

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE LAST RECONSTRUCTION:  
SLAVERY, EMANCIPATION, AND EMPIRE IN THE BLACK PACIFIC

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Dedicated to the Loving Memory of

Marvaleen Fern Cook

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## PREFACE:

### “A Closed Chapter” or a New Beginning?

“The average American... likes to insist that the problem of slavery is a closed chapter. If such men would look carefully around them however they would see that... instead of being the closing chapter of past history [it] is the opening of a new era.”

W.E.B. Du Bois, 1914<sup>1</sup>

One day, “a delegation of colored men called” upon their government. The men had come together “asking for redress from discrimination.” They recounted multiple painful “instances in which, solely on account of their color, their brethren had been refused positions.” This institutionalized collective was one of the many grass-roots civil rights organizations forming in the region at the time. The white politician who fielded these charges remembered in his journal the men’s “elaborate speeches” that “soared to heights of eloquence and abstractions.” But the appeals were far from empty rhetoric. These black activists were demanding reparations. Harkening beyond immediate acts of racism, and invoking the lasting legacy of slavery, the men boldly insisted, “[t]here cannot be crime without compensation.”<sup>2</sup>

Astonishingly, the white politician who had granted them an audience agreed. He “promised to take the matter under consideration.” He told the men that in the spirit

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<sup>1</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, “The World Problem of the Color Line,” Frame 335, Reel 80, Speeches, *The Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois*, Microfilm, Archives, University of Massachusetts Library, Amherst, Massachusetts.

<sup>2</sup> March 14, 1905, p. 168-169, v. 1, (MS Am 1192-1192.13) *Journal of William Cameron Forbes*, W. Cameron Forbes Additional Papers, 1904-1931, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

of reparative justice “I think we can fix them up with an opportunity to take out homesteads.” The men reportedly were “pleased with that idea.”<sup>3</sup> Unlike prior commitments made by federal authorities, in this case, the white politician kept his promise. Public Land Act No. 926 had just passed and became good law the year before.<sup>4</sup> As a result, a small colony of black men, women, and children began claiming title to government land as reparations for slavery and Jim Crow.

This event did not take place in Virginia, or Kansas, or even South Carolina. It was not 1863, 1865, or 1877. This remarkable event took place in 1905 at the *Palasyo ng Malakanyang* [Malacañan Palace] in the colonial Philippines. The white politician in question was none other than investment banker William Cameron Forbes, who would soon become the Governor General of the entire Philippines. At the time, however, he was the head of the revealingly named “Department of Commerce and Police.”<sup>5</sup> His support for reparations and black self-subsistence farming was not born out of any sense of idealism. Instead, it proved part of a highly strategic attempt to manage the ongoing tensions of American Reconstruction that lingered in the colonial Philippines.

Throughout his administrative work in the Philippines, Forbes struggled to reconcile the legacy of the American Civil War with the build-up of a massive colonial surveillance state and a booming prison industrial complex. Hiring black men as prison guards in Manila, for example, would mean that “guards from the southern states would

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Philippine Commission Act No. 926, October 7, 1903, File 212, Entry 5, Record Group 350, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>5</sup> For more on the ways in which commerce and the ideology of supposedly ‘free markets’ depends upon the kind of discipline and punishment that characterizes the modern prison industrial complex see Bernard E. Harcourt, *The Illusion of Free Markets: Punishment and the Myth of Natural Order* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

resign in a body.”<sup>6</sup> White Southerners had not traveled seven thousand miles across the Pacific to work alongside African Americans in prison. They came to capture the Philippine state and dominate another people of color that they hoped would become the successors to formerly enslaved workers. Black men in Jim Crow America, and its colonies, were supposed to be behind prison bars, not in charge of them.

Yet for the African Americans involved in this political campaign, a different dream was at stake. It was a dream denied in the U.S., but one that they hoped might be realized abroad. It was, however, also a tragic dream, one rooted much more in skepticism, alienation, and desperation than hopeful optimism. Even if African Americans were granted government jobs in the Philippines (especially as prison guards), this move would only put formerly enslaved peoples in another impossible position—securing their own freedom by helping deny it to a fellow colonized people.<sup>7</sup>

It is through this paradox, of empire and a belated emancipation, that a number of historical assumptions must be reconsidered. First and foremost, in the minds of formerly enslaved peoples, Reconstruction was clearly not over at the dawn of the twentieth-century. Slavery had been etched, perhaps hard-wired, into a growing black

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<sup>6</sup> Forbes Journal, March 14, 1905, p. 168-169, v. 1. For more on the birth of the modern American surveillance state in the Philippines see Alfred W. McCoy, *Policing America's Empire the United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State*, New Perspectives in Southeast Asian Studies. (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> While far from perfect, internal colonialism as a theoretical framework to understand the relationship between African American communities and America at large has a long tradition dating back at least to W.E.B. Du Bois, *Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1945) and his musings on the “colonial status” of black people in the United States. Harold Cruse elaborated on DuBois’s theory under the rubric of “domestic colonialism” in “Revolutionary nationalism and the Afro-American” in *Rebellion or Revolution?* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1968). This idea underwent a parallel development under Latin American postcolonial economists working on dependency theory in the 1950’s. Subsequently Mexican sociologist Pablo González Casanova first coined the term “internal colonialism” in Pablo Casanova González, “Sociedad plural, colonialismo interno y desarrollo,” in *América Latina*, Vol 6, (1962), 15-32. For historiographical reviews a critical analysis of this literature see Ramón A. Gutiérrez, “Internal Colonialism: An American Theory of Race” in *Du Bois Review* (Vol. 1, No 2, 2004) and Robert L. Allen, “Reassessing the Internal (Neo) Colonialism Theory” in *The Black Scholar* (Vol. 35, No. 1, 2005).

political consciousness.<sup>8</sup> Battling the “plantation mentality” remained a constant struggle.<sup>9</sup> For the thousands of black residents in both Hawai‘i and the Philippines, life in America’s overseas colonies did not represent a retreat away from these hard political realities, or an attempt to forget the pain of antebellum America. Instead, black transnationalism in the Pacific became another opportunity, a new avenue to address the lingering consequences of slavery, emancipation, and Reconstruction. Thus the Black Pacific became an imagined site of possibility.<sup>10</sup> It developed as an ideal where freedom might still find a foothold in the track of America’s imperial expansion. For former slaves, a Black Pacific seemed to offer a chance to extend the postemancipation experiment and escape the nightmare of Jim Crow at home. For the indigenous peoples of the Pacific, this dream was laced with a nightmare.

By treating emancipation and American colonialism as interrelated processes rather than separate events, this dissertation offers a new perspective on black life and aspirations in post-Civil War America. The perspective is interracial and transnational, centering on the lives and ideas of people, ordinary as well as extraordinary, as they moved through the Pacific as well as the Atlantic world. As politicians, intellectuals, and workers, their experiences conformed neither to a fixed geography nor conventional accounts of that historical moment. Their collective memories and diverse individual

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<sup>8</sup> For more on the idea of a collective black consciousness as dispensed through folk culture see Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*, 30th anniversary ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> For more on the persistent memory of plantation life and its indignities as well as their ability to fuel black political mobilization see Laurie Boush Green, *Battling the Plantation Mentality: Memphis and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> For more on how scholars are starting to think about a ‘Black Pacific’ and its potential utility see Vince Schleitwiler, *Strange Fruit of the Black Pacific: Imperialism’s Racial Justice and Its Fugitives* (New York: NYU Press, 2017); Etsuko Taketani, *The Black Pacific Narrative: Geographic Imaginings of Race and Empire between the World Wars* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2014), Robbie Shilliam, *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), and Paul Lyons (Forthcoming 2019).

experiences challenge the conventional temporal and spatial template of black America at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The primary lens through which this project approaches its topic is the long-forgotten work by black activists and white politicians to enact a state-sponsored black colonization plan to the Pacific between 1863 and 1914. Massive in its scope, unprecedented in its aims, and unlike any reconstruction project before or since, the idea of relocating five million African Americans to the Pacific (which amounted to over 60 percent of the total black population in America at that time) speaks volumes about the state of America in the postemancipation era. Viewed by its contemporaries as an extension of postwar Reconstruction, this colonization scheme lay bare the deep connections between American overseas empire, slavery, and the long process of emancipation. While it would be an overstatement to assert that empire simply replaced slavery as a form of domination in American life, what does become clear through this study is that the logic, structure, and ideology of American empire was deeply informed by both American slavery and the attempts to contend with what Saidiya Hartman calls “the afterlife of slavery.”<sup>11</sup>

By following both the idea of black colonization as well as the actual black colonists themselves as they tried to enact various iterations of different colonization proposals, the political, social, intellectual, and cultural dimensions of empire and emancipation emerge. The aim throughout this dissertation is to pursue an analysis that contends with both the top-down and the bottom-up forces shaping the lives of African Americans at this pivotal moment in American and African American history. Indeed,

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<sup>11</sup> Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*, First edition (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 6.

the interactions between everyday black folk-thought and the elite white political calculus taking place in the highest halls of governance combine to make black colonization to the Pacific a truly rich framework through which to view emancipation, empire, and this last effort to “reconstruct American democracy.”<sup>12</sup>

Marking the conceptual, spatial, and temporal boundaries of the Reconstruction era has occupied significant ink for the past several generations of American historians. While the periodization of Reconstruction is a particularly prominent feature in its historiography, Reconstruction as such is ultimately not simply a time period but a concept. Properly conceived that concept involves formerly enslaved peoples, and America at large, transitioning from a slave society to a society that had to contend with its legacy. Reconstruction, in these terms, posed fundamental questions of transformative justice wherein slavery and its legacy needed to be unwound through a new series of institutions, social relations, and political practices. In this way, Reconstruction necessitated some semblance of a revolution, literally an overturning of the old order. At the center of that transition were formerly enslaved peoples as they fought to reverse the conditions of social death and capture a measure of power through collective self-governance and assertions of sovereignty.<sup>13</sup> While Reconstruction presupposes freedom, it is not reducible to freedom in the narrow sense of a release

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<sup>12</sup> The notion that Reconstruction was fundamentally about building a multiracial American democracy in the absence of slavery was a central feature of W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1935).

<sup>13</sup> For more on the concept of social death see Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*; Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). For more on sovereignty, and particularly the concept of “extraterritorial sovereignty” see James T. Sparrow, “Morgenthau’s Dilemma: Rethinking the Democratic Leviathan in the Atomic Age,” in *Tocqueville Review*, Vol. 36, Issue 1, (2015) and James T. Sparrow, William J. Novak, and Stephen W. Sawyer, eds., *Boundaries of the State in US History* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2015).

from slavery. Emancipation was always viewed by enslaved peoples as much more than the legal end of chattel slavery. Freedom was the baseline requirement needed to pursue the much larger goals of Reconstruction—justice, equity, and reparations.

In this light, the periodization of Reconstruction often follows from its perceived ontology. A narrow conception of the goals of postemancipation reform tends to narrow its chronological scope as well. If Reconstruction is imagined simply as a stitching back together of the white North and white South, then the end of the Civil War works just fine as a starting point and the final removal of federal troops from the South in 1877 is an equally appropriate end point. The great historian, W.E.B. Du Bois, however, knowing that Reconstruction was, in fact, all about slavery and the fate of the formerly enslaved, began his revolutionary tale of Reconstruction not with the end of the Civil War but with its beginning in 1860. For Du Bois, the disruption of the Civil War, marked by the mass revolt of enslaved peoples, ultimately ended slavery and forced the nation to reckon with black citizenship.

While taking some inspiration from *Black Reconstruction*, Eric Foner downplayed Du Bois's general strike thesis by instead placing Abraham Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation as the starting point of Reconstruction and thus returning white actors and their initiatives to the center of his narrative.<sup>14</sup> For Foner, this turning point was the moment when enslaved peoples and the nation at large had to irreversibly contend with the legal end of slavery on a national political stage. Lincoln, therefore, becomes the central actor.

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<sup>14</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

Foner's now codified starting point stubbornly persists for many historians despite the great debt the field owes to Du Bois and early revisionists like Willie Lee Rose whose notion of a *Rehearsal for Reconstruction* also focused on efforts to make emancipation real during the Civil War and well before 1863.<sup>15</sup> Foner's starting point has also been subtly challenged by Julie Saville's *Work of Reconstruction*, in which she argues for a return to Du Bois's general strike thesis and a corresponding 1860 starting point. Meanwhile Steven Hahn has pushed Reconstructions' chronology back to the previous century and forward into the 1930's.<sup>16</sup> Reasoning that if Reconstruction is really all about building a new America in the absence of slavery, Hahn holds that Reconstruction actually began in 1777 when the state of Vermont spearheaded the legal efforts to abolish slavery in the North.<sup>17</sup> This 'Long Reconstruction' mirrors both the benefits and the shortcomings of the 'Long Civil Rights Movement'—a historiography that the Long Reconstruction threatens to both engulf as well as emulate.

Yet social movements, especially for their participants, almost always have definitive beginnings and endings. Determining an end point for Reconstruction has nonetheless proven only slightly less fraught than marking its beginning. In centering the experiences of the formerly enslaved, Thomas Holt, for example, has suggested that the overturning of the Civil Rights Cases in 1883 and the elections of 1884 might have marked the affective end of Reconstruction in the minds of African Americans who saw

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<sup>15</sup> Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1999).

<sup>16</sup> For an argument tracing the struggle for Reconstruction into the 1930's see Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> Steven Hahn, *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009). For more on gradual emancipation in the North, which may be framed as the opening chapter in the Long Reconstruction, see Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

these signs as particularly ominous closures.<sup>18</sup> For those focused more on political disenfranchisement, Jane Dailey has offered a state-by-state approach arguing that African Americans in Virginia, for example, carried on the aims of Reconstruction at least as long as they retained the right to vote.<sup>19</sup> Focusing instead on the national political climate, David Blight has marked the Spanish American War as something of a final point of reunion between North and South, which conveniently coincided with the white abandonment of Reconstruction.<sup>20</sup> Largely concurring with Blight's thesis and following his move abroad, Heather Cox Richardson similarly sees 1901 as the year that the North ultimately gave up on solving the deeply rooted class conflict at the heart of Reconstruction.<sup>21</sup> Charles Postel, however, has countered that the class politics of Reconstruction actually continued through the Populist Party and did not end until that party's demise in 1908.<sup>22</sup>

By taking a transnational approach to emancipation and Reconstruction, however, this project re-orients this debate by offering an entirely new set of entry points through which to address it. While in a certain sense Hahn may be correct in arguing for a 1777 starting point for Reconstruction, this approach runs the risk of conflating emancipation with Reconstruction. While Vermont may have initiated a (gradual) emancipation process a year after the official founding of America, what real efforts did the state of Vermont (or the nation at large) actually take at that time to undo

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas C. Holt, *Children of Fire: A History of African Americans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 181.

<sup>19</sup> Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2002).

<sup>21</sup> Heather Cox Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004) and Heather Cox Richardson, *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America after the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

the damage of slavery and restructure a postemancipation world? What Reconstruction projects, or experiments, existed? Free soil and free labor ideologies may have offered a valuable political touchstone for white yeoman farmers looking West, but unless applied in its totality to African Americans in the South the operation of this ideology did not offer a definitive agricultural solution for an America without slavery. The explicitly racist vision of most free soilers that included a newly conquered West devoid of black people, meant that the problem of slavery was not being solved but ignored.

In addition to encouraging small land-owning white farmers to move West, the North's only other domestic answer to slavery was wage labor and industrialization in large urban centers—where capitalism's chattel slavery would be replaced by capitalism's wage slavery. While these practices in industrial capitalism began booming by the 1830's in Northern states nominally engaged in gradual emancipation programs, Northern capitalists still offered little in the way of a national replacement to the large scale agricultural slavery that most enslaved people experienced. Cash crops still needed to be grown, if for no other reason than to fuel Northern factories. Thus, domestically, there was no viable alternative to slavery—only a doubling down on the logic of capitalism.

Thus, without a major re-orientation of the domestic relationship between capital and racialized labor on the horizon, we must look abroad for how African Americans and the nation at large were imagining a world without slavery. The argument of this dissertation is that Reconstruction does not begin spatially within the continental United States. It also does not begin with emancipation in the South (or the North). It begins when the nation as a whole, or some significant portion of it, attempted to

develop a significant social, political, economic, and cultural system that offered an actual programmatic alternative to slavery while contending with its legacy.

Reconstruction continues when enslaved and formerly enslaved peoples come to believe that such a project was possible and begin working for its realization. This might have happened after, during, or even before the abolition of slavery was actually secured in the continental U.S. Regardless of the timing, in the absence of an alternative to slavery there is no Reconstruction.

As it turns out, the North did have a viable alternative to slavery but it did not appear in the typical places that historians have been trained to look. Occurring through overseas empire, it initially bore little relation to emancipation and was not located in the United States. The first real attempt by Northerners to solve the national question of how to produce the cash crops that fueled the American economy in the absence of slavery occurred not in the industrializing North, the deep South, or the expansive West, but on cotton and sugar plantations in Hawai‘i during the 1840’s. As will be shown in Chapters 1 and 3, northern planters engaged in a very conscious attempt during the antebellum period to replace slavery with a new system of contract-bound, racially subordinated workers on massive corporate landholdings in the Pacific. While these practices ended up replicating much of the logic and structure of slavery and racial capitalism (not unlike Southern sharecropping would a generation later) this attempt to find a workable system that was at least marginally less inhumane than slavery can be rightly pointed to as the first national experiment in Reconstruction. Using Hawai‘i’s mixed race population as a stand-in for African Americans, both black

and white Northerners traveled to Hawai‘i to work on this alternative decades before the Civil War began.

It was thus not until the birth of American overseas empire, and through that very process, that a coherent alternative to chattel slavery, however insufficient, was conceived and enacted. In terms of periodization, this means that American overseas empire is what marks the start of American Reconstruction. While theoretically Reconstruction might have happened without an American overseas empire, the historical record put forward in this dissertation clearly demonstrates empirically that Reconstruction efforts emerged synergistically with American overseas empire. Empire became the American answer to the question of slavery.<sup>23</sup> A transformed internationalization of the labor supply’s geography became a near universal response of societies hoping to reconstruct their former slave empires. If African Americans could not be re-coerced into a plantation economy through a new kind of empire, people of color abroad would be compelled to fill the void.<sup>24</sup> From its onset, then, American overseas empire was connected to “the problem of freedom.”<sup>25</sup>

Taking place after most Northern states had committed to emancipation (if not national abolition) means that empire in Hawai‘i can be viewed, at the very least, as a

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<sup>23</sup> This is not to say that empire was somehow antithetical to slavery as becomes clear in Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016). It is only to say that the two are deeply connected and that over time empire came to function as a replacement for slavery in terms of extracting labor and resources as both empire and capitalism transformed in the absence of slavery. Overseas empire further provided a pathway for Reconstruction experiments such as black colonization to the Pacific, and here more consciously being imagined as a replacement for slavery.

<sup>24</sup> Spatially, this move was being made both overseas and domestically through immigration as can be seen in Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> For more on the problem of freedom, which, in short, was a problem of how to insure that emancipation did not involve the freedom to disrupt global capitalist production and consumption, see Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

highly-coordinated rehearsal for further Reconstruction efforts wedded to one of America's earliest forays into overseas imperialism. The great irony is that while empire was imagined, at least partially, as an avenue through which to build a new America in the absence of slavery, American colonialism ended up producing new forms of domination and exclusion that were eerily reminiscent of the slave society that many hoped they could leave behind.

When national emancipation did come in 1865, Northern sugar planters in Hawai‘i almost immediately used the power of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i to lure the formerly enslaved into the system they had been tinkering with for decades. Black colonization to the Pacific thus became one of the earliest postemancipation attempts at Reconstruction, as well as its last. Black people would both participate in and criticize various versions of the plan. Interest in black colonization to the Atlantic and Pacific clearly accelerated through the second half of the nineteenth century, reaching its zenith during the Philippine American War and black journalist T. Thomas Fortune’s state-sponsored feasibility study on black colonization to the region (detailed in Chapter 2). As support in Congress for the plan waned and black public opinion shifted during World War I, however, the abandonment of black colonization to the Pacific marked the end of the Reconstruction era. As flawed as the plan for black colonization may have been, it stands as both the first and the last serious Reconstruction effort in American history with the scope and ambition necessary to reckon with the lasting legacy of slavery. Never again would the American nation consider such a massive social welfare program to undo the legacy of slavery. As some Americans sought an end to the domination of slavery, what the world eventually got was empire.

