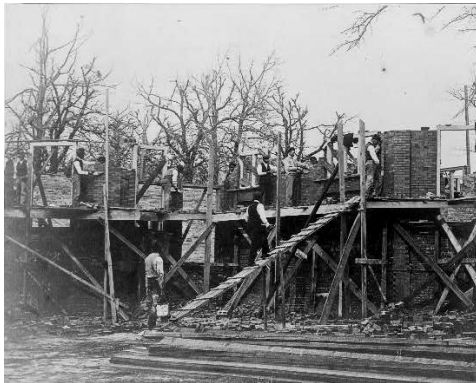
(figure 2)



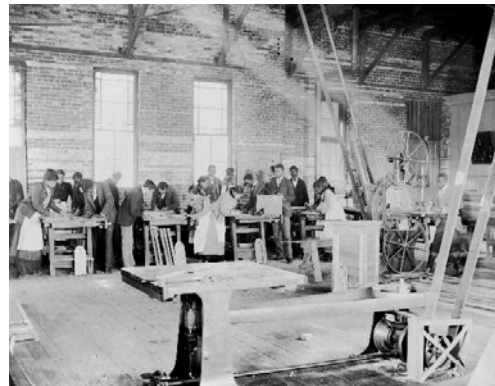
(figure 3)

The photographs from other institutions communicate the same racial concept. Even the universities, which normally offered more academic course-loads than the normal and industrial schools, sent materials that supported the Tuskegee idea of

education. In pictures from Claflin University, the students are represented as industrial producers much like the blacks pictured in the photos from Tuskegee. Once again, the products and tools of industrial labor supercede the identities of the African American subjects. A picture entitled “Bricklaying” shows a half-completed brick wall and a gang of laborers in the midst of work (figure 4). However, the people in the photograph are small and hidden. The individual blacks in the picture are not the focal point; the wall they are producing takes precedence. Another Claflin photo presents a group of black students clustered in the background while an industrial machine stands prominently in the foreground (figure 5). The machine represents the desired characterization of the blacks standing behind it: black schools endorsing the Hampton-Tuskegee philosophy hoped to construct an identity for the black community as a resource of production.



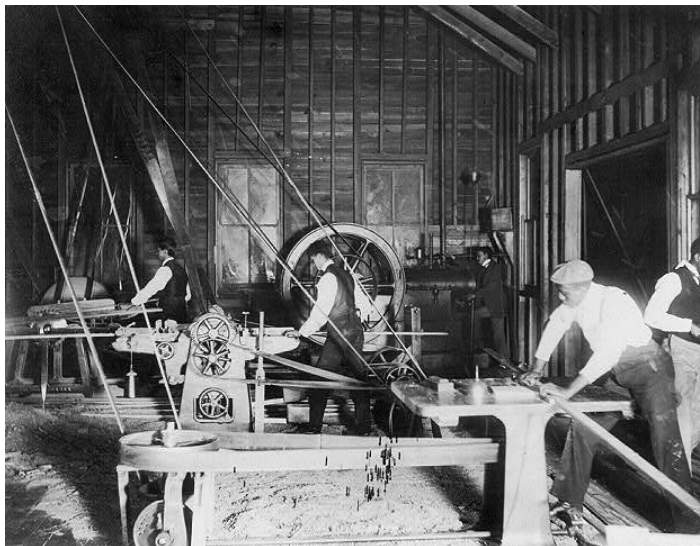
(figure 4)



(figure 5)

In another piece, five African Americans are pictured laboring in a woodworking shop (figure 6). The students are both enclosed within a smaller area than the open fields of the Tuskegee displays, and closer to the view-point of the photographer than the previous Claflin shots. Furthermore, the bulky equipment and belts of the steam-powered machinery only partially displace these black men as the central focus of the picture. Yet,

of the five human subjects, only one slightly faces the camera while two others turn their shoulders discretely away from the shot, one other student is almost hidden in the shadowy background, and the last individual in the picture is positioned on the margin, his face just cropped out of the frame. The singular student who is accessible to viewers cannot address the audience by looking into the lens or giving an expression because his entire attention is concentrated on his work. The students represented in these pictures are so involved in their labor that they cannot engage the audience except through their work. Their work becomes that which confronts the viewer, not their racial identity.



(figure 6)

These constructions of identity were not only reserved for black men. African American women were also represented in similar images. Many photographs from black schools and colleges presented women engaged in sewing or fitting classes. In these pictures, the women are rarely represented as individuals. Instead they are presented communally, part of a larger, productive group. In a picture from the Agricultural and Mechanical College of North Carolina, captioned “sewing,” about a dozen women are

crowded together behind sewing machines, working diligently on their projects (figure 7). A similar picture from Howard University shows almost twice as many women crowded together in a cutting and fitting class (figure 8). The situation of these women within large groups communicates the concept of community in labor. According to the implications of these pictures, to be a black woman meant to be a part of a greater community of producers. Within this framework, labor was the primary basis for community solidarity.



(figure 7)



(figure 8)

Furthermore, many of the university and college pictures communicated that blacks were a certain kind of laborer-producer. Often, the workers in the photographs were overdressed, wearing clothing too formal for the work that they were performing. The message was that these were middle-class people who were finding success through their labor. Not only were African Americans contributing to the economy and working virtuously to gain financial independence, but they had the tools to succeed because they were highly-trained, skilled workers. The women are shown operating new sewing machines, the men handle sophisticated machinery, and the display makes the case that the African American community offers a large and important source of top-notch

workers. These pictures make the case Washington emphasized repeatedly—that whites could not afford to ignore and exclude such a valuable work force for long.

Several important exceptions to the photographs that simply followed the themes of the Hampton-Tuskegee philosophy were among the pictures that dealt with the Hampton Institute itself. The well-renowned photographer, Frances Benjamin Johnston, produced these pictures. Johnston came to Hampton, probably with her mother, during December of 1899 and January of 1900. Hollis Burke Frissell, General Armstrong’s successor at Hampton, hired her to photograph the school because she was the most qualified photographer available, and she was already working in the area on a similar project for the District of Columbia school system. Unlike other depictions of black laborers, colleges, and technical institutes, the photographs Johnston produced were a mix between tacit support of the Hampton’s labor-centric approach and frames that conflicted harshly with this racial image. Many pictures illustrate classes in manual arts and agriculture. But in others, Johnston showed well-dressed students discussing South African Politics, or a Native American baby bound in the traditional cradleboard.⁵⁶ “Her apparent neutrality toward and outsider status regarding the debates within the African American community on the road for ‘negro progress’ were probably an advantage in that they allowed Johnston to reveal the complexities of the Hampton experiment, even as her progressive ideals kept her open to its promise.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ibid., 46-54.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 54-55. On pages 55-56, Berch also mentions that during Johnston’s visit to Hampton, she shared her own collections of prints with students, including pieces by F. Holland Day. Day later visited the campus, and Johnston’s introduction had already laid a groundwork for the acceptance of “his own very radical photography: headshots without context, intense meditations on the aesthetics of dark skin.” In this sense, Day’s work closely resembled the portraits compiled and displayed in Paris by Du Bois.

Yet, the influence of these “progressive ideals” sometimes required Johnston’s photographs to conform to the self-help philosophy of the Hampton Institute and the labor-centric racial identity. Just as in the pictures from Tuskegee and other African American schools, Johnston “often chose to distance her camera from the scene slightly, to suggest that these are not personal portraits so much as illustrations of ideas. At times Johnston’s frames were so serenely composed that they appear didactic. For instance, her image of student carpenters repairing a stair case stands as an example of the sublime virtues of cooperative labor.”⁵⁸ “This scene of work is startling for its stillness. No sawdust, no disorder, no movements accompanying the silent builders. Like the other lessons, the staircase is almost finished. Labor, trained at Hampton, these messages imply, bears fruit with the ease—and freedom from conflict—of a tree of eden.”⁵⁹

The prevailing treatment of the school within Johnston’s images affirmed Hampton’s accommodating plan for racial adjustment.⁶⁰ The Hampton-Tuskegee emphasis on work ethic and self-help was clearly evident in Johnston’s pictures, and the increased giving by Hampton’s white patrons demonstrated the effectiveness of their message. The endowment grew by \$18,000 in 1899, but in 1900, when Johnston’s photographs were exhibited, additional funds rose by more than 900% to \$163,000. Much of these new funds “came from northern Quakers and others who were not familiar with

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

⁵⁹ Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 138.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 149.

Hampton firsthand, but who could see in Johnston's photographs the kind of progress they wanted to support."⁶¹

The influence of the Hampton-Tuskegee philosophy reached from the public schools to the Universities. Although these school displays inherently dealt with training, the pervasiveness of images of labor and industry demonstrate the importance of these ideas in blacks' concepts of their own identities. The blacks represented in these materials wanted to be known as producers, craftsmen, and laborers. Their thoughts, their racial features, and their personalities were secondary and deemphasized. This concept was familiar to whites and they were comfortable with this arrangement, which was reflected in the prizes the exhibit won. The Hampton Institute, the progenitor of this concept of racial improvement, won a "Grand Prix." Besides Hampton, at least eight other schools whose displays primarily reflected the Tuskegee model won medals or honorable mentions, as well as a personal monograph on Negro education written by Washington himself. The international jury, without an African American representative, heartily embraced the model of racial adjustment represented in these displays. The representation of blacks as laborers and producers, faceless and without individual needs or rights, was welcome to American and European whites alike.

⁶¹ Berch, 50.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE HAMPTON-TUSKEGEE IDEA

Certainly, the racial strategy of Booker T. Washington and his Tuskegee philosophy were prominent fixtures in the “American Negro Exhibit” at the Paris Exposition. These images and representations were continuations of themes included at past American fairs and communicated ideas that were popular long before 1900. But, however prominent and influential these concepts seemed to be, African American opinion on the correct strategy of racial improvement was far from unanimous.

Although it is important not to underestimate Thomas Calloway’s adherence to the Tuskegee idea, Calloway was a complex character whose actions revealed some racial sympathies that did not fit into Washington’s construction of race. Calloway’s first letter to Washington regarding the exhibit argued that blacks must stand up for themselves, and that it was appropriate to “draw the color-line” when blacks were slandered as “rapists... and a drug to civilized society.” He insisted that the message of lynching and the disparaging remarks of the media must be answered.⁶² This stance was hardly in line with Washington’s view that “the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly.”⁶³

Calloway’s racial consciousness was shaped by his roots in Washington, D. C., an extremely racist city where politics were a way of life, and his Fisk University education. The prevalence of the Tuskegee idea had influenced all areas, but the philosophy’s lukewarm affection for higher academic education limited its effects on Fisk and other

⁶² Harlan, Smock, and Kraft, v. 5, 227.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, v. 1, 76.

leading African American universities, as discussed before. Whatever the reasons for Calloway's atypical passions, or why Washington overlooked them, these sentiments opened the door for a second discourse to formulate within the exhibit. Led by W. E. B. Du Bois's displays, the exhibit contained a message that celebrated the race, sought to legitimize visual black racial features, placed African Americans in society next to whites, and gave blacks individual and human personalities. Calloway blended this discourse with the Tuskegee-style materials to produce a unified impact that was more powerful than the individual effect of either approach.

Many African Americans disagreed with Washington's limited agenda, and chose instead to push for political and social inclusion beyond what they viewed as superficial participation in the economic arena. After the death of Frederick Douglass, these blacks lacked a leading figure who could articulate an alternative strategy and unapologetically push a more aggressive racial philosophy into national prominence. With the publication of *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903, however, W. E. B. Du Bois voiced a strong critique of Washington and quickly became the leading voice of dissent from the Tuskegee plan.

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois vehemently criticized Washington's plan for "becoming a gospel of Work and Money to such an extent as apparently almost completely to overshadow the higher aims of life."⁶⁴ Du Bois wrote, "one hesitates... to criticize a life which, beginning with so little, has done so much. And yet the time is come when one may speak in all sincerity and utter courtesy of the mistakes and shortcomings of Mr. Washington's career."⁶⁵ According to Du Bois, Washington was

⁶⁴ W. E. B. Du Bois. *The Souls of Black Folk*, 42.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

guilty of promoting a policy of submission rather than self-assertion. Du Bois insisted that “manly self-respect is worth more than lands and houses.”⁶⁶ Du Bois specifically condemned Washington’s Tuskegee plan for advocating and facilitating the forfeit of political power, civil rights, and higher education for African Americans.⁶⁷ Du Bois summarized his opposition saying, if

reconciliation [following the Civil War] is to be marked by the industrial slavery and civic death of those same black men, with permanent legislation into a position of inferiority, then those black men, if they are really men, are called upon by every consideration of patriotism and loyalty to oppose such a course by all civilized methods, even though such opposition involves disagreement with Mr. Booker T. Washington.⁶⁸

In Du Bois’s words, Washington’s Atlanta Compromise speech at the 1895 Cotton States Exhibition made him “the most distinguished southerner since Jefferson Davis.”⁶⁹

At the time of the Paris fair though, Du Bois had not yet differentiated himself as an opponent to Washington and Tuskegee. In fact, Du Bois had repeatedly considered teaching at Tuskegee under Washington’s supervision. Still, his contributions to the Paris exhibit and his apparent influence on Thomas Calloway, an old friend, added a dimension of immediacy and assertiveness not yet seen in an African American exhibit. In addition to Du Bois’s more abrasive style and aggressive statistical work, unlike Washington, he believed that white contempt for blacks’ visual identity was a primary source of hatred and bigotry. Washington’s faith in economic cures ignored or downplayed the role of the visual prejudice that Du Bois believed existed regardless of economic status, education, or indications of racial progress. This difference between the Atlanta professor and

⁶⁶ Ibid., 42.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 42-43.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 46.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 37.

Washington added to Du Bois's growing dissatisfaction with the conventional concept of racial identity and foreshadowed his impending split with the Tuskegee principal. Some of the assertive visual concepts articulated in Du Bois's Paris exhibits were preserved in his later work, resurfacing in initiatives such as the Niagara Movement and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Thomas Calloway was sensitive to the merits of Du Bois's arguments and, without abandoning the importance of Washington's ideas, chose to include and encourage Du Bois's work in the display.

Du Bois's Participation in the Paris Exhibit

Du Bois's participation in the Paris exhibit probably grew out of his friendship with Thomas Calloway and through his reputation as a rising African American sociologist. Du Bois had become Calloway's friend while the two were classmates at Fisk University. In 1887, Calloway served as business manager for the student newspaper where Du Bois was editor-in-chief.⁷⁰ When Du Bois was accepted to Harvard, he had trouble financing his education, so he and Calloway traveled together to Minnesota with a few other friends to work for the summer at a hotel restaurant.⁷¹ Although Calloway staunchly supported Washington after Du Bois's denunciation of the principal, the two friends never became estranged.

Du Bois also had a growing reputation as one of the leading African American sociologists in the nation. Du Bois's study of *The Philadelphia Negro*, commissioned by the University of Pennsylvania 1896, contained "the first documented sociological

⁷⁰ David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: a Biography of Race, 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 74.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

insights into evolving Afro-America.”⁷² The study earned high praise and gained Du Bois eminence among African American scholars. The *Yale Review* called the study “a credit to American scholarship, and a valuable addition to the world’s stock of knowledge.”⁷³ While engaged with this project, Du Bois came to the attention of the administration of Atlanta University. Du Bois took a faculty position and began a sociology program at the school, overseeing studies performed by students.

When Calloway needed a social statistician for the exhibit in Paris, it was no surprise that he enlisted Du Bois, his friend and former classmate, to assist with the project. What may have been surprising to some, though, was that Du Bois and his students from Atlanta University contributed work that offered a stark contrast to the materials of the Tuskegee schools and changed the tone of the overall exhibit. Through these materials, other facets of the display, such as the books and patents and even the Tuskegee materials, took on new life and power. The Paris exhibit departed from the mode of past African American exhibits that had represented blacks as primarily laborer-producers. The Du Bois displays and the materials they supported pioneered a new representation of race. This racial construction embraced blackness, celebrated individuals, and protested social conditions based on assumptions that blackness was inferior or repulsive, or even recognizable. In fact, Du Bois attempted to disrupt whites’ notions of visual black features in order to gain acceptance for the people who expressed these features.

⁷² Ibid., 196.

⁷³ Ibid., 210.

The Atlanta University Charts and Statistics

The first set of materials that Du Bois supervised and submitted were a series of charts compiled by Atlanta University students. These materials consisted of more than seventy statistical and graphical displays intended to dispute racial difference. While Social Darwinists attempted to prove scientifically the inferiority of blacks, Du Bois offered an empirical rebuttal of this idea. Many of the charts compared the African American population with European populations in order to demonstrate that differences between the races were insignificant or due to factors other than inherent racial deficiencies. Other charts were intended to address specific degrading myths about African Americans such as white allegations of blacks' lack of virility or notions of blacks' comparative mental weakness. Several of the graphs contain commentary on discrimination in their captions. These notes often pointed to "proscriptive laws" which were conveniently displayed nearby in a multi-volume record of the complete "Black Code of Georgia, USA."⁷⁴ The strategy demonstrated in these charts argued for the immediate rejection of racial stereotypes.