Thus, in a strange and morally bankrupt way, Reconstruction actually did succeed—but that success arrived in the wake of America’s imperial expansion. Race and labor in postemancipation America was effectively recast in the context of the nation’s rapidly expanding global empire. In that context, of course, success for some meant failure for others. As profit-seeking imperialists basked in the success of a newly expanded racial capitalism, workers paid the price. Colonial subjects, formerly enslaved peoples, and anyone laboring for a more egalitarian society after slavery were left instead with little more than a new geography of political struggle. While that empire succeeded in replicating slavery’s racial capitalism abroad, it simultaneously failed on a very human level to meet the needs of formerly enslaved peoples as well as newly colonized subjects—whose lives increasing blurred into one another’s. Thus, much as historian Richard White has shown how capitalism succeeded only through a series of failures, both moral and material, so too does America’s postemancipation empire appear successful only through a much bigger lens of failure.<sup>26</sup> If nothing else, the lines we use to evaluate the success or failure of Reconstruction and empire must become more numerous and more multidirectional.<sup>27</sup>

By bringing together the literature on Reconstruction and empire, this dissertation necessarily engages with the historiography on black transnationalism—most notably with the discussions prompted some decades ago by Paul Gilroy’s *The*

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<sup>26</sup> Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America*, 1 edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> This move also has a long legacy in Reconstruction historiography, with the Dunning School understanding Reconstruction fundamentally as a failure (if not a failed idea), the revisionists, as codified by Foner, countering that it was a briefly lived success, and the post-revisionists led by Holt returning to Du Bois’s notion of it being a “splendid failure” and, then, simply a failure.

*Black Atlantic*.<sup>28</sup> While my understanding of a Black Pacific is clearly indebted to that discussion, the Black Pacific also serves as a unique counterpoint to the Black Atlantic, a construct inevitably saturated with themes of an African redemption, even as the former inherits many of the latter's themes. In some ways, the Black Pacific might initially be approached through black Canadian poet Wayde Compton's notion of "Afroperipheralism." Compton suggests that "unusual black experiences" build a new form of blackness that is unmoored from "the redemptive drive of Afrocentrism, which iterates everything but a narrow set of perceived traditions as inauthentic and culturally ersatz."<sup>29</sup> In that spirit, this study of the Black Pacific, as part of a transnational black diasporic imaginary, challenges the bounds of 'the authentic' and what it represents in the minds of many Black Atlantic residents of that era. It also signals a departure from the violence, loss, and constriction so emblematic of the Atlantic World. At its most basic level, the Black Pacific is then simply the negation of the Black Atlantic—a juxtaposition promising new possibilities for black expression and conceptualization.

But at the same time, all black experiences are in one sense "unusual." Blackness itself, as Gilroy suggests, might best be understood as a limitless feature of modernity. The contestation and endless hybridity that builds and rebuilds blackness in the Black Atlantic is also clearly on display, perhaps even in a heightened measure, in the Black Pacific. Like Compton, Gilroy is also skeptical of Afrocentrism as an organizing principle. Yet applying concepts that seem to work in the Black Atlantic directly to the Black Pacific also leaves much to be desired. The expectations of the Black Atlantic to

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<sup>28</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

<sup>29</sup> Wayde Compton, *After Canaan: Essays on Race, Writing, and Region* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010), 14–15.

often serve to limit the possibilities contained within an even more expansive Black Pacific.

So how can we reconcile both the distinctive and the connective qualities of the Black Pacific? While thinking of the Black Pacific and the Black Atlantic simply as polar opposites (or counternarratives) might work rhetorically or abstractly, it utterly fails as one gets closer to the ground. At the level of everyday black thought and experience, however, the Black Pacific is not really as removed or peripheral to Africa or the Black Atlantic more generally as geography might indicate. Africa, and specifically African colonization, was constantly invoked by black colonists to the Pacific. Indeed, several black colonists to the Pacific traveled directly from a Caribbean context deeply tied to the Black Atlantic tradition (such as Tom Pritchard in Chapter 5), while others circulated back and forth between Liberia and the Pacific (like T. McCants Steward in Chapter 1). When Marcus Garvey began organizing his Back to Africa project he sent UNIA agents to the Philippines to study this prior colonization effort and recruit Pacific-oriented black colonists to return to the Black Atlantic. While distinctions must be drawn these connections between a Black Pacific and a Black Atlantic offer some of the most fruitful sites to analyze the trajectory of relationships among and aspirations of peoples of African descent in the Americas over the half-century separating the end of the Civil War and the outbreak of the Great War in 1914.

Thus the Black Pacific (or perhaps the blackness *of* the Pacific) should be thought of as an attempt to maintain links, both material and conceptual, to an Atlantic World even as it simultaneously attempted to both translate and reconfigure that Atlantic context through a Pacific lens. Indeed, as Brent Hayes Edwards, Vicente Raphael, and

others have shown, the multidirectional process of translation constitutes the very core of diasporic renderings as well as the transnational identities that emerge from them.<sup>30</sup> As people and ideas circulated in both the Atlantic and Pacific, black transnationalists made meaning of their lives, both for themselves and for others, by translating between black, white, Polynesian, and Asian peoples in various contexts. Metropole and colony, colonizer and colonized, constructed and re-constructed one another through an endless cycle of translation and meaning making in the Pacific.

This multi-centered, Afro-Asian complexity is perhaps where the Black Pacific departs most strikingly from the Black Atlantic.<sup>31</sup> Beyond Gilroy's "double consciousness" these black travelers in the Black Pacific developed, by necessity, a triple or even a quadruple consciousness. Not only were they having to see themselves through white and black eyes but also through Hawaiian and Filipino eyes. The fact that many racially ambiguous African Americans (like T. Thomas Fortune in Chapter 2 and Helen James in Chapter 3) were mistaken for something other than white or black in the Pacific further complicates the Du Boisian/ Gilroyian notion of hybridity and double consciousness (two concepts deeply linked in the thought of both W.E.B. Du Bois and his intellectual predecessor T. Thomas Fortune). In trying to conceptualize a Black Pacific, as something both distinct from (yet related to) the Black Atlantic, this

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<sup>30</sup> Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Vicente L. Rafael, *The Promise of the Foreign: Nationalism and the Technics of Translation in the Spanish Philippines* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2005).

<sup>31</sup> For more on Afro-Asian solidarity and black internationalism see Keisha Blain, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); Keisha Blain, "[F]or the Rights of Dark People in Every Part of the World": Pearl Sherrod, Black Internationalist Feminism, and Afro-Asian Politics during the 1930's," in *Souls: A critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 17, Nos. 1-2 (June 2015), 90-122; Yuchihiro Onishi, *Transpacific Antiracism: Afro-Asian Solidarity in 20th-Century Black America, Japan, and Okinawa*, Reprint (New York: New York University Press, 2014); Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

dissertation attempts to follow those voices and thoughts on the ground to bring the scholarly conception of the Black Pacific as close as possible to the understanding held by everyday people. What emerges is a Black Pacific standing as a critical site where the “aftermath of slavery” confronts the birth of American overseas empire. Above all else, the story of the Black Pacific is the story of how black people within the American empire, both at home and broad, fought to escape the shadow of slavery.

This dissertation unfolds in roughly two parts. The first details the idea of black colonization within the context of American overseas empire. Chapter 1 uncovers the birth of black colonization to the Pacific as a Reconstruction idea deeply tied to American conquest in Hawai‘i and later the Philippines. Chapter 2 follows the state-sponsored trip of T. Thomas Fortune to the Pacific as he further investigated black colonization for the Roosevelt administration, during which he encountered the violence of the surveillance state taking shape in the Philippines that augured the uncertain prospects of his mission.

The second part of this dissertation looks at some of the actual participants in that project, focusing specifically on black teachers, artists, and workers in the Pacific as they navigated the complex political currents of empire while pursuing black colonization. Chapter 3 uncovers the transnational links between colonial education in the Pacific and postemancipation industrial schools in the South through the life of Helen James who taught in both contexts. Chapter 4 offers a thick description of black life in the Philippines as Carter G. Woodson and other black teachers exchanged ideas and translated experiences with Filipino students about race, empire, and colonialism. Chapter 5 looks at African American and Caribbean food culture in the Philippines

through the life of Manila's most famous celebrity chef, Thomas Pritchard whose travels and life course was emblematic of aspirations of black American émigrés in the Pacific world.

In the end, this project hopes to open up new avenues—literally and conceptually--in the study of America's postemancipation and imperial era. The approach taken here is not only transnational but pushes beyond the black-white binary, recognizing that African American, Filipino, Hawaiian, and general American history are best viewed not as isolated fields of study but as a deeply intertwined whole. By taking seriously the most ambitious Reconstruction plan ever conceived, an alternate path for American history is laid bare—a path that might not have extended slavery or embraced an overseas empire—but one addressing the demands of the formerly enslaved while refusing to replicate the evils of slavery through new forms of colonialism abroad.

# **CHAPTER 1:**

## **“An Open Door”:**

### **The Geopolitical Possibilities and Pitfalls**

### **of Black Colonization to the Pacific**

“Where in the world may we go  
and be safe from lying and brute force?”

---W.E.B. DuBois (1903)<sup>1</sup>

“Looking at the world like where do we go?”

---Kendrick Lamar (2015)<sup>2</sup>

The Civil War and Reconstruction were supposed to be over by 1900. For Jessie M. H. Graham, however, both issues refused to die. Graham, like so many other African Americans in his generation, was born into limbo. Somewhere in Tennessee on February 8, 1864 he was born in a new America where slavery seemed to be on a path of destruction—but freedom seemed to move along a path threatened by the past.<sup>3</sup> While the American empire in the Pacific had already begun in earnest both in Hawai‘i and in

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<sup>1</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. David Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams (Boston and New York: Bedford Books, 1997), 68. Du Bois’s pointed question was intended as an argument against black colonization abroad with the rationale that American imperialism would subjugate the world’s “darker peoples” wherever they resided. The full quote is: “And yet, by the irony of fate, nothing has more effectually made this programme [of colonization] seem hopeless than the recent course of the United States toward the weaker and darker peoples of the West Indies, Hawaii, and the Philippines—for where in the world may we go and be safe from lying and brute force?”

<sup>2</sup> Kendrick Lamar, “Alright” in *To Pimp a Butterfly* (Interscope, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Biographical information on Graham is derived from his Bureau of Insular Affairs personnel files found in File 5736, Box 427, Entry 1-3 5-A, RG 350 and Box 246, Entry 21, Record Group 350, National Archives, College Park, Maryland as well as newspaper biographies found in *Cleveland Gazette*, January 2, 1897 and *Indianapolis Freeman*, November 28, 1896.

the dense transportation networks that supported the California Gold Rush, Graham's life in postemancipation Tennessee initially showed scant signs of a deep and abiding connection to the Pacific region.<sup>4</sup> The end of Reconstruction was, likewise, nowhere on the horizon for at least the first thirty-six years of his life. Graham reasonably expected emancipation to be an ongoing state of being, not a project that would be abandoned before it ever really got going.

His reportedly free-born father was a local Reconstruction politician holding "several municipal positions" in Nashville in the years following emancipation.<sup>5</sup> The family then moved to Clarksville, Tennessee in 1868, perhaps to escape the storm of violence that engulfed the state during Andrew Johnson's presidency. Following in his father's footsteps, Graham got himself elected in 1896 to represent Clarksville and the rest of Montgomery County in the Tennessee state legislature. Clarksville was one of the final Republican strongholds in the state with a powerful, well-organized black coalition. There, former slaves and their children were trying their best to fight off the tide of white redemption in the run-up to the twentieth-century. But the world was closing in on Clarksville. Graham would soon face a hostile set of white colleagues in the state legislature. His time as a representative lasted just sixteen days. After being duly

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<sup>4</sup> For more on the early history of American empire-building in Hawai'i see David Keanu Sai, "The American Occupation of the Hawaiian Kingdom: Beginning the Transition from Occupied to Restored State" (University of Hawai'i : Dissertation, 2008) and Jon Kamakawiwo'ole. Osorio, *Dismembering Lāhui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002); Ph D. David Keanu Sai, *Ua Mau Ke Ea Sovereignty Endures: An Overview of the Political and Legal History of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: Pū'ā Foundation, 2011). For more on the importance of the California Gold Rush in developing the nineteenth-century infrastructure for the twentieth-century American empire in the Pacific see Minyong Lee, "Circuits of Empire: The California Gold Rush and the Making of America's Pacific" (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> Cleveland Gazette, January 2, 1897.

elected by an overwhelming majority in a record turn-out, his white colleagues vacated his seat on a technicality and sent him home empty-handed.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 1. John H. M Graham**



**HON. J. M. H. GRAHAM.**

Source: *Cleveland Gazette*, January 2, 1897

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<sup>6</sup> Roll Call of the 50<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, Convened January 4, 1897.

Just a few years later, perhaps disillusioned with his prospects in the United States, Graham saw the Spanish American War as an opportunity to exit the Jim Crow South and find some semblance of the state power he had just been denied. In 1898 he joined the 5<sup>th</sup> Volunteer Signal Corps and shipped off to Puerto Rico. There his company destroyed the Atlantic telegraph lines to Spain, rerouted new ones to the United States, and placed all private cable companies under the military control of a burgeoning global empire.<sup>7</sup> Like most black soldiers, the thin veneer of patriotic rhetoric that sometimes accompanied such moves largely masked the increasingly desperate set of motivations driving African American decision-making more generally at this time. The need for basic economic survival and self-preservation during the rise of Jim Crow typically outweighed patriotic nationalism—indeed, it even revealed its hollowness.<sup>8</sup> As one of Graham's fellow African American soldiers, who described

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<sup>7</sup> For more on the Signal Corps see Rebecca Robbins Raines, *Getting the Message Through: A Branch History of the U.S. Army Signal Corps* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> The motivation of black soldiers to join the military during the Spanish American War remains a matter of historical debate. Black men gave a diverse, shifting, and even contradictory set of reasons to different audiences to justify their enlistment. Primary documentation (in the form of surveys done with former black Spanish American war veterans) clearly indicates that economic opportunity and leaving the Jim Crow South were nearly twice as likely to be cited as a reason for joining the military than any sense of duty or love of country. See folders 35,37, Box 8; Folder 25, 27, 28, 32, 34, 35, Box 58; Folders 19,20,21,24, Box 20; and Folders 19-26, 28,29, Box 43, Spanish American War Veterans Survey Collection, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Furthermore, while the concern for economic stability is unlikely to be empty rhetoric, appeals to patriotism also contained obvious incentives for African Americans. Many black people believed that a public display of patriotism might bolster their citizenship claims at home as seen in Adriane Danette Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009). In many ways the rhetoric of black patriotism functioned as a form of respectability politics and a means of amplifying black demands for inclusion in the body politic similar to the club women described in Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). For more on black soldiers in the Philippines during this period see Cynthia L. Marasigan, "Between the Devil and the Deep Sea": Ambivalence, Violence, and African American Soldiers in the Philippine-American War and Its Aftermath," (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2010).

himself as “simply a country boy,” put it: “The quickest way to get a job West was to enlist in the Army.”<sup>9</sup>

By 1900, Graham had indeed shifted his attention West. He imagined a new life beyond the enslavement, death, and ruptures in the Atlantic World and put his hopes in the glimmering but uncertain waters of the Pacific. Graham had no doubt read the glowing reports in the black press coming from his fellow soldiers who had already migrated permanently to the Philippines.<sup>10</sup> He likely would have heard rumors of a massive state-funded black colonization plan to the region promising land redistribution, in some measure a form of reparations for slavery as well as an aspiration Graham had failed to secure through the post-Reconstruction Tennessee state legislature. Leveraging his meager access to the emerging American colonial state, Graham decided to join this rapidly crystallizing black colony in the Philippines. Luckily, the 24<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Infantry Band was hiring. In effect they offered him free transportation to the Philippines and a stable job that would keep him out of the line of fire. All he had to do was play music in an active warzone. Given his rapidly dwindling options in Tennessee, Graham took the deal.

By 1914, upwards of a million Filipinos, mostly civilians, would be dead.<sup>11</sup> Once in the Philippines, Graham immediately looked for greener pastures beyond the

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<sup>9</sup> Survey of Vance Hunter Marchbanks, December 20, 1968, Folder 22, Box 43, Spanish American War Veterans Survey Collection, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center. Marchbanks enlisted in the U.S. Army on August 2, 1895, as one of the famed Buffalo Soldiers after finding it hard to make enough money to support himself as a barber. He would eventually be sent to the Philippines where he worked for six years rising to the rank of Captain.

<sup>10</sup> For an overview of these reports in the black press, which often took the form of blatant boosterism, see Willard B. Gatewood, “*Smoked Yankees*” and the Struggle for Empire: Letters from Negro Soldiers, 1898-1902 (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

<sup>11</sup> An exact number of Filipinos killed during the American occupation may never be known. Filipino historian Luzviminda Francisco in “The First Vietnam: The U.S.-Philippine War of 1899” in *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol.

military. On November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1900, he elicited help from an unlikely source, former Confederate officer and then current member of the powerful Philippine Commission, Luke Edward Wright. Born in Pulaski, Tennessee, the same town that gave birth to the Ku Klux Klan, Wright had been attorney general of Tennessee before traveling across the Pacific.<sup>12</sup> By 1904 Wright had become the Governor-General of the Philippines at large with over seven thousand islands (and all of their sugar, hemp, and tobacco plantations) under his sovereignty.<sup>13</sup> White officials like Wright held the keys to the comparatively less dangerous civil service jobs in the Philippines—and Graham knew it. Playing to Wright's Southern sympathies and to the old antebellum code of paternalism and patronage, Graham petitioned the man who many still referred to as "General Wright" for one of those jobs. Graham told Wright that he had the "feeling that as I am a Tennessean...you will give it favorable consideration." He reminded Wright of his brief stint as the only "colored member" of the 50<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of Tennessee. Graham assured Wright that he would "prefer actual competition." He wanted a job "[n]ot as a mere favor, but I want the chance to demonstrate fitness."<sup>14</sup> Years later Graham would boast unconvincingly that "[m]erit alone is and always has been my

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5, Issue 4, 1973 and *The Philippines: End of an Illusion* (London: AREAS, 1973) was one of the first to question the official estimates of the American state pointing out that one American Army General, J. Franklin Bell, admitted to killing well over 600,000 Filipinos in Northern Luzon alone. Along with other evidence Francisco put the total number of deaths from violence, disease, and starvation between 1898 and 1912 at well over a million people stating that even this figure "might conceivably err on the side of understatement." Paul Kramer in *The Blood of Empire: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) does not offer an exact estimate but agrees that the official figure of 250,000 Filipino war related deaths "appears conservative," 157. Harvard historian E. San Juan later revised Francisco's estimate upwards to 1.4 million people in E. San Juan, *Toward Filipino Self-determination: Beyond Transnational Globalization* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> For biographical information on Wright see John Trotwood Moore, *Tennessee: The Volunteer State, 1769-1923* (Chicago: The. S. J. Clarke Pub. Co., 1923), 1-9.

<sup>13</sup> For more on the antebellum culture of mastery, dominance, and sovereignty that informed Wright' childhood see Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> J.M.H. Graham to Luke E. Wright, November 27, 1900, Folder 8, Box 1, Luke Wright Papers, Worcester Collection, Special Collections Library, University of Michigan.

motto.”<sup>15</sup> In appealing to this ostensible American meritocracy, Graham naively hoped that the rules abroad would somehow be the same for everyone regardless of race. He wished for Thomas Jefferson’s famed “empire of liberty” that would serve as an egalitarian contrast to the highly bifurcated regime then taking shape in the Jim Crow South. At the very least, he yearned to prove to this old Confederate that he, and other African Americans, would continue the project of Reconstruction in the Philippines, even if former Confederates had made it increasingly untenable in the United States. What he found was none of the above.