The charts were divided into two sections. The first dealt with blacks within the United States in general. The second portion focused more narrowly on the African Americans living in Georgia. Du Bois stated,

It was a good idea to supplement these very general figures with a minute social study in a typical Southern State. It would hardly be suggested, in the light of recent history, that conditions in the State of Georgia are such as to give a rose-colored picture of the Negro; and yet Georgia, having the largest Negro population, is an excellent field of study.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ W. E. B. Du Bois, "The American Negro in Paris," *The American Monthly Review of Reviews* 22 (Nov. 1900): 576.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 577.

In function, the study of the US in general served to draw large conclusions, while the Georgia study proved the points and confirmed the conclusions.

Unlike the photographic materials, each of which offered only a singular example of progress in a white man's world, these charts compared the total African American community to communities of whites to prove their merit within the larger world context. One prime example of this was the set of charts that compared Negro population statistics to the various countries of Europe. The first of these was a study of the comparative populations. Du Bois and others such as Calloway liked to point out that the population of American blacks was almost as large as half the population of Spain.⁷⁶ However, besides Spain, the black population was compared to that of ten other European countries, some of which were smaller and almost equal to the population of American blacks. Visitors to the fair were likely to find either their own nation or one very near listed on the chart. This display was intended to personalize the black experience for white Europeans.⁷⁷

A similar chart compared the rate of illiteracy among American blacks to that of various European states. This struck a deeper and more aggressive chord than the population statistics. Unlike the raw population data, which did not necessarily imply superiority, literacy was analogous to intelligence, and when blacks scored higher than the Russians (who claimed the territory containing the Caucasus Mountains, from which the term Caucasian was derived), the claim struck a serious blow to the proponents of

⁷⁶ *BTW Papers*, reel 34, frame 278.

⁷⁷ W. E. B. Du Bois, [*Charts and graphs showing the conditions of Afro-Americans in 1900*], microfilm reproduction (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress Photoduplication Service, 1982).

black inferiority.⁷⁸ Contrasting the educational exhibits of past fairs that only compared black educational achievements to past conditions of blacks, this juxtaposition of African Americans and whites seemed to say at least, “we are like you,” if not “we are better.” This statement far surpassed the attitude of past exhibits that only implied, “we might someday be like you.”

Another pair of graphs accomplished yet another escalation in demands for respect and equality. These graphs showed the black marital status compared to that of Germany, and the age distribution compared to that of France. Most visitors to the exhibit were probably from one of these two nations, and most of these probably did not view Russia and Hungary as the top of the European society. Thus, a comparison of American blacks to the French or Germans was an even greater chance to catch the attention of fairgoers. According to the charts, American blacks were more likely than Germans to have been married with a significantly larger portion widowed before the age of sixty. Also, the African American population was much younger than the French population. Once again, comparisons of blacks to whites accomplished a greater effect than demonstrations of black progress inside a singular racial context. Comparisons with the host country itself must also have been impressive for foreign visitors who happened by the Negro exhibit.⁷⁹

Yet comparisons between whites and blacks were not the only interesting and assertive feature of the charts. One important characteristic of some of the charts is the inclusion of social commentary in the margins and beside the graphics. The captions

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

noted “Ku-Kluxism,” “political unrest,” “disfranchisement and proscriptive laws,” and “lynching.” This commentary gave contextual information about the circumstances within which the specific statistics occurred. One chart, “Valuation of Town and City Property Owned by Georgia Negroes,” showed a 400% increase in property value between the end of Federal Reconstruction and 1893. Not only does the chart demonstrate that blacks were surviving and working toward prosperity, the captions indicated that the changes occurred despite significant disadvantages afforded to blacks. Not only were blacks accumulating wealth, but they were improving in the face of adverse conditions.⁸⁰

A second graph shows the “Rise of the Negroes from Slavery to Freedom in One Generation.” This graph illustrates the social uplift of the African American population. Again, to underscore the importance of the achievement, commentary to the side of the chart refers to the proscriptive laws that may have hindered such a rise in conditions. This comment not only emphasizes the abilities of blacks but also points an accusing finger at white Americans. If democracy worked in practice, then the laws of a democracy must then reflect the attitudes and desires of the majority of the population. In this sense, either American democracy was breaking down or most Americans were interested in deterring the progress of blacks. Not only were African Americans succeeding in American society, they were doing so as victims of aggressive white discrimination.⁸¹

Supplementing these captions’ claims was a display of the “Black Code of Georgia USA.” This exhibit was composed of several volumes of Georgia’s legal code,

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

transcribed by hand. If foreign visitors were confused by the meaning of the “proscriptive laws,” referred to in the captions of the displays, they only had to turn to these volumes to find the meaning. These codes demonstrated penalties for various offenses, described the beginnings of institutionalized segregation, and defined persons of at least one-eighth African ancestry as black. In this way, the conditions under which blacks lived in the states were fully explained to a foreign audience who were also confronted by the total arbitrariness of the measures.⁸²

This method of comparing and denouncing disparaging myths about blacks was in stark contrast to the industrial exhibits of Tuskegee and other industrial schools. This aggressive challenge to entrenched racial assumptions was new and different from any material yet seen in an African American exhibit at any world’s fair.

The Visual Meaning of Blackness

Materials whose message traveled more obviously beyond that of the Tuskegee displays were hundreds of portraits of African Americans that Du Bois arranged and submitted. Most of these portraits were of young, well-dressed African Americans. Unlike the school photos that defined African Americans by what they did or what they produced, these photos defined blacks by how they looked. This visual identity was extraordinary for two reasons. First, the visual ideas of blackness in 1900 were overwhelmingly negative, among both white and black communities. Secondly, the

⁸² W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Black Code of Georgia, U.S.A.*, microfilm reproduction (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress Photoduplication Service, 1982).

visual concept illustrated by the photos proposed that blackness encompassed a much wider range of physical features than many people supposed.

The idea that blackness was undesirable or repulsive and the belief that African features were an indication of baseness of character, primitive culture, or ignorance was widely accepted at the end of the nineteenth century. The best demonstration of the acceptance of this racial attitude came from the popular literature of the era. Mainstream magazines would often run racially degrading pictures or advertisements without concern of negative reactions from readers. On the contrary, designers for these magazines hoped the pictures would be humorous or enjoyable to potential subscribers. For instance, the December 10, 1892 cover of *Harper's Weekly*, which declared itself the "Journal of Civilization," was illustrated with a picture entitled "A Reminder of Old Virginia." In the picture, two African Americans, an old man and an old woman, are shopping at an open-air meat-market on a crowded street. Both characters are dressed in shabby clothes and both have grotesque, stereotypically exaggerated features. On each of their faces, is a glow of excitement as they spot an opossum hanging among the geese, chicken, and ham. In the background, a white mother pulls her daughter away as she stares at the two blacks with frightened curiosity.⁸³

The picture communicates many racial meanings, but it is obvious that the blacks are represented as poor and backward. Their distorted features grant them only partial humanity and the young girl's stare demonstrates that they are out of place among whites in society. Furthermore, the opossum in the picture intends to poke fun of the black characters' retention of a degraded state associated with slavery in the antebellum South.

⁸³ *Harper's Weekly*, 10 December 1892, cover.

In another illustration from the September 1, 1883 edition of *Harper's Weekly*, entitled "An Optical Delusion," a black woman calls out to a pet monkey to get down from a fence. The caption says, "git down dar, chile!" The implication is that black children resemble monkeys to the point that their parents cannot even tell the difference.⁸⁴

In each of these illustrations, condescending racial messages were communicated through easily recognizable visual themes. In the first picture, the illustrator showed blacks drawn to represent whites' attitudes toward their racial features. These features were not only repulsive in their looks, but many white believed the visual characteristics to be interchangeable with unaccepted behavioral characteristics. The second cartoon implies that not only do black children look like monkeys, but they also act like monkeys. Thus, to whites during this period, blackness was both visually unpleasant and linked to inferior intelligence and character.

Whites were not alone in constructing negative images of blacks. African Americans often accepted and perpetuated these images as well. Blacks had been told for centuries that typical African features were ugly and undesirable, and this became a standard of personal value even in African American communities. Blacks tried to look white. Evidence of this comes from beauty products that promised to straighten hair and bleach skin. But where these products were advertised was perhaps more important than what they promised to do. If these products were advertised only to whites, many of whom obviously thought little of black features, then it could be argued that blacks rejected the degradation of their race in this manner. However, these products were most

⁸⁴ *Harper's Weekly*, 1 September 1883.

popular and advertised most often in black publications. This acceptance within the black community speaks to the degree to which even African Americans had accepted whiteness as the pinnacle of human development and beauty.