For the next decade and a half, Graham worked as a low-level clerk for the Bureau of Audits in the Philippines, supporting a new bureaucracy that would remake the American state. His dreams of political fame and fortune in Tennessee may have fallen victim to the Jim Crow regime, but he did his best to realize some semblance of emancipation through the expansive power of the American empire. But Filipinos would pay the price. Amidst a highly charged climate of sexual imperialism,<sup>16</sup> part of Graham’s own sense of freedom was marrying a local Filipina woman named Genoveva Garcia, in June of 1903. While the sexual politics of their union were complex, the couple appeared to have lived happily in Manila until at least October 1, 1916, when Graham retired from the Philippine Civil service with a full pension.<sup>17</sup> After a brief return to the military during World War I, Jesse Graham died on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1930. His death mirroring his life, he received a segregated burial at Arlington National

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<sup>15</sup> Jesse M.H. Graham to Bureau of Insular Affairs, November 29, 1919, Box 246, Entry 21, Record Group 350, National Archives, College Park Maryland.

<sup>16</sup> For more on the sexual dimensions of American empire in the Philippines see Marie T. Winkelmann, “Dangerous Intercourse: Race, Gender and Interracial Relations in the American Colonial Philippines, 1898-1946” (PhD Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> F. LeJ. Parker to M.R. Brock, October 26, 1931, Jesse M.H. Graham Personnel file, Entry 21, Box 246, Record Group 350, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

Cemetery.<sup>18</sup> Genoveva, as his widow, would continue to get a monthly check from the American state.

Graham's biographical arc captures many of the complex political fault lines that informed black colonization in the Pacific. While African Americans like Graham encountered American empire in the Pacific as an extension of their Reconstruction struggles, former white Confederates like Wright saw the Pacific as a new domain for mastery, where the end of slavery and the losses of the Civil War could be redeemed through violence and empire abroad. For white Northerners, the dream was a slightly different one. As the spirit of Progressivism and the self-congratulatory glow of emancipation loomed large, many came to see empire as a means of proving the righteousness of a new post-Civil War America, while expanding its alleged virtues abroad. Declaring itself free of the moral stain of slavery, America stood ready to conquer the world.

A competing set of hard realities, rooted in political economy, underwrote all these positions. As black colonization to the Pacific emerged as a public policy initiative, its aspirations rested upon the establishment of a new America that was both triumphant over its past and bullish about its future. What became clear, however, was that the unsettled issues of the Civil War and Reconstruction continued to haunt the nation. The newly colonized peoples of Hawai‘i and the Philippines would feel the concrete terror of that legacy, much like African Americans at “home.”

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<sup>18</sup> For more on the politics of segregation at Arlington National Cemetery see Micki McElya, *The Politics of Mourning: Death and Honor in Arlington National Cemetery*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

This chapter traces the wide span of political debates that took place over black colonization to the Pacific from the perspective of African Americans, native peoples of the Pacific, and a diverse cadre of white Northern and Southern supporters and critics. For all of these actors, state-sponsored black colonization to the Pacific was not a pipe dream, but a vital policy concern for postemancipation America that would endure until at least the start of World War I and the subsequent rise of Marcus Garvey and his back-to-Africa movement, which would give yet a different twist to that global imaginary. While many today believe that state sponsored black colonization schemes ended with Abraham Lincoln and were limited geographically to Liberia, the vibrant public conversations about black colonization to the Pacific between 1870 and 1914 proved otherwise. In addition to functioning as a rhetorical proxy for a variety of other more immediate domestic concerns, black colonization to the Pacific was at the same time a very real, viable project for those who experienced it. In this particular case, the fact that black colonization in the Pacific did not happen (at least to the extent that many had hoped) does not make it irrelevant but, instead, all the more compelling.

## **From Cotton to Colonization in Hawai‘i**

The story of black colonization to the Pacific begins in Hawai‘i—and it begins with cotton. While today Hawai‘i is more typically associated with sugar and pineapples than cotton, such an outcome was far from inevitable. While early white settlers encountered a vibrant indigenous sugar culture when they arrived in large numbers in the early 1800’s, the introduction of industrial, export-oriented sugar production

actually occurred simultaneously with that of cotton.<sup>19</sup> As the two crops increasingly competed for arable land and water in the 1830's, New Englanders moved quickly to monopolize suitable plantations in the wake of the Great *Māhele* [division] of 1848 that privatized part of the Hawaiian Kingdom's crown lands. The Alien Land Ownership Act of 1850 allowed non-Hawaiians to own pieces of this newly available Hawaiian soil and trade them as market commodities.<sup>20</sup> Whether it was ultimately used for cotton or sugar was largely a function of labor, market conditions, and profitability.

In this context, the antebellum growth of Hawaiian cotton followed the same general trends that fueled the industrial revolution more broadly around the globe. While short staple cotton always found a home, white planters in Hawai'i soon zeroed in on the Sea Island specialty, a strand of cotton that took hold particularly well there. Eventually, white Northerners discovered that by compelling Hawaiian workers to grow Southern cotton in the Pacific they could realize even greater profits than using slave labor in the actual Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia. These planters in antebellum Hawai'i raved that production of this long, stringy variety of cotton was yielding a thousand pounds per acre per year, nearly double the rate of the notoriously fertile Sea Islands bordering the Atlantic. With the lack of any real winter, the crop bloomed twice a year, extending the picking season to "ten months out of every twelve." Replanting costs were cut by eighty percent; by comparison, "[i]n the States it has to be planted every year, while here, it would not require to be planted oftener than once in

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<sup>19</sup> Hawaiian strands of sugar likely came to the islands with the original Polynesian inhabitants of the islands as per Robert L. Cushing, "The Beginnings of Sugar Production in Hawai'i," *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, (Vol. 19, 1985), 17-34.

<sup>20</sup> For more on the "Great *Māhele*" of 1848 and the Alien Land Ownership Act see Osorio, *Dismembering Lāhui*.

five years” all with no loss in quality or output.<sup>21</sup> These climate considerations caused one postemancipation writer to proclaim, even as late as 1909, that “[c]otton may yet be king in the Hawaiian Islands.”<sup>22</sup>

**Figure 2. “White Gold”**



AN OAHU COTTON FIELD—BEGINNING OF THE KUNIA DEVELOPMENT COMPANY'S COTTON PLANTATION.

Source: *Hawaiian Gazette*, November 12, 1909

As “white gold” drove the demand for slavery, territorial expansion, transportation, and industrialization in the U.S., the Civil War soon brought these forces to a head. While the Kingdom of Hawai‘i was officially neutral in the continental fracas, the large concentration of New England planters gave the islands a decidedly Unionist bent. Still, a significant number of the white planters and members of the Hawaiian

<sup>21</sup> The Pacific Commercial Advertiser, April 30, 1857.

<sup>22</sup> *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, October 21, 1909. This quote was eventually picked up and critiqued by Southern newspapers including *The Charlotte News*, November 20, 1909 and the *Columbia State* (S.C.). The *Columbia State*'s critique found its way back to Hawai‘i where it was re-printed in full under the headline “Southern Paper Objects to Hawaii Cotton Claims” in *The Hawaiian Star*, December 31, 1909.

royal family harbored Southern sympathies consistent with their shared agricultural interests. Queen Liliuokalani herself went so far as to hand-sew a Confederate Flag for her Kentucky tenant Curtis Perry Ward, which he proudly flew above his bed in Hawai‘i.<sup>23</sup>

The Civil War also proved a boom time for Hawaiian cotton, as the Union embargo of the South drove global cotton prices sharply higher. All around the globe industrialists were searching for alternate procurement sites for the crop that fueled their rise. When he was not starting some of Hawai‘i’s biggest newspapers, the aptly named Henry Martyn Whitney seized upon the Civil War as an opportunity to ramp up Hawaiian cotton production and fill the void left by the now war-damaged South. In 1861 Whitney had “twenty-four long staple cotton gins imported from New York” along with over a thousand bags of Sea Island cotton seed. He distributed the seeds free of charge to peasant farmers in Hawai‘i with the promise of buying the resulting crop in Honolulu at four cents a pound. He then built a huge cotton mill in Honolulu where “the buzzing sound of a dozen treadle gins was heard from morning till dark, the machines being run by both boys and girls who were paid for their work by the pound.” After bailing and loading the commodity “[s]hipments of Mr. Whitney’s cotton were made to Liverpool, Boston, and New York” where he earned “from sixty cents to \$2.25 in currency” per pound during wartime. The cotton was “consumed chiefly by the manufactures of sewing thread in Massachusetts and Connecticut,” where some of it no

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<sup>23</sup> Bob Sigall, “Newcomer’s Southern Flag Sewn By Hawaiian Princess,” *Honolulu Star Advertiser*, October 30, 2015.

doubt ended up being worn on the uniforms Union soldiers.<sup>24</sup> While helping to fuel the Union's victory, Northerners in Hawai'i also hoped to permanently take market share away from their Southern cotton rivals. With this aspiration came a new model for racialized agricultural production in the Pacific.

As the war ended, however, sugar seemed a safer bet for many Northern planters as global cotton prices roughly returned to their prewar levels. But the cotton culture remained. Just as Southern cotton producers came back on line after emancipation, many of the labor disciplines of cotton in Hawai'i continued. At the same time, emancipation brought another opportunity for Northern planters. They could now begin adding formerly enslaved African Americans to their already crowded account books of Hawaiian, Japanese, and Chinese laborers. It should come as no surprise that as a response to emancipation white Northern planters began contemplating black colonization to islands almost immediately after the Civil War.

In 1870, the future prime minister of the Kingdom of Hawai'i, Walter M. Gibson, began formally investigating black colonization to Hawai'i on behalf of these white Northern planters. By 1879, hoping for state support, Gibson and his associates had introduced the idea to the Kingdom of Hawai'i's legislature. They were successful. A year later black colonization was investigated by the Kingdom's Bureau of Immigration, which wrote the Legislative assembly that formerly enslaved African Americans would be "very willing to come, and many of their old masters would have seen them leave the country with pleasure." Their prime targets were the Exodusters who had been

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<sup>24</sup> *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, August 29, 1895. The Advertiser (which exists today as the Honolulu Star Advertiser) was one of the papers started by Whitney. The other was *Ka Nupepa Kū'oko'a*. For more on the material culture of Civil War clothing see Sarah Weicksel, "The Fabric of War: Clothing, Culture, and Violence in the American Civil War," (Dissertation: University of Chicago, 2017).

“crowding into Kansas.”<sup>25</sup> In selling a pilot project, the Bureau claimed that “the delivery of say 1,000 colored people” from Kansas to Honolulu could be financed much cheaper in Hawai‘i’s globalized labor market than the \$200 or \$300 planters were paying to contract Chinese, Japanese, and a diverse range of other workers. The formerly enslaved would only cost “\$100 per head.” This method of ‘purchasing’ labor meant that the formerly enslaved in Hawai‘i would find themselves in a system that eerily resembled the chattel-like property regime they thought they had left behind. Through contract law enforcement, which brought state power to bear on those who disobeyed the dictates of capital, workers of all backgrounds would reencounter the reality of un-freedom that had long governed American life.<sup>26</sup> Everyday plantation workers in Hawai‘i, however, resisted this plan; indeed, government records indicate that “public opinion [was not] altogether in favor of these negroes coming here.”<sup>27</sup> While labor competition, wage concerns, and overt racism certainly factored into this grass-roots resistance to black migrant workers, it cannot fully explain it. For Chinese, Japanese, Hawaiian, and later Filipino workers—who were already running away from these bounded contracts and slave-like conditions in significant numbers—the colonization of actual former slaves to their plantations threatened to further degrade

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<sup>25</sup> “Report of the President of the Bureau of Immigration to the Legislative Assembly of 1886,” Hawai‘i State Archives, Honolulu, Hawai‘i. For more on the Exodusters see Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction* (New York: Knopf, 1977).

<sup>26</sup> For more on the labor conditions in Hawai‘i see Ronald T. Takaki, *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii, 1835-1920* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984); Edward D. Beechert, *Working in Hawaii: A Labor History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985); Gerald Horne, *Fighting in Paradise: Labor Unions, Racism, and Communists in the Making of Modern Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011); Michi Kodama-Nishimoto, Warren S. Nishimoto, and Cynthia A. Oshiro, *Hanahana: An Oral History Anthology of Hawaii’s Working People* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995). For more on the spectrum of freedom in the U.S. see Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

<sup>27</sup> “Report of the President of the Bureau of Immigration to the Legislative Assembly of 1886,” Hawai‘i State Archives, Honolulu, Hawai‘i.

their own precarious status. With the exception of a few isolated cases and the more widespread practice of ‘blackbirding’, where Pacific Islanders were kidnaped from their home islands and forced to work in Hawai‘i, most plantation workers in Hawai‘i were not actual slaves; but none of them were entirely free of its legacy either.<sup>28</sup> At the very least, the echoes of American slavery and the fear of its reinstitution or evolution were never far from their minds.

But white Northern planters would not be dissuaded. In February of 1882, they convinced the Bureau of Immigration to officially appoint Samuel Chapman Armstrong, who was born and raised on a sugar plantation in Maui to Northern parents, to use his connections among African Americans to comb the South to contractually bind black people, black families, and black communities to manual labor on Hawaiian sugar plantations. The Bureau paid the founder of the Hampton Institute \$500 in advance from the Kingdom’s coffers. Chapman subbed out the job to a family member but before a full feasibility study could be completed by a Legislature, not yet fully under the control of the planter elite, “passed a resolution opposing the immigration of blacks.”<sup>29</sup>

Once again, white planters fought back. Already engaged in a sustained attempt to “dismember” the traditional political structures of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i (in the words of historian Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio) planter elites relentlessly resisted any regulations or restrictions on the amount or the ethnic origins of the

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<sup>28</sup> Horne is also particularly sensitive to the spectrum of unfreedom in his exploration of blackbirding in the Pacific. See Gerald Horne, *The White Pacific: U.S. Imperialism and Black Slavery in the South Seas After the Civil War* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007).

<sup>29</sup> “Report of the President of the Bureau of Immigration to the Legislative Assembly of 1886,” Hawai‘i State Archives, Honolulu, Hawai‘i.

commodified labor they could ‘import’ to work on their plantations.<sup>30</sup> Restricting black colonization may have been the straw that broke the camel’s back, however. In 1893 the planters called in the U.S. Marines. Together, this Northern corporate-military coalition unlawfully initiated the second *coup d'état* in the nineteenth-century of a foreign constitutional government backed directly by the American state.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps not coincidentally, the first such effort took place in the 1889, the overthrow of Haitian president François Denys Légitime in favor of the American backing of Florvil Hyppolite. Unbeknown to the conspirators at the time, the suppression of the duly elected constitutional government of Hawai‘i would initiate the longest standing military occupation of a foreign country in modern world history, which, according to a growing scholarly consensus, continues to this day in the Kingdom of Hawai‘i.<sup>32</sup>

As a result, for the white northern planter-dominated provisional government in Hawai‘i, black colonization, as part of the overthrow agenda, immediately became an important geopolitical and foreign affairs concern. However, as white American planters tried to assume power and build a new state, their desire for black labor was a dual-edged sword. Given the planters’ quest for international recognition of the *coup d'état* and their multiple unsuccessful attempts to annex the Kingdom of Hawai‘i to the United States, black colonization seemed to create just as many problems as it might have solved.

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<sup>30</sup> Osorio, *Dismembering Lāhui*.

<sup>31</sup> For more on Florvil Hyppolite and his involvement in American empire see Brandon R. Byrd, “An Experiment in Self-Government: Haiti in the African-American Political Imagination, 1863-1915” (Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014).

<sup>32</sup> For more on the preliminary and ongoing occupation of Hawai‘i see David Keanu Sai, “The American Occupation of the Hawaiian Kingdom”, Tom Coffman, *Nation Within: The Story of America’s Annexation of the Nation of Hawaii*, (Kāne‘ohe, Hawai‘i: Epicenter, 1998); Gary Okihiro, *Island World: A History of Hawai‘i and the United States* (Berkely: University of California Press, 2009); Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

In 1893, Lorrin Thurston, the chief architect of the coup, traveled to Washington to lobby for the annexation of the islands. While he was there, on behalf of the now-governing Northern planters, he also investigated the prospects for black colonization to Hawai‘i.<sup>33</sup> In Thurston’s view, not only was black colonization a critical policy objective to the national interests of this planter class in Hawai‘i, it was also good diplomacy. U.S. Secretary of the Interior and Georgia white supremacist Hoke Smith was initially skeptical of adding Hawai‘i to the U.S. because it would introduce more people of color into the American nation. However, once Smith found out that the provisional government wanted to pursue black colonization and thereby relieve the South of large numbers of formerly enslaved African Americans, he changed course and warmed up to the idea of annexing Hawai‘i. Soon Smith and other racist white Southerners, like Alabama Senator John Tyler Morgan, began to advocate for the annexation of Hawai‘i as a way to effect black migration out of the South.<sup>34</sup> It is unclear exactly how many senators who voted for annexation in 1898 did so with this intention.

But the political fault lines in America were much more complicated than simply stoking the racism of Southern politicians and their constituents. Once fellow conspirator Sanford Dole, of Dole pineapple fame, got wind of Thurston’s strategy to woo Southern politicians, he immediately used his power as the non-elected president of the so-called provisional government to telegraph Thurston and instruct him to stop advertising to the U.S. that the planters in Hawai‘i wanted to relieve America of its black

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<sup>33</sup> Lorrin Thurston to Sanford Dole, March 21, 1893, Hawaiian Officials Abroad, Washington, Ministers, and Commissioners file, Hawai‘i State Archives, Honolulu, Hawai‘i.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Carter to Sanford Dole, March 21, 1893, Commissioners File, Hawai‘i State Archives. For more on Morgan see Joseph A. Fry, *John Tyler Morgan and the Search for Southern Autonomy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992).

labor pool.<sup>35</sup> Dole understood that while racist politicians in America like Smith and Morgan (and especially those with small black populations in their districts) might favor black colonization to Hawai‘i as a political move, powerful, landed, former slaveholders in places where black labor was essential to the local economy would resist any attempts to part them from the primary source of their wealth. Knowing that Hawai‘i had already proven itself a more fertile and productive cotton location during the Civil War, the introduction of former slaves to work the soil of the Pacific would have seriously threatened the Southern cotton monopoly.

Privately however, white planters in Hawai‘i continued to push for black colonization with a small army of entrepreneurial white and black labor recruiters working on commission. Between 1900 and 1902, this sales force blanketed the American South and attracted several contingents of black colonists to Maui, most coming from Nashville, Tennessee, Montgomery, Alabama, and northern Mississippi. Much like the Exodusers before them and, to a lesser extent, the Great Migration to the American North that would soon follow, these several hundred colonists came not as individuals but often as fully intact families and communities.<sup>36</sup>

Those who arrived faced a labor management system that the legendarily efficient New England planters had been quietly developing for decades. Accounting for and measuring this system was always of the utmost importance. In order to prove their system’s superiority, Northerner planters kept voluminous records. An examination of their strict bookkeeping ledgers further unmasks the terrifying system of racial control

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<sup>35</sup> Sanford Dole to Lorrin Thurston, April 25, 1893, Commissioners File, Hawai‘i State Archives.

<sup>36</sup> For more details on these Maui colonies see Miles M. Jackson, ed., *They Followed the Trade Winds: African Americans in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005).

that had taken shape. Seemingly oblivious to the ironies, these accounting techniques mirrored and reproduced some of the most calculated and inhumane labor management practices developed by white Southern slaveholders.<sup>37</sup>

Upon arrival, black contract workers discovered that their plantation co-workers in the Hawaiian Islands were literally reduced to a race and a number in the ledgers of their plantation owners. Hawaiians, Filipinos, Japanese, and African Americans were all accounted for separately in payroll ledgers, profit and loss statements, and production tallies, enabling a comparison of each group's productivity against the others (see Figure 3 below). Just as workers on the plantations were kept in segregated housing units and were subjected to racially-segmented gang labor groups, the logic of plantation ledgers was driven by an ideology of segregation.<sup>38</sup> Thus accounting, a critical component to the infrastructure of modernity and colonialism, was also a cognitive enabler of segregation. While historians have long known that the culture of segregation contained deep roots in antebellum northern cities, the transmission of these systemic practices by northern planters in Hawai'i back to their New England brethren in the metropole during this period remains a largely unstudied phenomenon.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> For more on accounting and its connection to plantation violence during American slavery see Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*, (New York: Basic Books, 2014); Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2013).