Perhaps the most common products marketed to African Americans to make them less “black” were products designed to straighten hair. Besides hair straighteners, skin bleaches were another popular product. One advertisement from the *Cleveland Gazette* proclaimed a “Black Skin Remover.” The advertisement shows an illustration of a woman before and after. In the first drawing, the woman was so dark-skinned that it is hard to make out any facial features at all. The second picture showed a woman with the same hair and clothing, but now her skin had turned white and her features had become clear and distinguished. Although the after drawing was obviously supposed to show the woman in a more beautiful state, the only change in her life was that she now had white skin. Although the preparation was also promoted for removing wrinkles, freckles, dark spots, pimples and black-heads, small pox pits, tan and liver spots, these are not the uses most prominently displayed in the ad. The message communicated by the bleach manufacturers is that all of these traits are not as hideous as simply having back skin. This advertisement once again demonstrated the negative visual construction of blackness, even within the black community.⁸⁵

Du Bois had first-hand experience with the humiliation and discrimination of this system that degraded visual blackness. While working on the Paris project, Du Bois booked a train ticket to Savanna to attend a meeting of exhibition commissioners. However, when he tried to board a sleeping car, where he felt he belonged, he was told

⁸⁵ *Cleveland Gazette*, 1 September 1900, 1.

that he would have to ride in the car reserved for African Americans. There were no sleeping cars or first-class accommodations available for blacks. Du Bois had purchased a valid ticket, and if he had been very light-skinned, he might have been able to “pass” without incident, though this is not to say that the sociologist ever would have claimed to be white intentionally. Still, because of his blackness, he was denied a sleeping car. Du Bois was infuriated.⁸⁶

Du Bois believed that blacks’ lives were “mediated by a ‘white supremacist gaze,’ and therefore divided by contending images of blackness—those images produced by a racist white American culture, and those maintained by African American individuals...” when they did not accept the white-is-better paradigm. The tension between these visual attitudes contributed to what Du Bois termed the black race’s double-consciousness.⁸⁷ Besides weighing on the psyche of blacks, the idea of visual difference was also important because of a certain doubt that even if African Americans gained the economic independence championed by Washington, they would continue to be excluded and disparaged because of their black visual identity. Du Bois recognized these problems and sought to offer an answer through the collection of photographs he organized for the Paris exhibit.

Race in the Du Bois Photographs

The photographic exhibit materials that Du Bois organized contested the condescension toward visual blackness. The pictures consisted of hundreds of

⁸⁶ Lewis, 243-244.

⁸⁷ Shawn Michelle Smith, “ ‘Looking at One’s Self Through the Eyes of Others’: W. E. B. Du Bois’s Photographs for the 1900 Paris Exposition,” *African American Review* 4, no. 4 (winter 2000): 581.

photographs depicting the lives of African Americans, mostly in Georgia. Among these photographs, he had arranged more than a hundred portraits into a special display. "...Du Bois's 'American Negro' photographs disrupt the images of African Americans produced 'through the eyes of others' by simultaneously reproducing and supplanting these images with a different vision of the 'American Negro.'"⁸⁸ Du Bois, like Calloway, understood that "ordering facts into meaning, data into history... is not an idle exercise but a political act, a matter of judgement and choice about the emerging shape of the present and future." Photographs could play a key role in shaping identity. "It may be less obvious in the making of a photograph than in the writing of a history, but it is equally true: the viewfinder is a political instrument, a tool for making a past suitable for the future."⁸⁹

Like the photographs of the Hampton-style schools, Du Bois counted on the photographs in his display to construct an identity for African Americans as a community. However, Du Bois did not want to simply tell the story of black progress as it had been told before in African American exhibits, but he wanted to debunk and replace a negative visual concept of blackness. For this, portraits were especially powerful because nineteenth century viewers thought of photographs as both objectively true, and ultimately ambiguous. "All photographs have the effect of making their subjects seem at least momentarily strange, capable of meaning several things at once, or nothing at all. Estrangement allows us to see the subject in new and unexpected ways."⁹⁰ Du Bois hoped this strangeness would allow him to introduce a friendlier visual meaning of

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), xiv.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

blackness. “Photographic technology, like other human inventions, offers an extension and realization of already-imagined images,” but “photographs as physical evidence re-anchor the subject in the physical world” thereby either confirming or denying a person’s imagination.⁹¹ It was this power that Du Bois sought to harness.

Du Bois’s faith in photography steamed from his belief that photography could both document reality and communicate truth. This understanding of photographic material was a commonly held idea. Early in the history of the medium, photographers “developed a rationale which held that the true daguerrean artist looked through surfaces to depths, treated the exterior surface of persons as signs or expressions of inner truths, of interior reality.” This may have been in response to painters’ criticism that their new competitors’ products lacked the skillful sensibilities to represent their subjects’ inner lives.⁹² “To fix a portrait image,” photographer began to insist, “should be equivalent to fixing character.”⁹³ As noted in drawings and paintings of the period, the character of blacks had been denigrated even as non-photographic artists claimed the same responsibility to capture character in their work. However, as a more mechanical process, photography was viewed as objective, and Du Bois felt this objectivity could expose the errors in past representations.

Du Bois lived out his faith in photography when he arrived in Paris by going at once to have his portrait taken. He chose the Nadar Studio founded by Félix Nadar, “commonly acknowledged to be the foremost French portrait photographer of the

⁹¹ Linda Haverty Rugg, *Picturing Ourselves: Photography and Autobiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 2.

⁹² Trachtenberg, 27.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

century.”⁹⁴ Nadar started his career as a caricature sketch-artist. Popular notions of these artists during the period assigned special significance to the relationship between prominent visual characteristics and the inner character of the person. Sketch-artists derived success from their ability to capture or portray a personality within the exaggerations of their visual features.

On the one hand, the exaggeration of the facial features served... the purposes of the satirist... Yet alongside the principle of distortion for comic effect ran a more sober concern to elicit the essence of a person’s character: the contemporary conception of the portrait-charge (roughly speaking, a portrait-sketch possessing an extra dose of verve and emphasis) supposes an intriguing coincidence of exaggeration and veracity.⁹⁵

The European popular notions that infused visual caricature and exaggeration with ideas of personality or character were precisely like the attitudes that produced degrading cartoons aimed at African Americans. In fact, European artists produced similar drawings that attempted to portray blacks as primitive, simple, or child-like in order to capture the essence of their nature as most whites viewed them at the time.⁹⁶

Felix Nadar also participated in this visual construction of blackness when he published his *Panthéon Nadar*, a volume of 249 celebrity caricatures, in 1854. Later in his life, when Nadar reflected on this work, he confirmed his belief in the connection between physical features and the “spiritual and intellectual likeness” of his caricatures. Nadar specifically referred to his drawing of Alexandre Dumas the elder, the French novelist whose grandmother was of African heritage. Nadar explained that

⁹⁴ Roger Cardinal, “Nadar and the Photographic Portrait in Nineteenth-Century France” in *The Portrait in Photography*, ed. Graham Clarke (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), 6.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹⁶ See Dana Suzanne Hale, *Races on Display: French Representations of the Colonial Native, 1886-1931*. Ph.D. Thesis (Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, 1998).

he had sought to emphasise [sic]: ‘all those hints of an exotic racial origin, and to bring out the simian echoes of a profile which immediately seems to ratify Darwin’s theory, accentuating above all the predominant note in the person’s character, that is, his extreme and infinite kindness: --to squash that nose, all too fine in the original model, to enlarge those delicately incised nostrils, to tilt further the generous smile on those eyelids, to exaggerate... that fleshy lip...’⁹⁷

As demonstrated in Nadar’s own account, a connection between character and outward visual traits was a cultural expectation in both America and Europe.

This “quotient of seriousness, which adhered to the practice of the portrait-charge formed the supportive context wherein, as technology advanced, the photographic portrait would discover its rationale and its characteristic idiom.”⁹⁸ Certainly, attitudes toward photographic portraiture assumed the same power to capture the inner essence of the subject by recording its outward visual features. Perhaps the most compelling example of the similar attitudes toward photography’s ability to capture and portray true inner character was the proliferation of criminal mug shots and manuals that taught how to recognize a criminal from carefully documented visual features. However, the fascination with photography’s presumed mechanical objectivity and precision, replaced the skill of meaningful exaggeration with an emphasis on reality, exactitude, and authenticity. Photographic portraiture served the same purpose in capturing and identifying the essence of a character, but unlike the portrait-charge of the sketch-artist, the truth perceived within photographs was a function of their ability to represent the exact likeness of the subject, without accentuation or modification.