<sup>38</sup> Honokaa Sugar Company Ledger (1915), HSC 36/1, Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library Hawaiian Collection, Honolulu, Hawai'i.

<sup>39</sup> For more on the northern origins and contributions to the culture of segregation see Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

### **Figure 3. 1915 Honokaa Sugar Company Account Book**

Source: Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association Archives

As part of reducing workers to a race and a number, Northern planters soon began referring to their workers not by their names but *by* their race and their number. Likely beginning in the postbellum period, plantation owners started issuing *bango* tags to the workers whose labor contracts they had purchased. Rather than branding workers like cattle, each worker was assigned a number printed on a metal tag. These tags came in different shapes. Each shape corresponded to a particular racial group on the plantation. Workers were assigned their *bangos* based on their perceived racial

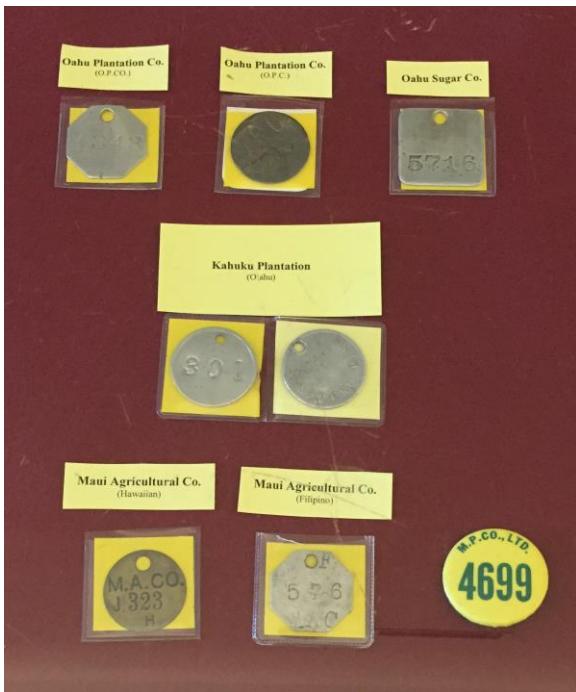
origins. In many cases workers were expected to wear these tags around their necks at all times so that they could be identified both individually and as members of a supposedly discreet race. The hope was that the mixed-race, highly diverse individual workers in Hawai‘i could be atomized and reduced to an fixed number within a discernable group. Workers had to present their *bango* tags to their overseers upon clocking into the fields, upon exiting the fields, when receiving a paycheck, and for the privilege of running up a debt at the company store.<sup>40</sup> It was designed to **be** their identity. For African Americans stepping into this system, the *bango* numbers perhaps elicited stories told by their enslaved ancestors, who had been at times forced to wear slave tags when hired out to neighboring plantations.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> For more on *bango* numbers and their use see JoAnna Poblete, *Islanders in the Empire : Filipino and Puerto Rican Laborers in Hawai‘i*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 63.

<sup>41</sup> Harlan Greene, Harry S. Hutchins Jr, and Brian E. Hutchins, *Slave Badges and the Slave-Hire System in Charleston, South Carolina: 1783-1865* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2008).

**Figure 4. Bango Tags and Slave Badges**



Hawaiian Bango Tags

Source: West O‘ahu Labor Education and Research Center



South Carolina Slave Badges

Source: Charleston Museum (Charleston, SC)

But workers resisted. Beyond the spectacular history of strikes, many workers used their owner’s ignorance of their actual identities to collect multiple *bangos* (sometimes on different plantations) and assist one another to make a communal act of resistance out what was meant to be an individualized system of control.<sup>42</sup> Some of these conditions came to light in an 1886 report to the Legislative Assembly of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i. There the country’s Bureau of Immigration expressed concern over recent newspaper reports that plantation conditions for contract workers in the Kingdom of Hawai‘i amounted to a system of “Modern Slavery” in the Hawaiian Islands.” While the Bureau of Immigration dismissed such reports as sensationalized

<sup>42</sup> Poblete, *Islanders in the Empire*, 63.

yellow journalism, two Norwegian contract workers, Ratzhorn and Anderson, who had run away from one such plantation (and subsequently told their story to the press), thought otherwise. For these men, invoking the specter of slavery was not simply rhetorical. Indeed, slavery was the lens through which they saw their lived experiences. Even though they were technically not people with a price, these workers clearly sensed that their all-sacred labor contracts were always up for sale in Hawai‘i.

After their escape, the Norwegian runaways told an international audience that “the value of a good strong man [in Hawai‘i] was considered to be \$200, and that of a smart, pretty girl \$300.” Once they found their way to freedom in San Francisco, the men further described how plantation workers in Hawai‘i referred to those who purchased them as their “owners.” The men assured the world, in an article that crossed the Pacific and the Atlantic, reaching as far as the German government, that “the trade in human flesh in the Sandwich Islands has latterly become quite common.”<sup>43</sup> Indeed as historian Gerald Horne has shown in his book *The White Pacific*, the practice of “blackbirding” was also common at this time; Tongan, Fijian, and other dark-skinned, phenotypically black peoples of the Pacific were routinely kidnapped from their homes and forced to work on neighboring island plantations by white planters. Combined with the secondary market in labor contracts, the sexual exploitation of “pretty girl[s],” and the prevalence of runaways, white Northerners in Hawai‘i had effectively built a labor regime in the Pacific, both during and after chattel slavery in the United States, that was bore a stark resemblance to the “peculiar institution” itself.<sup>44</sup> The fact that only a few

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<sup>43</sup> “Report of the President of the Bureau of Immigration to the Legislative Assembly of 1886,” Hawai‘i State Archives, Honolulu, Hawai‘i.

<sup>44</sup> Gerald Horne, *The White Pacific*.

hundred black colonists ever made the trip to Hawai‘i should come as no surprise. That they went at all speaks volumes about the desperation engulfing black life in the American South.

If Northern planters wanted to head off accusations of “Modern Slavery,” pushing for the introduction of the formerly enslaved to Hawai‘i might have seemed like a strange way to do it. But it actually made sense. From the moment of their arrival, white northerners in Hawai‘i had been growing crops long associated with Southern and Caribbean slaveholders. New England industriousness and prudence drew many of its missionaries into plantation life. While many also had strong pro-Northern, anti-slavery (if not abolitionist) leanings, they nonetheless (or perhaps because of these leanings) set about building an antebellum template for Hawaiian sugar plantations to replace slavery. If the same crops grown in the American South could be produced in a slightly less coercive and slightly more racially progressive fashion in Hawai‘i, the Northern way of life could not only be held up as an American ideal but a global one.<sup>45</sup>

That these idealistic Northerners ended up reproducing much of the Southern system that they hoped to replace in Hawai‘i may have been lost on them, but was well-known to their workers. The fact that this proving ground involved deposing native Hawaiians of their homeland and instituting a new system of racial control seemed not to matter to the planters. This unlikely arrangement effectively solidified as a large-scale experiment in the antebellum period to test the merits of Northern free soil, free labor

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<sup>45</sup> These aims would repeat themselves during the Port Royal experiment and Northern Reconstruction efforts in general as shown in Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction*.

ideology.<sup>46</sup> Effectively, Northern planters in Hawai‘i had been rehearsing for Reconstruction long before the Civil War even began.

The idea of incorporating the formerly enslaved into this workforce after the Civil War naturally followed. It must have seemed like the ultimate test of their system’s validity. Even if it never reached a scale that many had hoped for, black colonization to the Pacific in the postemancipation period was a chance to demonstrate these new Northern techniques that had been developed in Hawai‘i like the *bango* tag, modern accounting, and industrial schools. Many of these techniques and their logic would eventually re-circulate back to the Jim Crow South through the Freedman’s Bureau schools, Booker T. Washington, and, later, the American colonial schools in the Philippines, as detailed in Chapter 4. By 1898, however, black colonists set out to develop their own grand plans for the Pacific. They hoped it would not look like Hawai‘i.

### “Now Shall I Go?”<sup>47</sup>

John Lewis Waller was no stranger to black colonization plans. Enslaved at birth, he lived his adolescence in the chaos of the Civil War, where he would exit bondage as ‘contraband’ of the Union Army.<sup>48</sup> Emancipation in Missouri proved the formative event in his life and Reconstruction became his lifelong obsession. One of his first

<sup>46</sup> For more on free soil ideology see Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

<sup>47</sup> F. H. Henderson to Mr. Secretary of the United Stat At-Washington [sic], July 1, 1905, File 1846-9, Box 226, Entry 1-3 5-A, Record Group 350, General Classified Files, Bureau of Insular Affairs, National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>48</sup> All biographical information on Waller is taken from Randall Bennett Woods, *A Black Odyssey: John Lewis Waller and the Promise of American Life, 1878-1900* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1981).

responses to freedom as an adult was to join the Exoduster movement in 1878, making a new home for himself in Leavenworth, Kansas. As a vocal advocate of the Exoduster movement, Waller helped usher in this first wave of postemancipation black migrants willing to relocate across massive distances to escape the rise of Jim Crow.

Concurrent with the Exodusters, resurging interest in black colonization to Africa was being simultaneously spearheaded in the postemancipation era by Alexander Crummell, Henry McNeal Turner, and Edward Wilmot Blyden. Much like Jesse Graham, Waller would first try his luck in domestic Republican party politics before turning his attention abroad and the budding Pan-Africanist stage. During his promising political career in Kansas, Waller first advocated for a variety of other colonization plans, both inside the United States and to South America. Through a series of fortuitous events, he then found his stride in Madagascar, becoming President Benjamin Harrison's officially designated consul to the island nation in 1891.<sup>49</sup> Waller quickly used this diplomatic influence to initiate an unauthorized project securing a 150,000 acre concession from the queen of Madagascar for the purpose of black colonization.

Waller's initiative eventually landed him in a French prison. Apparently, the Third Republic of France, after initially appearing open to funding Waller's project, came to see any potential black American colony in Madagascar as a threat to their burgeoning empire in Africa. After a protracted diplomatic crisis, Waller was eventually released from prison. With the onset of the Spanish American War, however, he

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<sup>49</sup> Waller's appointment was not unprecedented as he followed the lead of other early black diplomats beginning with Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett in 1869 and Frederick Douglass in 1889, who both were stationed in Haiti. He would be followed by Richard T. Greener as detailed in Allison Blakely, "Richard T. Greener and the 'Talented Tenth's' Dilemma" in *The Journal of Negro History* Vol. 59, No. 4 (Oct. 1974), 305-321.

attempted to revive his colonization plans. Like so many other black thinkers at this time, he would pivot to the Pacific. Hoping to leverage his international fame and considerable influence within the American executive branch, Waller began petitioning in 1899 for a \$20,000,000 congressional appropriation to support the colonization of three million African Americans to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and, most significantly, the Philippines. Black newspapers, in describing the plan, called Waller “a modern high priest of Israel” who was calling for an “exodus of the colored men from America” to “The Negro’s Canaan.” Bound not by geography, national sovereignty, or the racial composition of any existing inhabitants, “The Negro’s Canaan” for Waller was quite simply anywhere on God’s green earth that African Americans could find, in his words, “an open door.”<sup>50</sup>

Waller practiced what he preached. Almost immediately after his public call for colonization, he petitioned President Roosevelt for a position in the Philippines for both himself and his son, who had already made the trip alone in 1899 through the military just like Graham. Waller and his son believed that “being a colored man [was] a barrier to his appointment.” With Roosevelt’s help, the junior Waller succeeded in breaking this barrier and landed a job as clerk for the black governor of the Isabella Province, Captain Robert Gordon Woods.<sup>51</sup> Although segregation remained in the Philippines, it came with government jobs. The younger Waller then married “Miss Mabel Rodgers” from Emporia, Kansas and was able to secure government funding for Mabel to join him

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<sup>50</sup> *Recorder* (Indianapolis), July 8, 1899. The full quote regarding Waller’s idea of “an open door” is: “There is before this people now ‘an open door’ as a result of the Spanish-American war, which makes it possible for the colored people of the states to emigrate in large numbers to islands comprising our new possessions and still be under the protection of the stars and stripes.”

<sup>51</sup> John L. Waller, Sr. to President Theodor Roosevelt, Jan. 17, 1903, File 9215, Box 541, Entry I-3 5-A, Record Group 350, National Archives, Washington D.C.

in the Philippines. With his son committed to “make that his permanent home”, the senior Waller then petitioned to go himself “to the Philippines to reside.” Then 52 years old, and having been “injured in ‘line of duty’ in Cuba,” Waller was “rendered partially unable to do any heavy labor for the support of my family.”<sup>52</sup> But as a disabled veteran, Waller was of little use to America’s empire in the Philippines and the Bureau of Insular affairs denied his request.<sup>53</sup> His family remained separated as well as segregated.

Emerging simultaneously with Waller’s prominent push, the idea of black colonization to the Philippines also took off like wildfire among everyday working class African Americans. Sharecroppers, teachers, nurses, and factory workers soon began writing to Presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt demanding state funding for an expanded black colony in the Philippines. A typical letter came in 1905 from a semi-literate black farmer named F. H. Henderson from Woodson, Arkansas. His letter essentially amounted to a public prayer for Waller’s ‘open door.’ Addressed to the “Secretary of the United State [sic] at Washington” Henderson asked quite simply: “if the colored people can settle” in “the Philippines [sic] islands.” Clearly interested in preserving a sense of black community life in the Philippines, Henderson asked “[i]s they any colored there?” In contemplating his future relations with local Filipinos, he further probed “what native is they?” Thinking about his children’s future, he then asked if there were any black schools or churches established. Dripping with desperation, while expressing an anywhere-but-here mentality, Henderson asked his president “[w]hat is the nearest point to the island will this government send a true man over

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<sup>52</sup> John L. Waller to Col. C. E. Edwards, Chief of Insular Affairs, November 18, 1903, File 9215, Box 541, Entry I-3 5-A, Record Group 350.

<sup>53</sup> Bureau of Insular Affairs to John L. Waller, November 21, 1903, File 9215, Box, 541, Entry I-3 5-A, Record Group 350, National Archives. Washington, D.C.

there.” Perhaps most tellingly, Henderson had one final question before committing any more time or leaving Jim Crow Arkansas for good. “How many white population is there in this island[?]”<sup>54</sup> The implication was clear—the fewer the better.

While many of the African Americans who wrote letters like Henderson’s had individual concerns, Henderson was not just writing for himself or even his family. He assured President Theodore Roosevelt that “I want to organize. Organize immigration for the Philippines islands [sic].” As part of his plan Henderson wanted to conduct a feasibility study to “seek that place so I can have a point to work at.” “[W]ill the United States government send me over there and back,” he wondered, so that he could share his findings with his “organizing club.” In short, Henderson was asking the American state, “Shall I go?”<sup>55</sup> And he was not alone.

With formal overarching government programs like Waller’s in a perpetual state of limbo, these individual attempts to access state resources for small-scale, family and community-based colonization plans were not uncommon. Bedford B. Hunter, was another African American hoping to find state funding to relocate to the Philippines. While there is no indication that Henderson ever made it out of Arkansas, Hunter was able to secure for himself a government job and with it state-funded transportation. Once he was appointed as a teacher, however, Hunter began pressing government policy to its administrative limits while trying to carve out his own personal colonization plan. After he was booked for transport, Hunter got government transport approved for “all members of my family” who were “dependent upon me for support.” While this was not

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<sup>54</sup> F. H. Henderson to Mr. Secretary of the United Stat At-Washington [sic], July 1, 1905, File 1846-9, Box 226, Entry 1-3 5-A, Record Group 350, General Classified Files, Bureau of Insular Affairs, National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

unheard of for teachers in route to the Philippines, Hunter's definition of family included "myself, my wife, mother, Mrs. Elsie Hunter, and sister, Mrs. Annie Palmer."<sup>56</sup>

After slipping his mother and sister in for free transport, Hunter then pressed his luck even further. Just two weeks before their scheduled departure for Manila, he telegraphed the Bureau of Insular Affairs again to "[r]equest transportation of 3 children of sick niece...Arthur Wilkes, age 6, Alonzo Wilkes, age 4, Myrtle Wilkes, age 3."<sup>57</sup> This attempt by Hunter to maintain and validate extended black kinship networks met with resistance from a state infrastructure committed to the idea of a nuclear, middle class, family unit. The Quartermaster's office initially ruled against Hunter's second request, stating that "it is believed that the Army Transport Service should not be burdened with the transportation of remote relatives of employees, even though in a certain sense they may be classed by the party concerned [Hunter] as members of his immediate family."<sup>58</sup> This coldness from his government must have been disheartening, especially given the assurances he offered that his niece and her children were "permanent members of my immediate family, habitually residing with me and have no other home."<sup>59</sup>

The state's decision about who was and who was not part of Hunter's family had real consequences. In the wake of the government's denial, Hunter's mother was forced to stay behind to take care of his sick niece, his grandnieces, and grandnephews — breaking up their extended family for what was probably not the first or the last time.

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<sup>56</sup> Before B. Hunter to Chief of Insular Affairs, June 12, 1916, Bedford B. Hunter Folder, Entry 21, Box 298, Record Group 350, National Archives.

<sup>57</sup> Telegraph from Bedford D. Hunter to Bureau of Insular Affairs July 25, 1916, Bedford B. Hunter Folder, Entry 21, Box 298, Record Group 350, National Archives.

<sup>58</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Endorsement of Henry C. Sharpe, Brigadier General Q.M. Corps, August 4, 1916, Bedford B. Hunter Folder, Entry 21, Box 298, Record Group 350, National Archives.

<sup>59</sup> Bedford B. Hunter to Bureau of Insular Affairs, July 25, 1916, Bedford B. Hunter Folder, Entry 21, Box 298, Record Group 350, National Archives.

But Hunter did not give up. Instead he doubled down on his demands. Reasoning that because the government denied his request and forced his mother to stay behind, he insisted that he was now also entitled to have his brother-in-law Ceasar Montilla, his niece Elsie Wilkes, and his nephew Clarence Wilkes funded for the journey as well—this time in order to look after his mother.<sup>60</sup> This attempt to extend the boundaries of black extended family structures once again (with Hunter’s family now up to eleven people) put African American definitions of family in direct conflict with a colonial state trying to normalize its own understanding of kinship ties. Perhaps fearing that Hunter intended to move every distant relative he could find who wanted to exit America for the Philippines, the Bureau wrote in an internal memo that “[t]he request of Mr. Hunter, on its face, does not appear fair, reasonable, or within the limits of contemplated law.”<sup>61</sup> It is unclear if Hunter and his family were ever ultimately reunited either in the American colonies or in its metropole.

While such individual and family-based colonization efforts were important, African Americans also moved into collective action with an organized set of petitions detailing the possible financial, political, and industrial structures of a more universal black colonization project. One such proposal was for the “American Colonization and Development Company.” At some point this proposal landed on the desk of Booker T. Washington, who was himself actively pursuing black colonization to the Pacific as a policy goal.<sup>62</sup> While it is unclear exactly who the authors of this particular plan were or

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<sup>60</sup> Bedford B. Hunter to Bureau of Insular Affairs, August 5, 1916, Bedford B. Hunter Folder, Entry 21, Box 298, Record Group 350, National Archives

<sup>61</sup> “6<sup>th</sup> Endorsement of Bureau of Insular Affairs”, August 10, 1916, Bedford B. Hunter Folder, Entry 21, Box 298, Record Group 350, National Archives

<sup>62</sup> See further discussion of Washington’s push for black colonization to the Pacific in Chapter 2.

what role Washington and Tuskegee played in its development, its sheer depth indicates that serious thought and significant political capital was being invested by black communities in the prospect of black colonization to the Pacific. In a remarkable six-page document written from “Lima, O.” sometime in 1904, the would-be colonists addressed their proposal to “Your Excellency, Theodore Roosevelt.” The writers begin with a critique of prior black colonization plans to Africa as “pauper movements” that did not “guarantee the immigrant steady employment at good wages” or housing that was “ready for occupancy.” What was needed, according to the plan, were “independent, self-supporting citizen[s]” who were “backed by the capital of an organized corporation interested in the country and its development.” While it is unclear if the document ever reached the desk of President Roosevelt, the authors claimed that they had shared their plan with Senator Mark Hanna of Ohio and that the lawmaker “was much impressed with the idea.”<sup>63</sup>

The plan called for “[a] Settlement in the Philippines on one of the islands with immediate control and guarantee of independence where a stable government could be conducted.”<sup>64</sup> Tellingly, black organizers forming a separate state that was free of American control was not met in 1904 with the same kind of incredulousness that Marcus Garvey’s proposals would receive a generation later. The boldness of this demand alone indicated that the dreams of self-governance after emancipation were far from extinguished during the period historian Rayford Logan dubbed the “Nadir” of black American opportunity. While clearly latching on to transpacific Philippine

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<sup>63</sup> American Colonization and Development Company Plan, dated 1904, author unknown, in *Booker T. Washington Papers* Reel 396 subfolder “Theodore Roosevelt.”

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

demands for self-governance, it is uncertain how these particular African American policy makers saw their independence affecting the ongoing Filipino revolution for freedom and self-governance. As later plans would demonstrate, and the growing anti-imperialism of the black press indicates, black colonization was imagined as something much different than white colonialism.

In appealing to the patriotic language of the time, three main reasons were given to the President to justify the plan. While clearly playing to the discourse of imperialism that had pervaded the nation by 1904, it is unclear exactly how seriously these black organizers took their own rhetoric. It is feasible that they were simply appealing to American policy makers with the power to wrangle together the congressional votes necessary to make their dream a reality. First, the authors argued that such a settlement would assert American dominance in the region and, in a curious interpretation of American diplomatic policy, “tell all foreign nations that the Monroe Doctrine is a living issue.” How exactly a separate African American state carved out from the Philippines would preserve American hemispheric hegemony was not explicitly spelled out (especially given that it was outside the hemisphere). Second, a black presence in the Philippines would supposedly “expand commerce and increase trade revenue” for both the United States and the Philippines. Third, in a long-standing trope, black colonization to the Pacific was framed as a way to “reliev[e] the pressure and strain between the races” by enabling the most disenchanted African Americans to leave the Jim Crow South once and for all.<sup>65</sup> This final general concern of the “strain between the races,” along with the valorization of black capitalism, certainly sounds like classic

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

Tuskegee-speak. The fact that the plan was written the year after T. Thomas Fortune's investigative trip to the Philippines, discussed in further detail in Chapter 2, also points to a significant degree of Tuskegee involvement and collaboration in this otherwise unsigned document.

Other elements of the plan, however, diverged significantly from the Tuskegee template. The authors also thought about black colonization to the Pacific as an open political tactic to directly pressure "the State Legislature[s] of the South" to "[r]emove the obstacles you have placed in the path of progress to the Negro." In this line of reasoning, black independence and self-governance in the Philippines would force the South to "recognize in the Negro a man," not just in the Philippines but in the Jim Crow metropole as well.<sup>66</sup> What activists were essentially demanding was that the federal government actively promote black liberation to the direct detriment of state governments trying to curtail it. The colony, with federal backing, would secure the rights that local and state governments would not. Additionally, the mere threat of black colonization, the authors hoped, would pressure the South into easing their criminalization of blackness lest Southern planters risk losing their labor force in this zeal for a mass black exodus to the Philippines. If black colonization to the Pacific worked, its architects hoped it would offer political leverage not only to those who left, but those who stayed behind as well. Even if it didn't work, the idea itself constituted an open threat to Jim Crow while laying the groundwork for future black political organizing.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

While dependent upon federal support, the writers clearly saw their new nation and their new state as an autonomous entity. They sought “favorable treaty” status with the United States and only needed “concession grants and Right-of-Way... to build, maintain and operate railroads, develop the lumber business and coal and iron industries” in the Philippines. After the government land grants and permits had been obtained (much like they had been a generation earlier in the American West) these assets would be used as collateral to issue stock in “The American Colonization and Development Company.” While at first glance this may have sounded like conventional state-backed capitalism, the authors actually envisioned something more akin to a social enterprise. Stock shares backed by government land grants would be “sold to Philanthropist individuals and societies and corporations” interested in supporting the project and the proceeds “given to negroes to assist them to immigrate.”<sup>67</sup> In short, the authors hoped to bring American capitalists, philanthropists, and state power together in order to form a charitable organization owned and controlled by black people. To avoid external plunder and exploitation, only African Americans could be employed by the company or hold stock in the company unless a need arose for a “special skilled labor not obtainable among negroes.”<sup>68</sup> Unlike other conceptualizations, this brand of black nationalism involved an autonomous self-governing state, not in Africa or the Atlantic World, but in the Pacific.

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<sup>67</sup> Similar corporate structures and business models were prevalent in American railroad companies where shell corporations were funded by land grants from the state that in turn served as collateral to raise hard money in international financial markets. For more on this process and its implications see Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011).

<sup>68</sup> American Colonization and Development Company Plan, dated 1904, author unknown, in *Booker T. Washington Papers* Reel 396 subfolder “Theodore Roosevelt.”

Thus, while some of the language may have sounded like an early appeal to black nationalist-driven capitalism, the details and the spirit of the plan ultimately took the form of a not-for-profit worker-owned cooperative rather than a top-heavy corporation. The enterprise was marketed as “a mutual benefit company of Co-operation; to build up a peaceful and prosperous nation and develop to the highest standard of humanity.” All workers would be shareholders in the corporation and be supplied with a five-room home of “modern construction” on a ten thousand square foot lot that would be “sold to colonists at reasonable prices and easy term payments” from the co-op. Schools for children, public facilities, “[h]ome government for the people and Municipal ownership of public utilities” would all be provided for at the expense of the colony at large. The co-op would also become the buyer of last resort for black landowners looking to exit their holdings in the United States by offering fair market value on any illiquid assets that would otherwise require selling at a deep discount.<sup>69</sup>

Labor rights were also of paramount importance. All workers were promised “fair and just compensation for their services” at “good, liberal living wages” and opportunities for “advancement on [the] merit system.” Income inequality was likewise on the radar, as the stated aim of the colony was to “not make millionaires of officers and paupers of section hands but equally benefit all in their respective positions.”<sup>70</sup> Legal protections, backed by a separate constitution, would include “security in property and life and a fair trial by Jury” along with a “hand in the government” that would operate independently from the company itself. These governing documents would guarantee the “[i]mmediate right of home government to colonist[s]” through a “right

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

and proper representation in legislative bodies.” Thus, the political participation that Graham and Waller had both sought during Reconstruction in America would hopefully be extended into the Pacific through black colonization.

To accomplish all this, the American colonial state would only need to provide a “grant of land sufficient to maintain Two Million (2,000,000) people” and access to “a good sea port” in the Philippines. Presumably this land would come from claims inherited by America through the 1898 Treaty of Paris with Spain, but there was no indication that Filipinos would be consulted about this proposal at all, just as they had not been in Paris. While far from perfect, the overall push of this plan spoke volumes about what black communities believed was politically possible as late as 1904. As it turns out, they had several unlikely allies in the highest halls of the American state.

## **Morgan and State Plans Philippines**

Black colonization plans to the Pacific began percolating among white American politicians almost simultaneously with these black-run grass roots proposals—albeit with very different objectives. In the rush into the Spanish American War, white politicians in the U.S. soon realized, much like their counterparts in Hawai‘i, the strategic geopolitical potential of black colonization to the Pacific. In late April of 1899, rumors began circulating that “unknown promoters” within the McKinley administration had already begun lobbying to make Waller’s black colonization plan to

the Philippines a reality.<sup>71</sup> In a report leaked from Washington that was reprinted across the nation in both the white and black press, the American government had come up with an apparently novel idea—use military enlistment as a way to transport black colonists. The timing of the leak was just prior to the official announcement that black regiments would be raised to go to the Philippines, suggesting that this decision to send troops may have been partially informed by the idea of colonization. Regardless of the intent, individual African Americans jumped on this chance and clearly saw their military employment as a vehicle for colonization.<sup>72</sup> Given rumors of an unprecedented level of government support that promised “colored people opportunities to get homes, and careers, they could not hope for in this country,” black enthusiasm only grew.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, the U.S. military was already moving forward with their mission. By 1902 the commanding officer in the Philippines, Adna Chaffee, began a policy of intentionally discharging black troops in the Philippines, without funding for return transport, hoping they would stay. In Chaffee’s words, black soldiers working in the Philippines would “be left here.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *The Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland) April 26, 1899. One of these promoters was undoubtedly Alabama Senator John Tyler Morgan, whose advocacy for black colonization was based on white supremacy and a global expansion of Jim Crow segregation where African Americans would be “deported” *en masse* to the Philippines. For more on Morgan see Fry, *John Tyler Morgan and the Search for Southern Autonomy*.

<sup>72</sup> See for example the story of F.H. Glazier in the *Cleveland Gazette*, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1900 where Glazier describes enlisting in the army only after running out of money and failing to find another way to the Philippines.

<sup>73</sup> This report from Washington was the first to announce the possibility of black troops being sent to the Philippines. It was re-printed throughout the nation including *The Age Herald*, (Birmingham, Alabama) *The Weekly News and Courier* (Charleston, SC), April 29th, 1899. April 26, 1899, *The Anaconda Standard* (Anaconda, Montana) April 26, 1899, *Colorado Springs Gazette*, April 26, 1899, *The Duluth News Tribune* (Minnesota) April 26, 1899, *The Grand Rapids Herald* (Michigan) April 26, 1899, *The Springfield Republican* (Massachusetts), April 26, 1899 and *The Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland) April 26, 1899.

<sup>74</sup> The origin of this idea to involuntarily discharge black troops in the Philippines comes directly from John Tyler Morgan as per the John Tyler Morgan file 467313, Box 3281, Office of the Adjutant General, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Soon after Morgan’s correspondence with General Adna Chaffee the general sought approval for and then actively began discharging black troops in the Philippines as per Adna Chaffee to Adjunct General, June 26, 1902, Box 440772, Entry 25, Record Group 94. See also Cynthia L. Marasigan, “Between the Devil and the Deep Sea,” 360-361 for examples of some of these black soldiers who

The logic of white state-builders as opposed to black colonists, however, revealed an even more elaborate design. The leaked report detailing American diplomatic plans held that according to the latest government intelligence reports, one third of all Filipinos were “negros of the same race as those in the United States.” It was reasoned that with black troops and a massive black colonization plan, “in a short time there would be an assimilation between the negros of the Philippines and their kindred from the United States.” Far from just a sociological experiment, however, colonization was also a war measure. Government advocates stated that “such a policy is urged on the theory that certain racial affiliations may be utilized in a way to defeat rebellious acts on the part of Aguinaldo and his party and to bring peace to the newly acquired possession of the United States.”<sup>75</sup> In short, the American state would raise a battalion of black colonist-troops that would—in support of American empire—assimilate themselves racially, socially, and presumably sexually with Filipinos to squash their revolution and bring them into submission. In this model, African Americans, not their white counterparts, would supposedly bring civilization and modernity to the Philippines. Black colonization was imagined as a vanguard project in American empire. Several thousand African Americans would participate.<sup>76</sup>

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were actually left behind as well as the ways in which marriage and sexuality between black men and Filipina women were used as a pretext to enact this policy.

<sup>75</sup> *The Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland) April 26, 1899, et. al.

<sup>76</sup> While it will never be known for certain how many African Americans moved to the Philippines with the intention of establishing permanent residency, the number is somewhere in the thousands. Cynthia L. Marasigan, “Between the Devil and the Deep Sea”: Ambivalence, Violence, and African American Soldiers in the Philippine-American War and Its Aftermath,” (Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2010) estimates that approximately 1200 of the soldiers she studied remained after their discharge either voluntarily or involuntarily. Era Bell Thompson counted at least 1000 black soldiers. Bell, “Veterans Who Never Came Home,” *Ebony* 27, no. 12 (October 1972): 105. In a first-hand account Richard Johnson, “My Life in the U.S. Army, 1899 to 1922,” January 1969, Richard Johnson Papers, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, 46–47 recalled that approximately 20% of his regiment stayed behind in the Philippines, confirming Marasigan’s estimate of 1200 when extrapolated to the 6000 or so black troops who landed in the Philippines. Other primary documents

While Waller and operatives from the Tuskegee Machine were likely among the “unknown promoters” trying to lobby the McKinley administration to realize this plan, former Confederate General and U.S. Senator from Alabama, John Tyler Morgan, almost certainly was part of that cadre, as well. Morgan’s desire to establish an overseas black colony was well-known and stretched back decades. In the 1880’s, Morgan had previously supported African American colonization to King Leopold’s Congo, as well as various sites in Latin America. In a strange way, he shared the anywhere-but-here mentality of many would-be black colonists.<sup>77</sup>

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indicate the number could be much higher, especially when civilian positions in the civil government, private individuals, wives of servicemen, and children born during the first generation of migration are accounted for. Simply counting children alone could easily double the number. Including black wives and non-military affiliated colonists could easily add another 20% or so. At least fifty “American Negroes” in the age range of this first wave of colonists were recorded by the Japanese army in 1944 from the Santo Thomas internment camp alone as per “List of American (Negro) in M.I.C. as of Nov. 29, 1944,” Santo Thomas Internment Camp Records Vol. 1, American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University. Of these surviving first wave colonists, the recorded ages of the 32 male heads of household ranged between 53 and 74 years old in 1944. This number is quite remarkable given that the men arrived at a time when life expectancies were approximately 40 in the U.S. and about 30 years in the Philippines (which was still an active war zone until at least 1914). Of these very old male heads of household (approximately 10%) were married to surviving black women who joined them in the internment camps (Filipina wives were exempt). Many of the men had multiple surviving mixed race children and possibly even grandchildren recorded in the ledger who were interned with them but many more likely had children who are not accounted for in these records because they passed as Filipino and evaded internment. Approximately three thousand people were interned at the Santo Thomas Camp at any one time but over seven thousand people were interned there at one time or another. Total civilian internees throughout the Philippines at one time or another may have approached 10,000 people. With the 1944 snapshot it can safely be assumed that surviving first generation black colonists accounted for approximately 1% of all those civilians captured and interned by the Japanese in the Philippines across at least eleven different internment camps. These 100 surviving first wave black colonists, of course, does not count the surviving colonists who evaded internment (many Americans fled the Philippines during WWII) nor does it account for the fact that black colonists likely existed in higher percentages in the rural provinces than in metro Manila, given the patterns of settlement and military operations that largely brought them deep into the provinces. It further undercounts surviving black colonists and their children who could pass for Filipino as well as those who were simply classified as a white Americans by Japanese observers who were likely unfamiliar with the diversity of African American and Filipino identities and phenotypes. While a full regressive analysis of this data remains to be done, the presence of at least 100 very old visually identifiable black colonists in 1944 (which doesn’t include their children) indicates that 1200 arriving first wave black colonists (most of whom would have died or returned to the United States by 1944) should be seen as a floor and not a ceiling. This figure could very easily double or triple with further study to include all black colonists in the Philippines prior to 1914.

<sup>77</sup> The biographical information here on Morgan is derived from Fry, *John Tyler Morgan and the Search for Southern Autonomy*.

As a Southern expansionist, Morgan had been trying to work across the sectional divide with Northern planters in Hawai‘i to annex the Hawaiian islands since at least 1884. Just as he supported the New England planters’ visions of Hawai‘i and their eventual coup in 1893, he also adopted their plans for black colonization to the Pacific. But Morgan was no reunionist.<sup>78</sup> He saw black colonization and American imperial expansion as a means to ‘win the peace’ from the North. By running overseas plantations under slave-like conditions through imperialism, Morgan worked his entire political career to replace the cornerstone institution that the South had lost during the Civil War (and that the North had been rebuilding in Hawai‘i). While African Americans saw black colonization as a means of extending emancipation, Morgan viewed it as an extension of Southern slavery, redemption, and dominance.<sup>79</sup>

In some ways, however, Morgan’s plan was simple and eerily similar to that of his black counterparts (even if it was a degree stingier in its terms). Responding to the longstanding black demand for forty acres and a mule, Morgan took it upon himself to cut Union General William Tecumseh Sherman’s Special Field Order in half. Black colonists would get twenty acres—and no mule.<sup>80</sup> And most important, previously enslaved peoples would not get this land grant in the American South but in the colonial Philippines. A government-owned and operated steamship company would provide transportation. Military salaries (and possibly pensions) would be paid to the black soldier/colonists to aid them in their transition from occupying force to yeoman

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<sup>78</sup> For more on the idea that North and South came together after the Civil War both through the Spanish American War and a shared anti-black commitment to Jim Crow, see David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2002).

<sup>79</sup> John Tyler Morgan to Elihu Root, December 27, 1901 and January 5, 1902, Elihu Root Papers, The Library of Congress. See also Joseph O. Baylen and John Hammond Moore, “Senator John Tyler Morgan and Negro Colonization in the Philippines, 1901 to 1902,” in *Phylon* 29, (1968): 65-75.

<sup>80</sup> Morgan as relayed in *Colored American Magazine*, February, 1903.

agriculturalists.<sup>81</sup> In public statements that circulated across the Pacific and into the Philippine press, Morgan claimed that “[t]he principal reason for my attitude in the Senate toward retaining the Philippine Islands was my belief that those islands would afford a home for the negroes.” He aggressively pitched his plan to Secretary of War Elihu Root and Governor of the Philippines William Taft, finding that “[b]oth were favorably impressed.” With political support growing, Morgan declared that “all the movement needs is a starter.”<sup>82</sup> Strikingly similar in form to the Southern Homestead Act that passed in 1866, Morgan’s idea of state funding for transportation and land grants for formerly enslaved peoples would not have been unprecedented.<sup>83</sup>

While similar in structure to black-led versions of colonization, Morgan and his collaborators clearly had no pretenses of actually fostering a political culture of black independence and self-governance. White capital and Southern oversight were presumed features of Morgan’s plans. As Morgan petitioned the commanding generals in the Philippines about his bill, internal investigative reports were being generated within the military’s top brass that made their way back to him through Root. One such report was commissioned by General Adna R. Chaffee, the head of the U.S. Army in the Philippines. Chaffee’s Brigadier General, George Davis, offered a detailed assessment of Morgan’s proposal. Davis shared Morgan’s concern that something needed to be done about “the superabundant blacks in the Southern states.” While largely open to

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<sup>81</sup> George W. Davis to Adna R. Chaffee, April 17, 1902, File 467313, Box 3281, Office of the Adjutant General, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>82</sup> *Manila American*, January 23, 1903.

<sup>83</sup> For more on the context of the Southern Homestead Act that informed Morgan as well as his black interlocutors see Claude F. Oubre, *Forty Acres and a Mule: The Freedmen’s Bureau and Black Land Ownership* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978) and Claude F. Oubre, “‘Forty Acres and a Mule’: Louisiana and the Southern Homestead Act,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 17, no. 2 (1976): 143–57.

Morgan's plan, Davis advised his boss that it nonetheless contained one critical flaw—it didn't reinstitute slavery. While Davis acknowledged that there was abundant fertile land in the Philippines, and that the African Americans who were in the country enjoyed excellent relations with local Filipinos, he claimed that former slaves would not "work if left uncontrolled." As evidence he pointed back to the Atlantic World claiming that after slavery black people "do not work willingly in Barbadoes [sic], Trinidad and Jamaica" because "the blacks are lazy, thriftless and unreliable."<sup>84</sup> Moreover, as holdovers from the age of capital, and reluctant entrants in the age of empire, the formerly enslaved had "no desire to accumulate."<sup>85</sup> After being considered the object of capital accumulation during slavery and experiencing the driver's lash in the pursuit of endless profit, Davis seemed shocked that the formerly enslaved were largely uninterested in maximizing output or producing surplus value for white people.