⁹⁷ Cardinal, 9, 11.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 7.

Nine months after the publication of the *Panthéon*, Felix Nadar opened his first photography studio. Nadar's photographs mimicked the subtle differences between popular notions of caricature and photography. While photography still captured the essence of a subject, the perception of truth could only be contained in the authenticity of the image. Soon after the opening of Nadar's photography studio, and only a year after the publication of the caricature of Dumas, Nadar had the opportunity to photograph the writer he had previously drawn. Nadar once again sought to elicit the same "infinite kindness" he cited in his drawing, recording Dumas's "jovial plumpness," the "jaunty tilt" of his head, and "the carefree clasping of his hands on the stool-back." But the realness of the photograph, and the absence of exaggeration give the photograph a much different meaning than Nadar's caricature of a year earlier. "These details signal the confidence and joviality of a successful man of the world," not the apish or child-like features of the cartoon. "Dumas is perfectly aware that his likeness—physical and intellectual—is being taken: he is not one wit put out by the fact, and has no fear of photographer or machine. He is weightily, uninhibitedly, himself.... Sitter and cameraman are equals...."⁹⁹ The difference in medium translated into a difference in meaning; Dumas's image was transformed from a degrading caricature into a respectable likeness. When Du Bois went to the Nadar studio to have his portrait taken, the Atlanta Professor signaled his confidence in this difference in medium and meaning. Du Bois used the resulting portrait for his exposition identity card.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰⁰ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois: 1803 (1877-1963) 1965* (Sanford, NC: Microfilming Corp. of America, 1980-1981), reel 89. Hereafter, this collection will be referred to as the *W. E. B. Du Bois Papers*.

Thomas Askew, an African American photographer from Atlanta has been credited for at least some of the portraits in Du Bois's display.¹⁰¹ But although it is unlikely that Du Bois took any of the portraits himself, the Atlanta University professor was undoubtedly responsible for the selection and the organization of their display. Therefore, with these portraits, Du Bois sought to transform the negative visual meanings indicated in the cartoons, beauty products, and attitudes of the period. He challenged the stereotypical notions of blackness and attempted to reclaim a positive visual black identity for the African American community.

Du Bois's first objective in his portrait display was to disrupt pre-formulated notions of blackness and whiteness. To do this, Du Bois consciously selected subjects who represented a full spectrum of visual traits. These pictures depicted individuals of myriad shades and features. The photographs documented various shapes of eyes, ears, mouths, and noses as well as many different hair textures. Some of the faces included in Du Bois's exhibit were very dark-skinned while others had a medium tone. The faces contained in the display were sometimes so light as to be indistinguishable from the European faces observing them. Although the viewer was aware that all of the portraits were of "blacks," Du Bois intended the wide range of features contained in the pictures to confuse each viewer's generalizations of the visual meaning of blackness (figures 9-12).

¹⁰¹ Deborah Willis, "The Sociologist's Eye: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Paris Exposition" in *A Small Nation of People: W.E.B. Du Bois and African American Portraits of Progress* published by the Library of Congress (New York: Amistad, 2003), 58-61. After the completion of majority of this paper, *A Small Nation* was brought to my attention. This volume of photographs from the "American Negro Exhibit," containing essays by David Levering Lewis and Deborah Willis, confirms several of the arguments submitted in this thesis; however, I determined not to cite the work in each instance, choosing instead to preserve credit for conclusions that I formulated independently. With this said, I do wish to thank the authors, especially Willis for shedding light on the mystery of the source of the Du Bois portraits. The connection of Thomas Askew with the Paris exhibit materials is both significant and important, and Askew must be viewed as a character who deserves much additional research and analysis.



(figure 9)

(figure 10)

(figure 11)

(figure 12)

However, the pictures did not simply offer a progression of blackness slowly transforming into whiteness. This would have undermined his position that blacks were not simply lower forms on a spectrum of human advancement. Instead, Du Bois arranged his pictures in an order that reflected no progression at all. He viewed real life as people of every color and race intermingled, and although his multi-shaded display did not explicitly include other racial groups such as Asians or Native Americans, it certainly represented how black community reflected a racially mixed condition. Still, the black people in the pictures were not measured on a scale of whiteness; the display implied that the lightest-skinned subject in any of the pictures was still black. Du Bois inverted the old fear of blacks “passing” as white and suggested that these light-skinned men and women were passing as black instead. In this scenario, however, they were accepted into the community of blackness that the exhibit had become.

An important example of this embrace of blackness, came through a picture of three young females posed close together (figure 14). The first girl, in the back, was recognizably African American. The next girl on the left is still certainly African American, but she could be bi-racial. The third girl looks very white. By displaying these

three girls in the same photograph, Du Bois permanently established a close connection between them. In fact, an observer may assume the three girls could be sisters, or best friends. Unlike in American society, in this portrait, the lightest girl was the minority. Here she was “passing” as black, and she was accepted into a community of blackness.



(figure 13)

The portraits served as the best explicit representation of Du Bois’s message in the exhibit. However, in addition to the studio portraits, Du Bois included many pictures and shots of town and country scenes. Often, these photographs addressed specific race myths such as the impotence of black sexuality (addressed by the many portraits of children and families such as figure 15), the natural indolence of the black race (addressed through the many depictions of black businesses), or the natural inclination of blacks toward crime (addressed in church scenes and depictions of positive community involvement such as a military company in figure 16). These show blacks in communities

much like those of their white neighbors. In this way, Du Bois contested the notion that blacks were inferior or base. He showed that they contributed to society through more than just industry and labor. His materials demonstrated a departure from the narrow racial strategy espoused by previous Negro exhibits.



(figure 14)



(figure 15)

Other Materials and the Complimentary Power of the Display

Besides the impact of the charts and photographs themselves, the exhibit materials sponsored by Du Bois augmented the power of other segments of the display. The books on display at the fair and the list of patents had meanings of their own, but even though these materials had larger meaning, the lists and titles existed as faceless names until Du Bois's photographs and charts offered them matching visual images and context within the imagination of European viewers

By many accounts, the jewel in the crown of the exhibit was the display of African American literature. Daniel Murray, an assistant librarian of Congress in 1900, organized these materials. On January 22, 1900, Murray issued a "Preliminary List of Books and Pamphlets by Negro Authors." His list named almost 270 titles and included a declaration that "any persons able to furnish books or pamphlets on this list, or having

knowledge of such are not on this list, will greatly aid this effort by interesting themselves to make certain that all books or pamphlets are duly represented in the collection.” Murray even promised to “furnish, upon application, penalty labels which, when attached to a package, will insure its free transmission through the mail.”¹⁰²

With the help of others, Murray added to his African American bibliography, and eventually, the list contained as many as 1,400 titles. In addition to this list of authors and titles, roughly two hundred actual volumes were displayed in Paris along with many African American newspapers and periodicals.¹⁰³ In addition to many of the titles in the collection, such as *A Freedman yet a Slave* and *Lynchings in the South*, that suggested works of protest in themselves, the collection as a whole acted as a demonstration to counter white derision toward blacks, and a demonstration against Washington’s conservative position on the issue. While Washington insisted that plowing a field was as dignified as writing a poem, in Murray’s collection, “books with philosophical tendencies are largely represented. These are followed by books of poems.”¹⁰⁴

The Du Bois photographs added power and meaning to this display of books as well. By establishing a black visual identity, the names in Murray’s bibliography could no longer be seen as just a name in a pamphlet. The names invoked the images of blackness that Du Bois offered the exhibit’s visitors.

Another significant aspect of the “American Negro Exhibit” was a display of more than 300 patents held by American blacks, a testimony to both their intelligence and their powers of innovation. Du Bois referred to a specific racial myth when he later

¹⁰² Daniel Murray, “Preliminary List of Books and Pamphlets by Negro Authors,” 1-8.

¹⁰³ Du Bois, “The American Negro at Paris,” 577.

¹⁰⁴ *The Indianapolis Freedman*, 10 February 1900.

recalled this portion of the exhibit. He recalled, “it was a Massachusetts lawyer who replied to the Patent Office inquiry, ‘I never knew a negro to invent anything but lies’; and yet here is a record of 350 patents granted to black men since 1834.”¹⁰⁵ Once again, without the Du Bois photographs, the names in the list of patents would have remained faceless, and lacking a visual race identity.