Uninterested in black sentiments, Davis longed for the days of slavery. Anticipating (in a morally bankrupt way) the arguments of Trinidadian historian Eric Williams a generation later, Davis noted that "[n]early all the wealth gained by the world from cultivating the soil in tropical America...was won by negroes brought as slaves from Africa." He openly admitted that "[w]ithout this forced labor" both America in the past, and the Philippines in the future, "would have remained for a long time

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<sup>84</sup> George W. Davis to Adna R. Chaffee, April 17, 1902, File 467313, Box 3281, Office of the Adjutant General, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C. The postemancipation black inclination in the Caribbean towards self-sufficient agriculture and away from the cash crops that had predominated during slavery is detailed in Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*. White imperialist/capitalists like Davis often interpreted this economic threat to their system through racist ideology while attempting to shame former slaves into working for wages and producing cash crops which would disproportionately benefit white elites.

<sup>85</sup> George W. Davis to Adna R. Chaffee, April 17, 1902, File 467313, Box 3281, Office of the Adjutant General, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C. For more on Hobsbawm's periodization and the transition to modern empires see Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875* (New York: Vintage, 1996); Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage, 1989).

undeveloped.” Yet Davis knew he could not publicly argue in 1903 for an actual return to chattel slavery. This was especially true as traditional tribal slavery in the Philippines was proving to be an embarrassment (but also a strange opportunity) for a wide variety of political constituencies.<sup>86</sup>

Instead, Davis turned to slavery’s offspring—colonialism and industrial capitalism. To augment Morgan’s plan, Davis suggested that “capital can be induced” to manage the labor of former slaves. His inspiration appeared to be Hawaiian sugar plantations. He fancied the private monopoly of “very extensive tracts [of land] under one control” that would “import better varieties [of sugar] from Hawaii” and then compel black colonists to produce it in the Philippines. For Davis, African Americans would only work on an industrial scale if labor discipline was provided by “a very large aggregation of capital under one management.” As in Hawai‘i, contracts, enforced by the threat of state violence, would be the legal mechanism to replace bondage.<sup>87</sup> In order to succeed, Davis’s sugar trusts needed only “such protection of the local laws as will secure the enforcement of the provision of the labor contract.” As a further model, Davis suggested “we can well imitate” the contracts “entered into between the West India planters and the British authorities in Calcutta for East Indies coolies.” Davis ultimately believed that “[i]f capital is enlisted in the cause, the hegira which Senator

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<sup>86</sup> For more on the how the presence of traditional slavery in the Philippines was invoked by American imperialists, Filipino nationalists, and anti-imperialists alike to advance their nation-building projects see Michael Salman, *The Embarrassment of Slavery: Controversies Over Bondage and Nationalism in the American Colonial Philippines*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>87</sup> For more on the complex uses of contracts and the ideology of contracts after emancipation see Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Morgan desires may be realized.” This would only be the case, however, “if the government is efficient and fair in its attitude towards investors.”<sup>88</sup>

Indeed, support for Morgan’s plan among certain white capitalists had been building for years even as this same transnational expansionist-oriented capitalism threatened various other, more established, business interests. In 1899, F. B Thurber of Oklahoma, spoke to a meeting of the “Transmississippi Congress” and asked this organization of American capitalists to endorse black colonization to the Philippines. He proposed lobbying lawmakers to insure that “the policy of our Government supplement and support the efforts of our producers.” The British colonies were again invoked as the British crown was lavished with praise for its support of multinational corporations operating in colonized spaces. Like so many others, Thurber saw “the control of some markets” in the Philippines as “stepping stones to others” in East Asia. He argued that black colonization to the Philippines would create even “wider markets” because domestic producers could then “dump our surplus” of both agricultural and finished products on black and Filipino consumers in the colony. This two-way import-export economy could maintain employment levels at home while avoiding price declines in manufactured goods. Furthermore, white American labor received protection as it would not have to compete against cheaper workers from “semi-civilized populations” either in the Philippines or the United States. Globalization, expanding overseas consumer markets, and chasing ultra-low wage labor were all clearly on the agenda. Black colonist in the Philippines, Thurber reasoned, would actually free up positions in the U.S. and raise wages domestically. At the same time, black colonists

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<sup>88</sup> George W. Davis to Adna R. Chaffee, April 17, 1902, File 467313, Box 3281, Office of the Adjutant General, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

were characterized as better prepared than Filipinos to exploit the islands' natural resources because they were an already 'Americanized' labor force accustomed to the modern and presumably scientific American system of plantation management. Using black labor to export American capitalism abroad was part of Thurber's plan to make sure that American imperialism did not inadvertently turn "our profits into losses."<sup>89</sup> The global quest for cheap labor and the international migration of workers and capital that followed had begun. If African Americans could be moved from an informal colonial setting to a more formal colonial setting, profits would multiple accordingly.

These forces were further codified as an emerging American ideology through the Senate Congressional hearings on the Philippines several years later, in 1902 where black colonization became a point of national debate. Congress was convinced that "Americans will go there with capital" and that they will "want action for their money." Like all capable bureaucracies, the American state needed to generate a report and know exactly "[w]here are they going to get their labor?" Senator Fred Du Bois of Idaho asserted that American capitalists "are not going to sit around and theorize and wait for the development of the Filipino mind."<sup>90</sup> Capitalists needed the state to identify a reliable labor force accustomed to their rigor. Brigadier General Robert P. Hughes, as the "provost-marshal-general of Manila" suggested during the Congressional investigation that if the Chinese Exclusion Act were repealed or ruled inapplicable to the Philippines, "[t]hey can get millions, of course, from China."<sup>91</sup> As a realist, and knowing something of the long presence of Chinese workers and merchants in the Philippines,

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<sup>89</sup> *New York Sun*, June 1, 1899.

<sup>90</sup> Testimony of General Robert P. Hughes in "Affairs in the Philippine Islands: Hearings before the Committee on the Philippines of the United States Senate," (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), 646.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 505, 646.

Hughes assured the committee that regardless of the laws on Chinese immigration to the islands “you can not keep them out.”<sup>92</sup> This was because in addition to the centuries-old Chinese and Chinese mestizo community that already existed in the Philippines, new Chinese workers entering the Philippines could easily use false documentation to impersonate existing Chinese, Filipino, or Chinese-Filipino residents upon their arrival.<sup>93</sup>

While being grilled on other possibilities, including Japanese and Hawaiian workers in the Philippines, Hughes told Congress, “I should not be surprised if they could get the negro from America.” He assured the committee “I have looked into this matter,” referring perhaps to his having read Davis’s internal report on Morgan’s plan.<sup>94</sup> On the Senate floor, Hughes tried to talk his countrymen into “giving the darky a chance.” In extending this epitaph and no doubt referencing earlier iterations of the military’s plan for black troops/colonists, Hughes reasoned that “[t]he darky troops whom they sent to Samar mixed with the natives at once.” Rightly or wrongly, Hughes reported that whenever African Americans and Filipinos “came together they became great friends.” “When I withdrew the darky company from Santa Rita,” he recalled, “I was told that the natives even shed tears over their going.” The feeling was apparently mutual, as his black soldiers “begged me to leave them.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 648.

<sup>93</sup> For more information on the Chinese Exclusion Act in the Philippines see in Richard Chu, “The ‘Chinaman’ Question: A Conundrum in U.S. Imperial Policy in the Pacific” in *Kritika Kultura*, No. 7, (July 2006). For the Chinese in the Philippines more broadly see Richard Chu, *Chinese and Chinese Mestizos of Manila: Family, Identity, and Culture, 1860s-1930s* (Boston: Brill, 2010).

<sup>94</sup> “Affairs in the Philippine Islands: Hearings before the Committee on the Philippines of the United States Senate,” (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), 646.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 647.

Relations and comparisons between African Americans and Filipinos proved to be a vital public concern as the state explored the global possibilities of labor in the Philippines. In the Philippine Commission's report to Congress, the word from the field was that “[a] Filipino who is furnished ‘chow’ is more contented than the negro in the United States whose boss furnishes him his ‘victuals and clothes’”<sup>96</sup> Back in the senate hearings, General Arthur MacArthur was asked by Senator Culberson “how do you compare the Filipinos with the negro?” MacArthur wisely took the fifth, saying, “I am not willing to go into that subject because I have not investigated it.”<sup>97</sup> Yet in his silence, MacArthur was breaking a critical newly-formed injunction brought about by American imperialism. As the structure of these congressional hearings indicated, the compulsive need of the colonial state to investigate and to know definitively proved to be an enduring legacy of American empire, capitalism, and modernity at large. The endless comparisons between racialized labor groups both at home and abroad in the service of private capital would likewise remain a central function of the American state.

Others, however, were looking backwards not forwards, and began their investigations of black colonization through historical connections to the Civil War. None other than Admiral George Dewey in his testimony before the Senate understood his experiences with Filipinos during the Battle of Manila directly through “an illustration furnished by the civil war.” As a veteran of the capture of New Orleans in 1862, Dewey recalled that in fighting the Confederacy “the only friends we had in the

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<sup>96</sup> Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1903, Volume V., Part 3, Report of the Philippine Commission (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), 79.

<sup>97</sup> Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1903, Volume V., Part 2, Report of the Philippine Commission (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), 877.

South were the negros and we made use of them.”<sup>98</sup> Just as Filipinos were in active revolt against the Spanish, so too were enslaved African Americans in revolt against the Confederacy. Dewey remembered that the enslaved people of New Orleans “assisted us on many occasions” likely with intelligence, free labor, plantation strikes, and sabotage.<sup>99</sup> In encouraging local insurrection against the Spanish, Dewey looked at the Philippines in the same way, saying to himself “they will help us just exactly as the negroes helped us in the civil war.” After all, Dewey reasoned, “[t]he Filipinos were slaves, too.”<sup>100</sup> Filipinos themselves, however, rejected Dewey’s comparison. At a mass meeting in 1903 of the “Union Obrera Democratica” in Bocaue, Bulacan a fifteen-year-old Filipina girl stated emphatically, “Filipinos are not slaves.” While other speakers confirmed Dewey’s intended parallel that “they had been slaves to the Spanish” this was now “a thing of the past.” Filipinos “would never be slaves to the Americans.”<sup>101</sup> Harkening to slavery in the wake of a proposed mass migration of actual former slaves only complicated the rhetorical terrain.

Regardless of these tangled implications between slavery, colonialism, and emancipation, support from the military establishment, black activists, and big capital were beginning to congeal around some iteration of Morgan and the American Colonization and Development Company’s blueprint. At the same time, some of Morgan’s fellow legislators began to push back. In the Senate hearings on the

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<sup>98</sup> “Affairs in the Philippine Islands: Hearings before the Committee on the Philippines of the United States Senate,” (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), 2939.

<sup>99</sup> For more on these black tactics during the Civil War see Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction [Electronic Resource]*; Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Laborer in South Carolina, 1860-L870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>100</sup> “Affairs in the Philippine Islands,” 2939.

<sup>101</sup> *Manila American*, March 3, 1903.

Philippines, Senator Fred Du Bois from Idaho stated emphatically “[w]e can not deport the negro. He will not go.”<sup>102</sup> The black press picked up on this language of deportation, asking confrontationally “[h]ow does Senator Morgan hope to deport the Negro unless the Negro is willing to be deported?”<sup>103</sup> Significant resistance also sprang up from the notoriously tax-averse state of South Carolina. Its senator, Benjamin Tillman, called Morgan’s plan “chimerical dreams of the wildest character” that would force the nation “to tax the people to the point of oppression.”<sup>104</sup> Several other fellow Southern lawmakers and ex-Confederate soldiers joined Tillman, including Senator Hernando Money of Mississippi and Senator Edmund W. Pettus of Alabama, who said that “it would take all the ships in the world to transport our colored fellow citizens, even if it were not against the law.”<sup>105</sup>

Like all able politicians, Morgan pivoted in response. He assured the public that his plan was totally voluntary and “contemplated no cost to the government.” Abandoning his promise of a government-run steamship company and concealing the involuntary aspect of the plan he was already enacting with the help of military generals, Morgan told the public that African Americans themselves “would build ships enough to accommodate the gradual emigration.”<sup>106</sup> Big capital could supply the startup money and management. Knowing that vague bills are often the most likely to be passed, Morgan did not disclose exactly how, who, or when these capitalists and African

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<sup>102</sup> “Affairs in the Philippine Islands,” 646.

<sup>103</sup> *The Freeman*, December 5, 1903.

<sup>104</sup> *Manila American*, January 23, 1903.

<sup>105</sup> *Colored American Magazine*, February, 1903.

<sup>106</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, January 10, 1903.

Americans would collectively take up the task. With federal funding slipping off the political table, however, black enthusiasm for the project waned proportionally.

In addition to the unwillingness of many lawmakers and voters to use tax dollars to support African American independence, both white business-owners and black laborers also faced global economic pressures that American imperialism had wrought. In 1906 the U.S. Senate held another expanded series of hearings on how to get “Revenue for the Philippines.” Black colonization was again discussed in depth by a number of witnesses, including J. L. McFarlin, the designated representative of “Taussing & Co.,” a large Illinois based tobacco firm with operations in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Texas. McFarlin testified that black workers would not move to the Philippines voluntarily for the simple fact that they can make more money staying in the United States. McFarlin proclaimed under oath that his firm paid black workers in Florida \$1 to \$1.75 per day but that black laborers in the Philippines would only command 25 to 50 cents per day. The reason for this lower wage, which McFarlin failed to mention, was that many Filipinos were literally starving to death under U.S. rule and forced to work for 17 to 20 cents a day just to survive. For McFarlin, black labor in the Philippines was simply not financially viable either for domestic workers or for capital—at least as long as Filipinos could be paid starvation wages to do the same work. Like others before him, McFarlin worried that an industrializing Philippines combined with the lowering of tariff rates on Philippine goods that came with a closer relationship to the U.S. would hurt domestic American industries. The merging of the two economies would flood both American workers and producers with cheap Philippine labor and products that they simply could not compete with.

In an interesting twist on black colonization, however, McFarlin agreed to drop his objection to a lower tariff and support black colonization on one condition—if he could in turn transport Filipino workers to his tobacco plantations in America. Waxing patriotic while mocking Filipinos' half-citizen/half-subject status, McFarlin reasoned that “[t]hese Filipinos are either American citizens, and should be recognized as such, or they are foreigners and should be treated as such.” The U.S. Supreme Court did not share McFarlin’s logic, however, ruling in a series of *Insular Cases* that Filipinos, not entirely unlike antebellum African Americans under the Dred Scot ruling, could be treated as either full citizens or foreign aliens depending upon the whims of white lawmakers.<sup>107</sup> If African Americans—whose equal citizenship rights continued to be under constant threat despite the Fourteenth Amendment—could freely migrate to the Philippines then, by McFarlin’s logic, Filipinos should be able to freely migrate to the United States.<sup>108</sup> McFarlin thundered: “admit them to citizenship by accepting these islands, give them the Constitution, and I will at once, as well as my company, withdraw our objections to this revision of the tariff.”<sup>109</sup> American capitalists serving as advocates for Filipino citizenship and constitutional protections may have seemed counter-intuitive to many, but black colonization to the Philippines was congealing a strange set of bedfellows.

Other white capitalists with business interests in the South, however, took the threat of black colonization much more seriously. They worried that their own Southern

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<sup>107</sup> Gerald L. Neuman and Tomiko Brown-Nagin, eds., *Reconsidering the Insular Cases: The Past and Future of the American Empire* (Cambridge: Human Rights Program, Harvard Law School, 2015); Bartholomew H. Sparrow, *The Insular Cases and the Emergence of American Empire*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006).

<sup>108</sup> For more on the question of intercoloniality in which colonized peoples move not between colony and metropole but between colony and colony see Poblete, *Islanders in the Empire*.

<sup>109</sup> “Revenue for the Philippine Islands: Hearing before the Committee on the Philippines of the United States Senate” (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), 184.

racism might eventually backfire globally against their own economic best interests. They knew that African Americans might actually accept a lower wage in the Philippines just to escape Jim Crow while actualizing some degree of promised political autonomy. Southern planters and landlords in postemancipation America also knew they were fast becoming dependent on black sharecroppers. They worried that a mass black migration to the Philippines (much as that to the North a generation later) would drain them of their own domestic low-cost, highly specialized labor force. For these self-conscious exploiters of black labor, African Americans represented a strange “blessing in the south,” according to *Dixie* magazine as it evaluated the colonization question. While African Americans were hated from a racial standpoint, *Dixie* made clear that even after slavery, the South depended upon cheap black labor more than ever. Black workers were still the engine driving the South’s agricultural machine and its emerging industrial economy. With African Americans held in check by the legal constraints of Jim Crow, many white planters “would not consent to his removal.”<sup>110</sup> Morgan himself knew this was a major obstacle to pushing his bill through Congress, as he privately confided in Secretary of War Elihu Root, “I cannot move this matter in Congress...I would get no southern support for a measure that would disturb labor conditions.”<sup>111</sup> Looking into the future, *Dixie* also imagined black workers as something of an insurance policy because they offered “a permanent guaranty against vicious labor organization.”<sup>112</sup> By keeping the cost of wages low enough and the threat of unions at bay, the South could still

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<sup>110</sup> *Dixie* as reprinted in *Literary Digest*, February 7, 1903.

<sup>111</sup> John T. Morgan to Elihu Root, May 5, 1902, File 467313, Box 3281, Office of the Adjutant General Files, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>112</sup> *Dixie* as reprinted in *Literary Digest*, February 7, 1903.

compete with new international sources of cheap labor like those opening up in the Philippines.

Other white lawmakers found it better for their own political careers to just pander to their constituents' overt racism and ignore the desires of the wealthy planter class in their districts. One particularly crafty political maneuver, Senator Anslem J. McLaurin of Mississippi, tried to split the difference and satisfy both wealthy planters who wanted black laborers to remain in the South and everyday white racists who wanted them removed as far away as possible from the South. What emerged was perhaps the most nuanced, if not dumbfounding, compromise of the day. In classic political double-talk, McLaurin was able to argue both for and against black colonization to the Philippines. By making an intra-racial distinction among African Americans, he held that the South should keep "our genuine black negroes here and deport the mulattos."<sup>113</sup> With this compromise, racism could be affirmed. Planters could keep their supposedly more docile, dark-skinned, black labor force. The presumably more rebellious light-skinned segment of the black community could be eliminated, making racial categorization all the easier under Jim Crow. This strategy made sense according to McLaurin because in his historical rendering there "never was any trouble" among African Americans in the South "until the inception of the mulatto breed."<sup>114</sup> Much like the promise of American capitalism itself, politicians like McLaurin sold their white constituents on the dream that they could have it all.

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<sup>113</sup> *Colored American Magazine*, February, 1903.

<sup>114</sup> *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, December 17, 1902.

While black support for a voluntary experiment with colonization to the Pacific remained high, the racist motives and hollow promises of many of these white supporters dampened their spirits. Themes of a black exodus, escape, and open door soon coexisted simultaneously with those of exclusion, expulsion, and deportation. Rumors ran rampant in the black press about these more pernicious developments, spearheaded by Morgan and supported by white capitalists and the American military. As one black paper put it “Senator Morgan’s wild-cat scheme has evidently frightened somebody.”<sup>115</sup>

Writer R. B. Lemus was among the frightened. With an intimate knowledge of the Philippines he had gained as a soldier, Lemus sounded the alarm bell in the *Colored American Magazine*, which had previously published a number of articles in favor of an African American led colonization plan to the Pacific. Lemus was particularly critical of “the scheme of Senator J.T. Morgan” and of Morgan’s insistence that black people were “the aboriginal inhabitants of the Philippines.” But Lemus’s critique was also a more general one. The main problem for him was not labor but land. How would millions of black people occupying millions of acres of Filipino land be received by Filipinos? Would Filipinos not continue to fight for their independence as they had for centuries? Lemus reported that the history of the Philippines could, in fact, be told through “the determination of its people to hold their lands.” In addition to the prospects of a black-Filipino civil war, the scale of state resources necessary to indemnify the formerly enslaved was deemed far too great in Lemus’s calculation. The amount needed to “give the ten million of Negroes twenty acres each of Philippine territory” was astronomical.

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<sup>115</sup> *Colored American*, January 24, 1903.

Not to mention the fact that it would require seizing or purchasing land that “morally belong to the natives.” Mirroring tax-adverse white senators, Lemus stated the cost of such reparations in the Philippines “would require a taxation of which no economist would dare attempt to guess, nor any statistician try to figure.” In a striking move of solidarity, Lemus countered that Morgan should instead “turn his attention and energy toward securing the passage of a measure, providing twenty acres of Philippine territory for each Filipino.” As for African Americans in the U.S., Lemus resented the idea that “Morgan is allowed to say whether or not we must leave home.” In the end, Lemus stated emphatically, black people “are here to stay.”<sup>116</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Any of these plans, if fully enacted, would have represented the largest organized relocation of any people since the transatlantic slave trade. Each iteration also imagined the most massive social welfare program in American history prior to the New Deal. The fact that such notions were considered at all speaks volumes about the state of the American nation circa 1900—struggling to work out the meaning of emancipation within the context of an overseas empire. These entanglements between Reconstruction, slavery, emancipation, and the start of empire meant that the legacy of the Civil War and its central issue—slavery—not only traveled west, as Heather Cox Richardson has argued, but through black colonization to the Pacific it also merged into empire.<sup>117</sup> The building of a global system of colonialism and industrial capitalism did

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<sup>116</sup> *Colored American Magazine*, February, 1903.

<sup>117</sup> Richardson, *West from Appomattox*.

not develop after slavery or beyond its logic but within full sight of its centrality and with the knowing intention of reproducing many of its techniques.

In addition, the centering of black colonization plans at this critical moment in American history reveals that the old fault lines between North and South and the unsettled question of black emancipation after the Civil War did not end in reunion through empire, as David Blight has argued, but that these foundational issues continued—and they continue through empire.<sup>118</sup> Black colonization to the Pacific thus exemplifies the extension of the Reconstruction project into the age of empire as the question of emancipation and self-governance turned abroad. Black colonization, not the Spanish American War, would prove to be the final death knell of Reconstruction. It was the last time that state- funded reparations to indemnify the formerly enslaved on such a scale were ever seriously considered by officials of the American nation. As the dream of reconciliation with America faded away, black people found themselves on their own—locked in a condition of coloniality and serial statelessness wherever they traveled and even at home. American empire, in this light, was not a new horizon but the anxious reworking of a very old problem. The ‘unfinished revolution’ remained unfinished.

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<sup>118</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2002).

## **Chapter 2:**

### **Visualizing the Surveillance State:**

#### **T. Thomas Fortune's Journey to Hawai'i and the Philippines**

“Filipinos hate the whole tribe of southerners here, and so do I”

---T. Thomas Fortune (1903)<sup>1</sup>

“I couldn’t get away no matter how far I went”

---Charles Bradley (2011)<sup>2</sup>

Despite the mountain of obstacles, black activists and white state-builders refused to abandon the project of black colonization to the Pacific after the series of Senate hearings in 1902 and 1906. R.B. Lemus’s blistering critique in the *Colored American* also seemed to do little to dampen interest in the idea among black Americans. Indeed, black colonists continued to arrive in Hawai'i and the Philippines with little more than a hope and prayer that government assistance would follow. Lemus was himself already anticipating a further national conversation on race and colonization. He knew that Senator John Tyler Morgan had “actually annoyed the War Department, until the President appointed Mr. T. Thomas Fortune a Special

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<sup>1</sup> From Fortune to Washington, February 26, 1903 in Booker T. Washington Papers.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Bradley, “Why is it so Hard,” in *No Time for Dreaming* (New York: Daptone, 2011).

Commissioner to Hawaii and the Philippines to investigate the feasibility of a wholesale race emigration to the distant isles of the Pacific.”<sup>3</sup>

Fortune was unquestionably the most prominent and the most radical black journalist of his era. With Senator Morgan’s unlikely backing, he actually did set sail for the Pacific in 1902. His state-sponsored mission was “to solve the race question existing in the United States” by looking abroad.<sup>4</sup> Traveling at the behest of President Theodore Roosevelt, who had appointed him a special commissioner to Hawai‘i and the Philippines under the auspice of the Treasury Department, Fortune’s task was to investigate the feasibility of black colonization plans to the Pacific that had been brewing for years in the U.S. and for decades more in Hawai‘i. The lives of millions of formerly enslaved African Americans and their children hung in the balance. When he authorized the excursion, President Roosevelt stated that “it was a mission that might result to the great good of the country.”<sup>5</sup> The president was not alone in his optimism. Senators, generals, soldiers, colonial bureaucrats, activists, sharecroppers, and black diplomats were all anxious to see if upwards of five million African Americans (or sixty percent of all black people living in America at the time) might have a viable future in the islands of the Pacific. Fortune’s appointment was announced by American newspapers in Manila as proof positive that the plan and Congressional legislation authorizing state funding for black colonization to the region “had made substantial progress.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Colored American Magazine*, February, 1903.

<sup>4</sup> *The Morning Olympian* (Olympia, Washington), July 4, 1903.

<sup>5</sup> General James Sullivan Clarkson to Washington November 20, 1902 in the Booker T. Washington Papers.

<sup>6</sup> *Manila American*, January 23, 1903.

Fortune's eventual report, published as a three part article in the *Voice of the Negro* magazine between March and June of 1904, confirmed that "5,000,000 Negros could be located [to] the Island [of Luzon], taken out of the Southern States, where they are wronged and robbed, and where the white man claims that they are in the way."<sup>7</sup> In reporting his findings, Fortune argued that black migration might not only serve as a means of liberation for African Americans under the reign of Jim Crow but also serve an anticolonial function for Hawaiians and Filipinos under the yoke of American imperialism. Fortune promised in *The Independent* that under his version of the plan any black colony in the Pacific would "be governed in the interest of all the people, native and foreign born, with justice for all and special favors for none."<sup>8</sup> This Afro-Asian alliance would supposedly rid the islands of white Northern capitalists and white Southern military men and establish a genuine interracial democracy in the Pacific. Departing from the official 'civilizing' aims of many white missionaries and schoolteachers heading for the Philippines, Fortune maintained an extremely complex relationship with the imperial nation that he was simultaneously subjected to, charged with representing, and hoping to change. Even though many Americans believed at the time, for example, that the Filipinos' "lights are not our lights," Fortune ultimately proclaimed that "the Filipino is all right."<sup>9</sup> Peoples of the Pacific were no more in need of 'racial uplift' than any other group at the time. His final proposal to turn over governance of the entire Philippines to a joint citizenry of African Americans and

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<sup>7</sup> T. Thomas Fortune, "The Filipino: Some Incidents of a Trip Through the Island of Luzon," in *The Voice of the Negro*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (June 1904). See also T. Thomas Fortune, "The Filipino: A Social Study in Three Parts," in *The Voice of the Negro*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (March, 1904), and T. Thomas Fortune, "The Filipino: The Filipinos Do Not Understand the Prejudice of the White American Against Black Americans," in *The Voice of the Negro*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (May, 1904). Fortune withheld his official government report from the Treasury Department in a dispute over reimbursements that will be discussed in more detail below.

<sup>8</sup> T. Thomas Fortune, "Politics in the Philippine Islands," in *The Independent*, September 24, 1903.

<sup>9</sup> Fortune, "The Filipino," (March 1904).

Filipinos (with Booker T. Washington as Governor, no less) promised that the American state could be relieved of the costly burden and moral hazard of administering its distant overseas possessions.<sup>10</sup> It also promised African Americans freedom, self-determination, and reparations for slavery.

White officials, black soldiers, and Fortune himself, all seemed to confirm that Filipinos were likewise open to such an idea. Between 1899 and 1905 the black press was inundated with glowing reports of interracial harmony between black and Filipino residents including one from a wealthy Filipino planter named "Senor Tomas Consunji." A black soldier living in the Philippines reported to readers of the *Richmond Planet* that Consunji said "all my people would look very kindly upon your people as neighbors." In the tide of a crystallizing though diverse Filipino nationalism, Consunji added that African Americans "would become good Filipinos."<sup>11</sup> For him, black folk would do the assimilating and join an already existing project of self-governance under Filipino control. While African Americans and Filipinos no doubt differed over exactly how such an arrangement would proceed and how power would be shared in a system of mutual self-governance, life with each other certainly appeared at least marginally better than a comparable one under white control and domination. In advancing this egalitarian interracial utopia, however, Fortune quickly found that American business interests, ex-Confederates, and the accelerating forces of American imperialism had something quite different, and significantly less democratic, in mind.

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<sup>10</sup> For Washington as Governor see *The Freeman* (Indianapolis), July 4, 1903.

<sup>11</sup> *Richmond Planet*, December 30, 1899. While Consunji's status as a wealthy planter, and desire for black labor, must discount him as a disinterested representative of everyday Filipinos able to speak on their behalf, black soldiers interacting with more impoverished Filipinos on the islands seemed to confirm these sentiments as nearly all had rave reviews of black-Filipino relationships, a fact that did not go unnoticed and was often bemoaned by white military officers who thought African Americans related too closely with the plight of the Filipinos. For more examples see Willard B. Gatewood, "Smoked Yankees."

This chapter will explore Fortune's journey into the murky intersections of imperialism, nationalism, and industrial capitalism in the Philippines. The picture that emerges reveals an internally conflicted American state, struggling to define the boundaries of race, nationhood, law, and citizenship. The fluid social, political, and cultural environments that Fortune and other Americans encountered among Hawaiian and Filipino nationalists in the wake of the Spanish-American War, both at home and abroad, were being vigorously explored, contested, and re-worked in relation to various American national identities. Rather than import a fixed set of ideologies to the Pacific, Fortune's trip demonstrates that black and white Americans were actively experimenting with the opportunities that might be opened by America's imperial expansion and the prospect of redefining the boundaries of America itself and thus situating the postemancipation relationship between race and industrial capitalism in both a national and an international context.

## A Black Nation in the Pacific

Growing up enslaved in Marianna Florida, T. Thomas Fortune never dreamed of visiting the Philippines. At the moment of his birth on October 3, 1856, not a single soul in his small rural town would have likely been able to locate Manila on a world map. Certainly no one would have predicted that the American government would one day lay claim to this distant island chain in the Pacific. Perhaps most remarkably, however, was that not even the most imaginative Floridian could have invented a narrative whereby an enslaved baby boy named Timothy, whose legal status as the human property of Ely

Moore did not even deem him worthy of a last name, would one day meet directly with the President of the United States to secure an appointment to officially represent the America government abroad in the Philippines.

Nestled between Alabama to the north and Georgia to the east, Marianna was part of Jackson County in the middle of the Florida panhandle. This geography all but insured that the young Timothy would come of age in one of the most violent hotspots of the Reconstruction era. His father Emanuel quickly became involved in state politics after Emancipation as one of the first African Americans to be elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 1868. Violence soon followed. When Fortune was a young boy his father was forced into hiding after receiving numerous death threats from the Ku Klux Klan. These proved to be more than just idle hate speech after several assassination attempts were made on his father's political allies. With his father in hiding, the twelve-year-old Timothy was left to stand guard at the family home—shotgun in hand—as the last line of defense for his mother and younger siblings against attacks from white marauders.

Eventually the family fled to Jacksonville, but Timothy would soon find his way up north. He briefly attended Howard University until a bank failure wiped out his meager savings and forced him back into the labor market. After that, Fortune landed in New York City in 1881, where he partnered up with a local black gossip paper, *The New York Globe*, that he would quickly transform into a serious political weekly with national circulation. By the mid-1880's the *Globe* and its successors, *The New York Freeman* followed by the *New York Age*, had become the most respected black newspaper in America. Its opinionated editor had become T. Thomas Fortune, as if to at

once forget, re-inscribe, and remember his life as Timothy the slave. Editor Fortune was soon known nationwide as a tireless crusader for African American civil rights.<sup>12</sup>

By the 1890's Fortune had extended his reach well beyond his role as editor and become actively involved in partisan politics and black political organizing. In 1887 he founded the first nation-wide civil rights organization in America, The Afro-American League. Fortune encouraged the development of local chapters and funded some of the earliest legal test cases against Jim Crow segregation.<sup>13</sup> After a brief period of dormancy between 1893 and 1898, Fortune revived the League as the Afro-American Council. He was serving as its president when he departed for the Philippines in 1902. Since 1899 the organization's platform had included an appeal to the American state to transport the "enlightened Christian conscience" and "humanitarian spirit," that the nation claimed to be at work in the Philippines to African Americans on the home front. Only by removing the imperialistic "hindrances which are in the way of our fullest development" could African Americans or colonized people abroad know freedom.<sup>14</sup> After his trip, in a short article for the *Cleveland Gazette*, Fortune continued exploring this connection between imperialism, black nationalism, and Jim Crow as he questioned the prevailing discourse that assumed "the Filipinos are better fitted for self-government than the Negro."<sup>15</sup> By this, Fortune did not mean that Filipinos were incapable of self-governance only that African Americans were at least equally as capable. In assessing

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<sup>12</sup> For more biographical information on Fortune see Emma Lou Thornbrough, *T. Thomas Fortune: Militant Journalist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972). And the introduction to Shawn Leigh Alexander, ed. *T. Thomas Fortune, the Afro-American Agitator: A Collection of Writings, 1880-1928*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> See Shawn Leigh Alexander, *An Army of Lions: The Civil Rights Struggle Before the NAACP* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012) which shows that Fortune's Council was a direct forerunner to the NAACP.

<sup>14</sup> *Colored American*, January 7, 1899. Speech given by President Alexander Walters to the National Convention.

<sup>15</sup> *Cleveland Gazette*, November 19, 1904.

the geopolitical climate, Fortune desperately hoped that an independent Philippines might make way for some new form of black political power where self-governance for former slaves might emerge either at home or abroad.

Fortune's credentials as an uncompromising radical, who fought hard, drank harder, and refused to give an inch to White Supremacy, were widely discussed among his peers and proved to be well-deserved. Just four years before his voyage to the Philippines, Fortune made national headlines after publicly threatening to stab President McKinley unless his demands for immediate black civil rights and social equality were met.<sup>16</sup> In 1900 supporters of Tammany Hall accused him of instigating a race riot in New York because of his longstanding advocacy for armed black self-defense.<sup>17</sup> Yet somehow after President McKinley's actual assassination at the hands of a Polish American anarchist, Fortune managed to convince McKinley's successor to appoint him to represent America abroad during its early experiments with global imperialism and overseas nation building. Not unlike the newly sworn-in President Roosevelt when he was conquering Cuba, Fortune would pursue his mission in the Philippines with a gun strapped firmly to his hip.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The event was widely circulated in the press including the *Washington Times*, *Washington Evening Star*, and *Baltimore Herald*, December 20 and 21, 1898. After the public outcry Fortune later clarified that he meant only that black voters should 'stab' McKinley at the ballot box by voting him out of office.

<sup>17</sup> *Colored American*, September 1, 1900. Fortune advocated his eye-for-an-eye "Shoot and Stand" policy as early as December 1, 1883 in the *New York Globe*.

<sup>18</sup> "Theodore Roosevelt in his Rough Rider Colonel Uniform" in Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library, Class No. 520.3, Shelfmark TRC-PH-1 and "T. Thomas Fortune in T. Thomas Fortune, "The Filipino" in *The Voice of the Negro* (March 1904).

**Figure 5. Theodore Roosevelt and T. Thomas Fortune**



Theodore Roosevelt in Cuba, 1898

Source: Harvard College Library



T. Thomas Fortune in the Philippines, 1903

Source: *The Voice of the Negro*

Fortune and Roosevelt shared more than a sense of fashion. The two men had an ongoing political relationship that dated back at least to Roosevelt's run for Governor of New York in 1898, when Fortune helped organize campaign rallies and drum up black votes on his behalf.<sup>19</sup> After Roosevelt was elected, Fortune asked him to set aside several positions for black office seekers to which Governor Roosevelt replied: "I have been able to see that a number of small appointments of colored men were made."<sup>20</sup> The two men likely met as early as 1886 when Roosevelt was running for Mayor of New York City, though Fortune officially endorsed Roosevelt's opponent, and eventual victor of the race

<sup>19</sup> Fortune to Washington, October 30, 1902 in Booker T. Washington Papers.

<sup>20</sup> Roosevelt to Fortune, March 27, 1899 in Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, Reference Department, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. See also Roosevelt to Fortune March 28, 1899 and March 30, 1899 in Roosevelt Papers.

Abram S. Hewitt, in his *New York Freeman*.<sup>21</sup> After the Spanish American War, Fortune corresponded extensively with then Governor Roosevelt in hopes of securing a position at the Library of Congress for a “Mrs. Matthews,” who according to Roosevelt was “the relative of a [black] Rough Rider who was killed.”<sup>22</sup> Roosevelt apologized to Fortune after being unsuccessful on this front.<sup>23</sup> Given this history, when the prospects of black colonization to the Pacific looked promising, Fortune was able to go directly to President Roosevelt, meeting him at the White House to discuss the matter in 1902.<sup>24</sup>

Despite this ready access, however, Fortune always suspected that “[p]ersonally, the president appears to have a grudge against me.”<sup>25</sup> Around the time of his appointment Fortune heard a rumor “that President Roosevelt said that I was unreliable in politics, and I was not popular with leaders of the race” to which Fortune fired back: “Why can't he keep his mouth shut? If I should open up my batteries on him and his unpopular policy in the South he would very soon find out how much popularity I have.”<sup>26</sup> These complex political considerations between Roosevelt and Fortune as they traded favors and jockeyed for position were emblematic of the tangled relationship

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<sup>21</sup> *New York Freeman*, August 14, 1886. Despite his support of Hewitt, Fortune claimed “I have been faithful to [Roosevelt] in all his public career” indicating that men had known each other since Roosevelt first entered public office. See Fortune to Washington, October 30, 1902 in Washington Papers. As mayor, Hewitt would become known as “Father of the New York City Subway” for his planning and financing of the city’s underground rail lines.

<sup>22</sup> Roosevelt to Fortune, May 15, 1901 in the Theodore Roosevelt Papers. See also Roosevelt to Fortune June 5, 1901 and June 11, 1901 and Fortune to Roosevelt May 13, 1901, May 15, 1901, May 17, 1901, June 7, 1901 and June 14, 1901 in Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>23</sup> Roosevelt to Fortune, May 15, 1901 in Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>24</sup> Fortune to Washington, February 1, 1902 in Booker T. Washington Papers. See also *Colored American*, February 15, 1902 and April 26, 1902 that confirms Fortune was in Washington both in February and again in April lobbying for a position in the new administration.

<sup>25</sup> Fortune to Washington, October 30, 1902 in Booker T. Washington Papers.

<sup>26</sup> Fortune to Washington April 10, 1902 in Booker T. Washington Papers. Fortune further extended his threats which he no doubt hoped would circulate back to the President via Washington saying: “I am the least selfish of men, but when others try on me, as the president has done for four years, I know well when and how to make my selfishness effective.” Fortune to Washington October 30, 1902 in Washington Papers.

between African Americans and the various branches of the American government during this period. It proved to be a nuanced dance that informed Fortune's entire trip to the Philippines where friend and foe, black and white, and the benevolent and malicious motivations of various state and non-state actors often wrapped into one another.

Another crucial character in this matrix, who was also instrumental in securing Fortune's commission to the Philippines with Roosevelt, was Fortune's good friend and benefactor Booker T. Washington. The 'Wizard of Tuskegee' had just finished spending much of his hard earned political capital in an exhaustive set of negotiations with the President to secure black political appointments—or at least officeholders known to be friendly to blacks—within the new administration.<sup>27</sup> Fortune represented perhaps his greatest success on this front as the two men found themselves in a position to potentially shape the future of American imperialism though Fortune's appointment as a special commissioner to Hawai'i and the Philippines.