Calloway was not a black radical in any sense, but this complimentary power of the displays was the most successful aspect of Calloway’s role as coordinator of the exhibit and his work bridging the gap between Du Bois and Washington. Du Bois’s photographs and charts did not only lent faces and stories to the books and patents; they also gave life and humanity to the workers in the industrial and educational displays, who were struggling successfully to improve the conditions of their race. In the same way, the Hampton-Tuskegee materials gave strong, tangible evidence to the real lives of the people in Du Bois’s portraits and offered artifacts that testified to the potential within the numbers on his charts. “In the American Negro Exhibit,” Calloway integrated Washington’s conservative, practical, and inoffensive approach with Du Bois’s personal, immediate, and unabashed race consciousness. Where these ideas met was the racial reality that Calloway embodied and worked hard to communicate in Paris.

¹⁰⁵ Du Bois, “The American Negro at Paris,” 576.

THE EXHIBIT'S RETURN TO AMERICA

As the Paris Exposition wound to a close, Thomas Calloway began to imagine the impact the “American Negro Exhibit” could have if it were displayed in the U.S. Calloway had imagined the impact of the exhibit on Americans, especially southerners, from the very beginning of his work on the Paris project. In his letter asking Washington to support the display, Calloway wrote, “not only will foreigners be impressed, but hundreds of white Americans will be far more convinced by what they see there than what they see, or can see, everyday in this country, but fail to give us credit for.”¹⁰⁶ But travel had been long and expensive, and despite their large representation in the exhibits, the number of American visitors to the fair had been fewer than expected. The low turnout of Americans must have disappointed Calloway.

Besides the absence of Americans, Calloway also expressed mixed feelings about the prizes awarded to the Exhibit. In fact, the exhibit had done exceptionally well; it garnered two grand prizes, four gold medals, five silver medals, four bronze, and two honorable mentions. Calloway was certainly proud that the exhibit had been so well received, but he also suspected that the judging was inflated. In a letter to the *Atlantic Monthly Review of Reviews* regarding the awards, he explained, “there is not an even balancing that might be wished.” Unfortunately, “Some of the principal features were not installed till after the juries were disbanded.” Since the juries awarded the prizes without seeing some of the main displays such as “the books, the models, patents, &c.,” in

¹⁰⁶ Harlan, Smock, and Kraft, v. 5, p. 227.

Calloway's opinion, the prizes "do not necessarily represent the strongest features of the exhibit." Besides the lack of American attention, Calloway feared the display had not inspired the effect that it should have.¹⁰⁷

Calloway was too excited about the prospects of the exhibit's discourse to be satisfied with this result. So, as he considered his return to the States, he began to imagine ways to transfer and continue the exhibit's message back in America. One idea, probably discussed with Du Bois while they were together in Paris, was to continue the Atlanta University research formally in an annual investigation of the conditions of American blacks. However, a more direct plan presented itself when Calloway learned that there might be a Negro exhibit at the world's fair to be held in Charleston, South Carolina that would open in December of 1901. If Americans would not come to the Paris display, Calloway decided, then perhaps the Paris exhibit could come to them.

On September 18, 1900, Thomas Calloway wrote to Booker T. Washington, "I have heard nothing more from you in reference to the proposed exhibit at Charleston, S.C. I am giving the matter some thought and feel that there are many things I can secure here in the way of plans and suggestions that would admirably serve in making a showing at Charleston."¹⁰⁸ Washington replied that he had been chosen "President of the Negro Department" and agreed with Calloway's ideas of reusing the "American Negro Exhibit" at Charleston. Washington wrote,

Of course the Charleston people are depending upon the Negro exhibit being brought from Paris to Charleston and I hope that this plan can be carried out. If you know anything in the way of its being done, please

¹⁰⁷ Thomas J. Calloway to Albert Shaw, *W. E. B. Du Bois Papers*, reel 1, frame 512.

¹⁰⁸ *BTW Papers*, reel 34, frames 265-266.

let me know. I have suggested that the Directors make a formal applicatin [sic] to Commissioner Peck for the Negro exhibit.

Calloway must have been delighted when Washington went on to write, “what is needed is a man who will buckle down to the active work of securing and installing a proper exhibit. The Board of Directors have left it to me to secure such a man.... I am very anxious to have you take the position. In case you decide to do so I think you could come direct from Paris to Charleston and enter upon the work....”¹⁰⁹

Thomas Calloway did take the position, at least briefly, but he did not go directly to Charleston as Washington had suggested. He may have wanted to rest at home in D.C. for a while, or he may have been committed to support the proposed annual study of African Americans. Whatever the reasons, in February of 1901, Calloway was in Washington lobbying for the study, not in Charleston.¹¹⁰

However, Calloway was still at work, guiding the development of the Negro Department from D.C. In a letter to Washington, written on the letterhead of the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition Co., Calloway reported on the status of efforts to secure funding through Congress, and advised Washington on publicity matters. Calloway confidently concluded, “as soon as the matter [of funding] is settled, an office should be opened in Charleston and matters should be pushed as vigorously as possible.... I see no reason why quite the best exposition of that kind ever attempted can

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., frame 268.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., frame 286. Regardless of the origin for the study idea, the motivation for the proposed “investigation” was tied directly to the success of the Paris exhibit. Calloway’s argument in favor of this study “along the lines of the Negro’s industrial and sociological development” underscored again both the Tuskegee idea and the influence of Du Bois.

not be realized.”¹¹¹ What Thomas Calloway could not see was that the “American Negro Exhibit”, slated to appear at the Charleston fair, was going to take a detour to Buffalo.

The “American Negro Exhibit” in Buffalo

While organizers were pulling ideas together for the South Carolina Exposition, another fair, the Pan-American Exposition, was about to open in Buffalo. Originally, the Buffalo fair administration excluded any black commissioners and had no plans for an African American exhibit. After all, the white organizers reasoned, African Americans made up less than one half of one percent of Buffalo’s population.¹¹² However, Buffalo’s black community was politically active and demanded black participation in the Pan-American Exposition. On November 11, 1900, a “well attended meeting” of the Phyllis Wheatley Club of Colored Women resolved that, “immediate steps should be taken to inform the exposition officials of the desire of the colored people for a negro exhibit, and declaring that the negroes of Buffalo were unanimous in demanding that a colored commissioner be appointed.” Mary Talbert, an educated and prominent black leader in Buffalo submitted an essay, “Why the American Negro should be represented in at the Pan American Exposition,” in which she argued that “the Negro Exhibit at the Paris Exposition had attracted the notice of the world and that the exhibit should be brought to the Pan American Exposition.”¹¹³

Perhaps in response to these demands, Dr. Selim H. Peabody decided to bring the “American Negro Exhibit” from Paris to Buffalo. Peabody had been involved with

¹¹¹ Ibid., frames 291-292.

¹¹² Loos, Savigny, and Gurn, 9.

¹¹³ *Commercial Advertiser and Journal*, November 12, 1900, reprinted *ibid.*, 12.

Chicago's Columbian Exposition, and had been "appointed editor and statistician for the United States at the Paris Exposition." He was also involved with both the Buffalo and Charleston fairs. At the Pan-American fair, he served as "Chief of the Liberal Arts Division at the Pan-American Exposition, thereby directly overseeing the installation of the Negro Exhibits."¹¹⁴ Peabody must have decided early to take the Negro Exhibit first to Buffalo and then to Charleston. An article in the Buffalo Express dated January 6, 1900 announced plans for the Paris exhibit to appear in Buffalo "under the supervision of some person, not yet designated by the Exposition Company, of the Negro race."¹¹⁵

However, Thomas Calloway, who was enthusiastically preparing for the Charleston fair, did not seem to know this plan until early March, when the former Negro Special Agent sent Booker T. Washington a terse letter informing him that Peabody had taken the materials to Buffalo. Calloway emphatically stated that "the exhibit was sent there against the plan I had arranged for and contrary to an arrangement entered into in Paris." Calloway obviously felt betrayed by Peabody's change of plans.¹¹⁶

Also significant is that Calloway's letter does not appear on the Charleston Exposition letterhead and from this point on, Calloway never appears clearly connected with the exhibit again. Whether Calloway did travel to Buffalo, was fired, or gave up, the detour of the exhibit to Buffalo seemed to take the exhibit out of his hands. Du Bois had returned to his duties at Atlanta University and without Calloway or him controlling the display's execution, the exhibit gradually became less oppositional and lost the power that it demonstrated in Paris.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 15.

¹¹⁵ *Buffalo Express*, January 6, 1901, reprinted *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *BTW Papers*, reel 34, frame 294.

James Ross and the Commodification of the Exhibit

Calloway may have traveled to Buffalo to install and curate the exhibit, but it is more likely that the exhibit materials were placed under the direction of James A. Ross, a Buffalo businessman and politician as well as the publisher of a periodical named the *Globe and Freedman Informant*.¹¹⁷ Ross had been active in the push to bring the exhibit to Buffalo, and he took a leading role in promoting the display.¹¹⁸ Later, Ross identified himself using the title, “Assistant in charge of the Negro Exhibit, Pan-American Exposition.”¹¹⁹

Although some obscure and spotty evidence may be construed to indicate that Thomas Calloway continued to oversee the Negro exhibit in Buffalo, the most convincing signs indicate that Calloway was not involved. One important clue to Calloway’s absence was that Ross supervised the publication of a “souvenir” pamphlet to commemorate the exhibit at the Buffalo exposition. In the principal article of this pamphlet, “Advance of the Negro as Shown in the Negro Exhibit at the Pan-American,” Ross took the liberty of plagiarizing an article that Calloway had written for the *Illustrated Sunday Express*.¹²⁰ If Calloway had been present in Buffalo, it is unlikely that Ross could have taken such freedom with his work.

Furthermore, subtle changes in the form and intent of the “American Negro Exhibit” were documented in Ross’s pamphlet. On the front cover, Ross appears in a picture of the display, along with another man, examining some of the exhibit materials.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 17.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 11, 12.

¹¹⁹ “Souvenir of the Negro Exhibit” pamphlet reprinted *ibid.*, 21, 28.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 18.

In the background, the display materials were organized in a slightly different order from their placement at the Paris fair. The most striking difference is the change of portraits hanging above the display. The portrait of Booker T. Washington, which hung above the agricultural and industrial products in Paris, appeared once again prominently above the exhibit. However, in Paris, Washington's picture was accompanied by those of two other black leaders, Blanch K. Bruce and Judson W. Lyons. In Buffalo, Bruce and Lyons were replaced by a large picture of Abraham Lincoln.¹²¹ Although Lincoln was a hero to most blacks and the inclusion of his likeness would not have been cause for resentment, the Lincoln portrait was not part of the original exhibit. Calloway chose less recognizable black figures for the Paris display despite its foreign audience. Thus, he established a consistent, fully African American content. If whites had been allowed even a small presence in the display, viewers may have mistaken the intent of Du Bois's mulatto photographs. Calloway understood this and the appearance of Lincoln's portrait provides further evidence against the possibility of Calloway's presence at the Buffalo fair.

In addition to the change in portraits on display, the exhibit was also inverted, with Daniel Murray's collection of books displayed above the agricultural and industrial materials. In the original display, the books stood on a shelf below the other materials, like pillars supporting the entire black community. This arrangement was consistent with Du Bois's philosophy that he later termed the "Talented Tenth." Du Bois believed that an educated and privileged minority of blacks could support the rest of the race and pull the community up with them. The inversion of the literature to a high shelf, above the other

¹²¹ "Souvenir of the Negro Exhibit" pamphlet reprinted *ibid*, 20.

materials communicated symbolically that higher education and intellectualism were aloof and disconnected from the rest of the African American struggle for success.

While well worth noting, these changes were minor relative to the change in the tone of promotion of the display. Calloway's absence from the Buffalo exposition became truly important because James Ross was free to do anything he wished with the exhibit. While Ross left the exhibit largely unchanged, besides the important details mentioned previously, his involvement with the exhibit transformed the display into a commercial product. This commodification of the project was the most significant change in the presentation of the display because it symbolically affirmed Washington's Tuskegee idea and lessened the power of the oppositional Du Bois materials.

As noted above, Ross was an active member of the movement that lobbied to bring the Negro exhibit to Buffalo. He also took part as a member of the Committee of Public Comfort, a group of African Americans who dedicated themselves to the comfort of black visitors at the fair. The committee took it upon itself to publish announcements in African American newspapers declaring that a black visitor would receive "as hospitable and courteous treatment as the white visitor," and give committee members' names as references for lodgings and accommodations. This effort may have been a good-will gesture on the part of the community. Yet, these efforts to bring blacks to the fair more resembled advertisements meant to drum up business from African Americans who might come to the city as tourists. This interpretation is supported by the attempt to establish a new, exclusively African American hotel which would open in conjunction

with the Exposition. The Pan-American fair promised to be a money-making event and African Americans, along with whites, wanted to cash in on the opportunity.¹²²

Besides being a member of the ambiguous Committee of Public Comfort, Ross also demonstrated his own entrepreneurial intentions by seeking to produce and sell a special brand of cigars. In February of 1901, after plans were announced to bring the “American Negro Exhibit” to Buffalo, Ross wrote to Booker T. Washington asking permission to market a brand of cigars using Washington’s name and picture on the box.¹²³ The timing could not have been better for Ross, whose efforts had brought the now famous and highly decorated “American Negro Exhibit” to the Pan-American Exposition, and whose Comfort committee was selling Buffalo’s charms to thousands of blacks across the country. Surely, a cigar endorsed by the most famous living African American would be a cash cow.

Washington refused permission to use his name and likeness, but Ross’s commercialization of the Negro exhibit continued, this time in the form of a “souvenir” pamphlet.¹²⁴ The front cover of the souvenir cited Ross’s *Globe and Freedman* as its publisher. Once again, the intent of the pamphlet was ambiguous. Given Ross’s history, and the unique, commercialized nature of the pamphlet, Ross probably would have liked to turn a profit off the publication, but regardless of the motives, the pamphlet turned the exhibit into a business event. “Unlike nearly all of the other Pan American Exposition pamphlets, this one contains advertising. More than 40 local companies marketed their

¹²² *Ibid.*, 9.

¹²³ Harlan, Smock, and Kraft, v. 6, p. 32.

¹²⁴ Although Washington refused to allow his name to be used to market cigars, interestingly, Du Bois gladly accepted a similar opportunity later in his career.

products and services for such items as hotel accommodations, beer, liquor, shoes, paints, housewares, food and catering.”¹²⁵ In the solicitation of advertisements for the pamphlet, the Negro exhibit became an event for sale. These advertisements showed how local businesses believed exposure in connection with the “American Negro Exhibit” would be profitable within a niche market. Even the souvenir pamphlet itself transformed the exhibit into an object that visitors could take home with them. This commodification of the display implied an attitude that the exhibit itself was a material product of black industry that could be bought, sold, and traded, much like the Tuskegee products on display. Without realizing it, blacks who celebrated the Buffalo exhibit as a product of black industry had reaffirmed Washington’s idea that blacks’ identity and value laid in the produce of their industry. In practice, these events obscured the alternative message of the Du Bois materials.

The Exhibit’s Move to Charleston

Finally, in late 1901, after a year-long delay at the Pan-American Exposition, the “American Negro Exhibit” arrived in Charleston where Thomas Calloway had hoped it would make its greatest impact. Unfortunately however, both Calloway and Du Bois had been disassociated with the project, and while in Buffalo, the exhibit had been under the direction of persons less conscientious or less attached to the project’s original meaning. While in Paris, the exhibit communicated two opposing philosophies on racial identity, but slight changes in the form and attitude toward the display had signaled that, without the care of sympathetic exhibitors, the less popular position of the Du Bois materials was

¹²⁵ Loos, Savigny, and Gurn,14.

vulnerable to disregard. This reality continued and became more apparent at the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition.

Unlike the Buffalo display, in which the “American Negro Exhibit” made up the complete body of materials, the South Carolina exhibit attracted many other submissions, and eventually filled an entire Negro Building. Although Booker T. Washington had been selected as the president of the department, he acted essentially as a figurehead, with vice presidents and secretaries conducting much of the organizing. Still, Washington’s influence set the stage for the rest of the department. Although several instances showed that the black community of Charleston would have been receptive to the alternative racial construction offered by the inclusion of the Du Bois materials in the Paris display, that aspect of the “American Negro Exhibit” could not win enough attention to make an impact.

When the plan for a separate Negro building was proposed for the Charleston exposition, there was some initial opposition. Some blacks felt this segregated building would only affirm the Jim Crow atmosphere of the South. Like the photographs and charts Du Bois submitted to the Paris exhibit, these rumblings were indicative of a faction among the black community that did not share Washington’s racial perspective. This faction of blacks may have applauded the Du Bois materials, and given the Paris exhibit the impact that Calloway had imagined, but while the Paris displays were passed from fair to fair, the exhibit was obscured by the large quantity of other materials collected for the Charleston Negro Department.

Additionally, Du Bois had not yet been recognized by a great part of the African American community, and without a spokesperson as influential as Washington, the group of dissenters was soon silenced. Thomas Jefferson Jackson, a teacher at Tuskegee and one of Washington's hand-picked field agents to the fair, insisted that "the demands for proof as to the Negro's power and capabilities are growing stronger and stronger, and these demands can best be met and satisfied by having a distinct collective Negro exhibit."¹²⁶

But by the end of the exposition, Jackson's logic proved to be flawed. While the separate building did give blacks an opportunity to display freely much more material, the exhibits attracted such a small turnout of white visitors that several organizers concluded that the Negro Department was a failure. Washington blamed the lack of interest the exposition generated stating, "the exhibition as a whole is far from the success that it was expected to be.... I think we have a reasonably creditable exhibit in that department. I very much fear however, that the attendance on the Exposition as a whole is going to be poor all through."¹²⁷ But in addition to the generally disappointing attendance, the white people who did come to the fair took little interest in the Negro exhibit. "It was reported that no more than a dozen white persons were ever in the building at the same time."¹²⁸

The sequestered nature of the black exhibit hampered the effectiveness of the Du Bois materials. In Paris, the Negro Exhibit was housed side-by-side with other, non-race-

¹²⁶ *The Exposition*, September, 1901, p. 369 reprinted in Schenck, p. 25.

¹²⁷ Harlan, Smock, and Kraft, v. 6, p. 387.

¹²⁸ William D. Smyth, "Blacks and the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 88.4 (1987): 219.

oriented exhibits, such as the building and mutual-aid societies of France, the state insurance of Germany, and the Red Cross Society.¹²⁹ The integration of a dedicated African American display with these exhibits was a new and important development, empowering the expression of Calloway, Du Bois, and other black contributors. Also, Du Bois had arranged the pictures and charts with a white audience in mind. In Paris this objective made sense; the exhibit was housed among many white organizations, and almost all of the visitors were white Europeans. The pictures in particular were most effective through their disruption of white racial stereotypes. Surely, many blacks harbored stereotypes of their own, but these pictures did not attempt to confront these assumptions. Du Bois intended his materials to speak to whites, and without whites to view them, they became powerless.

The separate black building also destroyed the complimentary power of alternative philosophies that Calloway had worked to balance in the Paris exhibit. Du Bois's innovative materials were simply buried within a flood of Tuskegee-style exhibits. The Charleston Negro Department was filled with exhibits such as dairying and poultry-raising, silk weaving, dress making, millinery, wig making, and cooking. These exhibits celebrated the productiveness of the African American community and defined blacks by their industries.¹³⁰ With such a showing comprising an entire building, the Du Bois materials were hardly noticed. The Atlanta University professor's voice could not be heard above the din of Tuskegee's industrial menagerie.

¹²⁹ Du Bois, "The American Negro in Paris," 575.

¹³⁰ Smyth, 215-217.

In addition to the many displays inside the building, organizers planned a monumental statue to be placed outside the main entrance of the Negro Building. The statue completely fit Washington's plan to link blacks with industry and labor. Each of the three figures included in the piece was engaged in some productive capacity. The first figure, a "young black woman with a full basket of cotton on her head," represented the agricultural productiveness of the black community. Next, "a muscular man holding a plow and leaning on an anvil," denoted industry, manufacture, and craftsmanship. Finally, the last figure showed a young student who had put down his books and tool apron, demonstrating the Tuskegee education, in order to take up his banjo during the midday break. Each of these figures represented a black community that celebrated its labors and produce.¹³¹

The statue immediately generated complaints and indignation from blacks who felt the piece belittled blacks and relegated them to menial tasks. Thomas Jackson appeased the objections temporarily by explaining that a second group of statues was intended that would show "the contrast between this ignorant vicious type and the intelligent cultured type."¹³² There is no indication that any such work was planned, but the ruse bought some time until an arrangement could be made to move the piece to another, less prominent location on the exposition grounds.

Once again, the general notion that the statues showed "ignorant vicious" blacks proved the growing discontent with the prevailing Tuskegee theory. Calloway's hope that the Paris exhibit would change the tone of exhibits in the U.S. had sympathizers in

¹³¹ Ibid., 217. Also, Schenck, 64.

¹³² Harlan, Smock, and Kraft, v. 6, p. 238.

Charleston. But the exhibit's detour to Buffalo had derailed the display's momentum and stolen its power to solidify the faction of blacks that dismissed or questioned the Tuskegee plan. Remarkably, Washington missed the significance of the rejected statuary, claiming the piece was accurate because the majority of blacks occupied similar menial positions.¹³³ Yet, Washington's philosophy still exerted its influence over the message communicated by the Charleston exhibit.

Despite Washington's lack of sensitivity, the Paris exhibit could have impacted the Charleston fair. But without curators who understood its purpose and meaning, the complex complimentary nature of the materials was gradually lost from the display. At the Charleston exposition, the complicated and multifaceted racial presentation of the "American Negro Exhibit" ultimately lost its remaining power because it was secluded from the white crowds it was intended to challenge, and because it was buried under the weight of the one-dimensional, Tuskegee-style exhibits that filled the entire Negro building.

¹³³ Smyth, 218.

CONCLUSION

The Meaning of the “American Negro Exhibit”

One photograph displayed in the “American Negro Exhibit” depicted a team of African American baseball players from Morris Brown College (figure 16). The photo shows nine players, a man that could be the coach or manager, and a small child posed in front of a stone building. While the players are outfitted in uniforms and seem to proudly display their equipment, including several bats and a set of catcher’s gear, especially noteworthy are the items that seem conspicuously absent—gloves or mitts. In fact, only three of the nine players have gloves in the photograph. If baseball could be viewed as a truly American game, then these gloveless players were apt representatives of the greater community of blacks struggling for success in America despite significant disadvantages.



(figure 16)

Like this Morris Brown team, black ballplayers existed for decades as good analogies for the African American community as a whole. Black players often performed in poor conditions, on rough fields, and with mediocre equipment. When they were excluded from white professional leagues, black sought to establish their own Negro League that eventually produced some of the finest ballplayers ever, such as Joe Williams, Satchel Paige, and Josh Gibson. But despite the talent and excellence heralded by fans of black teams like the Kansas City Monarchs, “the League” continued to operate in second-class status to the exclusively white Major Leagues. Many African Americans felt that their achievements would only be meaningful if they were allowed to participate and compete equally with whites.

In the much same way, African Americans debated the strategic wisdom of prioritizing either economic independence or civic inclusion. Booker T. Washington endorsed a philosophy that emphasized labor and industry as the tools to establish independent economic stability within the black community. He believed that once blacks demonstrated that their success and economic value, then American whites would welcome them into their society. The history of the Negro Baseball League could be interpreted to prove Washington’s idea. Branch Ricky and the Brooklyn Dodgers eventually took notice of the wealth of talent within the Negro League and came to the conclusion that the inclusion of black players like Jackie Robinson could benefit white baseball.

On the other hand, W. E. B. Du Bois promoted more aggressive demands for political and social equality. He argued that even if blacks achieved economic success,

they would continue to be ostracized from American society because of visual prejudice and the denial of legal protections as of avenues of recourse to combat this prejudice. Once again, the history of African American baseball confirms this argument, as years after the color barrier was broken in Major League Baseball, Hank Aaron received death threats for challenging the homerun record of the white Babe Ruth.

Both Du Bois and Washington hoped to accomplish the same goal: equality and acceptance for blacks in American society. The two leaders only differed in their strategies and priorities. But, while these two spokesmen dominated the black racial discourse, especially during the first two decades of the twentieth century, most average blacks probably hoped for some mixture of the two agendas. Thomas Calloway acted as a representative of these African Americans, striving to be a bridge between his mentor and his childhood friend.

When the honors for the exhibit were awarded in Paris, Calloway was disappointed that the entire exhibit was not yet installed and lamented that the awards did not “necessarily represent the strongest features of the exhibit.”¹³⁴ He may have felt patronized or misunderstood, and his disappointment was likely compounded by the failure of the exhibit to communicate his vision at subsequent fairs in the United States.

However, despite the Calloway’s initial disappointment and the exhibit’s mild effect on its 1900 audience, the Special Agent was ultimately proud of his creation and spoke of its success to audiences of blacks after his return to the states.¹³⁵ Calloway believed in the integration of ideas achieved through his exhibit. The display stands as a

¹³⁴ *W. E. B. Du Bois Papers*, reel 1, frame 512.

¹³⁵ *BTW Papers*, reel 34, frame 278.

testament to the struggle among African Americans to find and communicate a suitable identity for themselves and to formulate an effective strategy to combat racist conditions in America. When Thomas Calloway began building the “American Negro Exhibit,” he dreamed that the exhibit would “do a great and lasting good in convincing thinking people of the possibilities of the Negro.”¹³⁶ Perhaps the greatest of these possibilities was that someday blacks could be welcomed fully into American society. Surely Europeans gazing upon the Morris Brown club would have seen those blacks as baseball players, and as such, profoundly American. This recognition was Calloway’s ultimate vision and the exhibit’s continued success.

¹³⁶ Harlan, Smock, and Kraft, vol. 5, 227.

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