According to Fortune, he and Washington "had a working understanding that I should pursue the radical course I had always pursued and that [Washington] would pursue the course of diplomacy he had mapped out for himself." Who exactly was steering the ship depended on who was being asked, however. In Fortune's mind, Washington "never advised me as to any policy that I should pursue or the character of any address I should make" while, conversely, Fortune supposedly gave Washington

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<sup>27</sup> For examples of Washington's extensive correspondence with Roosevelt during this period about black appointments see Washington to Roosevelt between late 1901 to mid-1902 in both Washington Papers and Roosevelt Papers. Correspondence in both collections going both to and from Fortune and Clarkson during this same period are also frequently on the subject of black appointments.

“advice and criticism of every article and speech and book that he wrote.”<sup>28</sup> Fortune was in fact a ghostwriter for Washington and claimed to have written both *Up From Slavery* and the famous “fingers of the hand” speech that catapulted Washington to national prominence at the Atlanta Cotton Exposition in 1895.<sup>29</sup> While he was certainly Washington’s most gifted confidant, Fortune’s claim that Washington “would not write or speak any sentiment I disapproved as injurious to him or the race,” almost certainly overstated his influence. For his part, Washington seemed to regard Fortune as something of loose cannon, saying in private “[h]e breaks out in a wrong way once in a while in his paper, but he can be controlled and is always open to reason.”<sup>30</sup> In a letter to W.E.B. Du Bois, whose first job was as a paperboy and columnist for Fortune’s *The New York Globe*, Washington said that “we may or may not agree with a great many things that [Fortune] does, but I think there’s no question that he influences public opinion in a very large degree.”<sup>31</sup>

Black media outlets often saw Fortune and Washington as a team, thus lending additional attention and institutional support for Fortune’s eventual proposal in the Philippines. Frequent Tuskegee critic, William Monroe Trotter, published a political

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<sup>28</sup> T. Thomas Fortune, “The Quick and the Dead,” *AME Church Review* (April 1916).

<sup>29</sup> Fortune and his wife relayed this information to writer Pauline Hopkins upon Fortune’s return from the Philippines sometime around 1904. See Pauline Hopkins to William Monroe Trotter, April 16, 1905 in Pauline Hopkins Papers, Franklin Library Special Collections, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. For more on Fortune’s ghost writing for Washington (which often included several other co-writers), including the first iteration of Washington’s autobiography *The Story of My Life* and the 400 plus page *A New Negro for a New Century* see Fortune to Washington January 19, February 23, April 27, May 4, May 17, June 23, August 15, September 24, 1900, Washington to Fortune, May 2, May 8, May 15, 1900, and Fortune to Scott, November 14, 1900 in Washington Papers. *The Montgomery Advertiser* noted on August 11, 1903 that Fortune was “doing considerable literary work nowadays” as “[h]is fine Italian hand is discernible in many effusions which do not bear his signature.” A recent Washington biography recognized that “Fortune relished the role of kingmaker.” Robert J. Norrell, *Up from History: The Life of Booker T. Washington* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 133.

<sup>30</sup> Washington to Clarkson, November 3, 1903 in Washington Papers.

<sup>31</sup> Washington to W.E.B Du Bois November 8, 1903 in Washington Papers.

cartoon in 1902 showing a well-dressed Fortune serving as the public voice of “Gen. B.T. Washington,” the “Sub-Cellar Leader.”<sup>32</sup> Washington’s “Bomb-Proof Position” hiding underneath Fortune’s considerable media presence not only helped deflect public criticism of the Tuskegee approach, as this cartoon laments, but it also served as a channel for Washington to pursue more radical and covert challenges to the Jim Crow regime—something he promised white Americans he would never do.<sup>33</sup> Such a close allegiance to one another lent the impression that Fortune’s plan in the Philippines either came directly from the “Sub-Cellar Leader” or at the very least was in line with the Tuskegee program of self-help and black independence.

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<sup>32</sup> *Boston Guardian*, October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1902.

<sup>33</sup> For more on Washington and the current historiographical trend to read him as something of a black nationalist trickster figure see Norrell, *Up from History*; Michael Bieze and Marybeth Gasman, eds., *Booker T. Washington Rediscovered* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); Raymond Smock, *Booker T. Washington: Black Leadership in the Age of Jim Crow*, (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2009); Deborah Davis, *Guest of Honor: Booker T. Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, and the White House Dinner That Shocked a Nation* (New York: Atria Books, 2012).

**Figure 6. “Aaron and Moses”**



Source: *Boston Guardian*

One black newspaper at the time went so far as to portray the duo in biblical terms. Fortune was likened to “Aaron” and Washington to “Moses,” with the two brothers working collectively to deliver their people from the grasps of the Pharaoh.<sup>34</sup> In the case of black colonization to the Pacific, however, Moses and Aaron were not only struggling against the Pharaoh but at times working *with* the Pharaoh to achieve their political aims. This complicated relationship and the convergence of what often looked like contradictory black political policies would be on full display as Fortune and

<sup>34</sup> *Washington Bee*, April 3, 1904.

Washington discussed their plans for black colonization of the Pacific—a policy never far removed from the proposed policies of several powerful white political actors in the federal government.

Just one month before his departure, Fortune, in a *New York Sun* editorial, contemplated the connections he would soon encounter between black colonization, industrial capitalism, and the geopolitics of imperialism.<sup>35</sup> In the curiously titled “How to Get Labor for the Philippines,” which he later encouraged Washington to read, Fortune offered black colonization to the islands as a direct answer to Cornell University professor Jeremiah W. Jenk’s recommendation that labor shortages in the Philippines should be solved by implementing a three-year guest worker program involving Chinese laborers.<sup>36</sup> Parroting the anthropological wisdom of the time, Fortune held that black workers from the hot and humid South would be better suited to fill the island’s labor demands because they were already “adapted to the climate.”<sup>37</sup> Fortune also argued that the Chinese Exclusion Act, a measure he had previously opposed because of its racist implications,<sup>38</sup> should regrettably be honored as binding law in American territorial possessions, an idea that was still on murky legal grounds and hotly debated among black and white Americans in the Philippines.<sup>39</sup> Fortune predicted that African-Americans who were “dissatisfied with their civil, social, and industrial conditions”

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<sup>35</sup> Fortune to Washington November 3, 1902 in Washington Papers. Fortune told Washington: "I have a short article on the editorial page of the Sun today on the wisdom of employing Afro-American labor in the Philippines"

<sup>36</sup> *The Sun*, November 3, 1902.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> *New York Globe*, July 28, 1883.

<sup>39</sup> For more on the Chinese Exclusion Act as it related to the Philippines see Richard Chu, “The ‘Chinaman’ Question.” Questions of citizenship rights, habeas corpus, the applicability of American law, and constitutional protections of all sorts were very much up for grabs as the military/civilian Philippine Commission were quite literally making new law as they went along and then publishing it local newspapers after they enacted each measure. See examples below.

would "gladly go to the Philippines,"<sup>40</sup> an assumption not unwarranted given the glowing reports coming to him and others in the black press from black soldiers living overseas.<sup>41</sup> In pandering to white fears about black crime in northern and western cities, Fortune assured his anxious New York readers that a shift in black migration out of the South towards the Philippines would help mitigate concerns that unemployed black migrants might "become charges upon public charity" and that an "idle, vicious, and criminal class" of "unfortunates" would expand to northern and western black urban ghettos. "The race question in this country and in the Philippines" could be ameliorated, if not solved, he claimed, by black people leaving the hostile conditions of the South, the urban segregation of the North, and heading off to an American controlled Pacific island in the sun. In a not-so-subtle plug for state resources and reparations Fortune made sure to qualify his claims by saying that African Americans would only commit to the plan in large numbers "if suitable inducements were offered to them."<sup>42</sup>

Such a bargain, however, did not come without its costs. The Tuskegee commitment to industrial education, economic achievement, and black capitalism would counter-intuitively require powerful allies in the Philippines and significant support from the federal government to make them viable engines capable of turning the dream of black independence into a tangible reality. Less than two decades after penning (in 1884) the first black Marxist interpretation of slavery, labor, and the postemancipation South—complete with a call for poor whites and blacks to unite in a

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<sup>40</sup> *The Sun*, November 3, 1902.

<sup>41</sup> For examples of black soldier's reporting positively on living in the Philippines see *Manila Times* January 20, 1903, *Richmond Planet*, December 30, 1899, and others below.

<sup>42</sup> *The Sun*, November 3, 1902

revolutionary proletariat capable of overthrowing the Southern white planter bourgeoisie<sup>43</sup>—Fortune seemed willing at this point to make certain pragmatic bargains with the capitalist class as well as with various state interests in order to achieve his vision of black nationhood in the Philippines.<sup>44</sup> “With an adequate supply of this Afro-American labor” Fortune saw his Philippine colony “producing a vast volume of new material, which American capital and enterprise would soon convert into manufactured products on the spot.” While granting that some colonists might have been able to survive as small subsistence farmers, Fortune was keenly aware of the geopolitical stakes and the prevailing international trade considerations at play. Black homesteads in the Philippines would be favorably positioned for the production of cash crops and bulk staples that could then be traded in the global commodities markets of Asia, Europe, and the Pacific region. Fortune contemplated that an island-wide black monopoly on certain key exports like hemp, sugar, and tobacco would soon develop and allow goods to circulate freely to “the coveted markets of the Orient.” Fortune, never modest in his aspirations, even boasted that this black economic powerhouse in the Pacific might undermine white economic supremacy worldwide as “no European power

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<sup>43</sup> Timothy Thomas Fortune, *Black and White; Land, Labor, and Politics in the South*, American Negro, His History and Literature (New York: Arno Press, 1968). [1884] James M. McPherson in his introduction identifies Fortune’s Marxist leanings but finds Fortune’s argument for an interracial proletariat in the postemancipation South naïve, amateurish, and unconvincing. While certainly utopian, Fortune’s groundbreaking use of Marx in 1884, along with his entire body of work as a political theorist and public intellectual over a forty-year public life requires a more comprehensive scholarly treatment than has been pursued thus far. Fortune’s inclination to read situations like the one he found in the Philippines as a struggle between capital and labor cannot be overlooked and emerges frequently in his assessments.

<sup>44</sup> On the petite bourgeoisie leanings of black nationalism see Cornel West, “The Paradox of the Afro-American Rebellion,” *Social Text* no. 9/10 (1984): 44; Cornel West, *Prophecy Deliverance!: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002); Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Creative Conflict in African American Thought: Frederick Douglass, Alexander Crummell, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1978).

nor all of them would be able, in a few years hence, to compete with us.”<sup>45</sup> Who exactly constituted Fortune’s “us” in this American/Afro-American/ Filipino/industrial/state partnership, or who precisely would control its institutions and forms of governance was left open-ended.

Interestingly, Fortune’s notions of black colonization required “assimilating harmoniously with the native people.”<sup>46</sup> In some ways this was an obvious move for Fortune. Interracial marriage and the cultural fluidity of ‘Afro-American’ identities were concepts that the visually ambiguous, multiracial Fortune had been openly promoting on the home front for decades.<sup>47</sup> His attempts to transport such ideas to the Philippines, however, placed him in a unique position vis-à-vis the prevailing black political thought of his era. Black colonization, as it had been traditionally understood, had always been infused with a certain measure of ‘race pride,’ or what W.E.B. Du Bois would later call “racial chauvinism.”<sup>48</sup> It was also heavily tied to Africa and the Atlantic World. Unfortunately, this commitment would often push African American colonists to not only draw the color line internally but look down upon other people of color, especially Africans. Fortune’s contention that a new form of black nationalism might be built upon

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<sup>45</sup> *The Sun*, November 3, 1902

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> For more on Fortune’s promotion of interracial marriage and multiracial African American identities as replies to racism and central features of African American culture see, T. Thomas Fortune, “The Afro-American,” *Arena* 3, no. 13 (1890), 115-118, T. Thomas Fortune, “Race Absorption” in *AME Church Review* 18, no. 1 (1901), 54-66, and T. Thomas Fortune, “Who Are We? Afro-Americans, Colored People or Negroes?” *Voice of the Negro* 3, no. 3 (1906), 194-98

<sup>48</sup> For more on Du Bois’s concept of chauvinism and his turn towards a multiracial sense of blackness that was rooted in interracial sexuality and existed within the framework of a Pan-Third World black internationalism see W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1992); W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1999) especially the essay “The Souls of White Folk.”

integration with Filipinos in the Philippines would prove too disorienting for many self-identified black nationalists to embrace.<sup>49</sup>

In the years building up to Fortune's trip, Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, Edward Wilmot Blyden, and several other early advocates of black nationalism and colonization to Africa had expended a great deal of intellectual labor to develop a particularly narrow brand of black nationalist thought. It demanded not only racial pride but also an imagined sense of racial purity.<sup>50</sup> In the context of African colonization, Blyden himself went so far as to claim that "the 'colored' or mixed man is not a Negro."<sup>51</sup> When asked about his own funeral Blyden further insisted that his political project be memorialized not in terms of his love for black people but a tombstone inscription that simply read: "He hated mulattoes."<sup>52</sup> In the realm of fiction this tension often played out as an attempt to stabilize blackness and create an authentic archetype. Published concurrently with Fortune's trip to the Pacific, Pauline Hopkins's serial *Of One Blood* told an elaborate Afrocentric tale of a white skinned, self-hating, upwardly mobile multiracial black medical student who lived much of his life as a white man until he discovered his roots and true happiness only after a long misadventure in Ethiopia.<sup>53</sup> Hitting close to

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<sup>49</sup> For more on this intellectual and political tradition, offered in an attempt to canonize its program, see the collection of primary documents presented in Wilson Jeremiah Moses, ed. *Classical Black Nationalism: From the American Revolution to Marcus Garvey* (New York: New York University Press, 1996). Moses saw this collection as "a rethinking" of his landmark work *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism*.

<sup>50</sup> For more on Blyden and Turner see Stephen Ward Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992); Edwin S. Redkey, *Black Exodus: Black Nationalist and Back-to-Africa Movements, 1890-1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969); Hollis Ralph Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1912* (London: Oxford, 1967); Teshale Tibebu, *Edward Wilmot Blyden and the Racial Nationalist Imagination* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012).

<sup>51</sup> *New York Age*, January 11, 1890. This quote from Bishop Edward Wilmot Blyden was originally reported in the *Florida Times-Union* and reprinted in the *New York Age* as part of a Fortune editorial.

<sup>52</sup> Lynch, Edward Wilmot Blyden, 139.

<sup>53</sup> Pauline E. Hopkins, *One Blood* (London: X Press, 1996) was originally published in *The Colored American Magazine* as a serial between 1901 and 1903 with the last installment appearing while Fortune was in the

home, Fortune likely would have read this novel closely. In this internal black political context, the multiracial Fortune's trip to the Pacific might be understood as an anxious quest for an alternative mode of black nationalism. A successful project in the Pacific not only would have validated Fortune's own personal experiences and public policies about the intrinsic mixedness of blackness in America but also proven that transnational black subjects were not bound to the racial ideologies and assumptions of modernity rooted in the Atlantic world. African Americans would be free to explore a new racial context in the Pacific, and indeed travel anywhere in the world, in their quest for black liberation.

Fortune's efforts to re-imagine black nationalism via colonization to the Pacific were already well underway several years before he departed. Almost immediately after the Spanish American War, and in the midst of the Philippine American war, African American soldiers, businessmen, and newspaper editors were lining up alongside several white generals and the nefarious Senator John Tyler Morgan to support this state administered plan for African Americans to relocate to the Philippines. Black soldiers had led the way. As early as 1900 black soldiers reported in the black press that “[t]he natives are very friendly to the Negro” and that there are “openings here for the Negro in business.” Captain F.H. Crumbley of the 49<sup>th</sup> Infantry suggested that religiously inclined African Americans should “come as missionaries with spelling book and Bible.” Crumbley reasoned that black churches “would do well to send young men and women here as soon as possible” because there were “room for thousands” and the

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Philippines. For a more detailed reading of Hopkins see Hanna Wallinger, *Pauline E. Hopkins: A Literary Biography* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005).

churches “should not wait till the field is covered by others.”<sup>54</sup> The competition for resources and the completion for souls were both driven by an ideology of scarcity.

Over a year later, Crumbley wrote home again saying that many black soldiers intended to remain in the Philippines after their discharge and “marry native women as soon as they are free of Uncle Sam.” Thus black freedom would not only demand escape from the American state but the sexual conquest of Filipina women. Crumbley was less convinced, however, of a mass movement. He saw clear class distinctions within black communities playing into the calculus. Crumbley noted that the Philippines were “a good place for the active professional Negro, or one who has capital to go into business” but that “the Negro as a laborer would starve to death here [because] so cheap is native and Chinese labor.”<sup>55</sup> Little did Crumbley know at the time, but Senator Morgan had already orchestrated the Army’s discharge of penniless black soldiers in the Philippines with the hope that they would do exactly what Crumbley feared—stay in the Philippines to work the land and never return to the America again.<sup>56</sup>

By 1902, little seemed to have changed as William Blakeny of the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry assured black readers that “the Philippines are far from being a “God Forsaken Country.” Blakeny said that “after much reasoning and deliberation” he concluded that “all industrious and energetic colored Americans” would find that “they cannot do

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<sup>54</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, March 7, 1900.

<sup>55</sup> *Savannah Tribune*, May 4, 1901

<sup>56</sup> John Tyler Morgan to Elihu Root, April 4, 1900 in the John Tyler Morgan Papers, Southern Historical Collection at the Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and General George W. Davis to Chafee Zamboanga, April 17, 1902 in the Elihu Root Papers, The Library of Congress. See also Joseph A. Fry, *John Tyler Morgan and the Search for Southern Autonomy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992). Joseph O. Baylen and John Hammond Moore, “Senator John Tyler Morgan” and Willard B. Gatewood, *Black Americans and the White Man’s Burden, 1898-1903* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975).

anything more beneficial to themselves than to come over here while the country is still in its infancy.” He promised that there “will be many fortunes made” and that African American capitalists should “reap the harvest which we shall soon begin to gather in.” In a conclusion that sounded more like a savvy marketing ploy than a military travel diary, Blakeny trumpeted:

“Why not come and share with us the glorious good times which are sure to come? Come now. The first to come will be the first served. Be among the first. A few dollars invested now will yield big returns. Desirable correspondence a pleasure.”<sup>57</sup>

While this merging of black nationalism, American military power, and industrial capitalism may have seemed familiar to many advocates of prior black emigration plans in Liberia or Sierra Leone, the prospects of engaging in such enterprises with a “friendly” population, that African Americans would come to be variably understand as both racially distinct and racially similar, was a departure from all prior (and future) colonization plans.<sup>58</sup>

For his part, Fortune explicitly set colonization to the Pacific against Blyden and Turner’s “African immigration fatality.” The Pacific would provide an “effectual quietus” against black desires to colonize Africa “which breaks out rabidly once in every twelve months.”<sup>59</sup> How exactly the experiment in the Philippines would be different from those underway and previously attempted not only in Liberia and Sierra Leone, but most

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<sup>57</sup> *The Freeman* (Indianapolis), March 15, 1902.

<sup>58</sup> For more on the tensions between African Americans, Africa, and Africans see Alan Huffman, *Mississippi in Africa: The Saga of the Slaves of Prospect Hill Plantation and Their Legacy in Liberia* (New York, N.Y.: Gotham, 2004); James Ciment, *Another America: The Story of Liberia and the Former Slaves Who Ruled It* (Hill and Wang, 2014) and James Campbell, *Middle Passages: African American Journey to Africa, 1787-2005* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006).

<sup>59</sup> *The Sun*, November 3, 1902

recently in the Tuskegee-led charge into Togo, was left unanswered.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps Fortune thought that state resources, private capital, and a widespread political commitment would make all the difference in the Philippines, allowing it to graduate from the “pauper movements” that one black observer credited for the failure of previous black colonization attempts.<sup>61</sup> Fortune may have also reasoned that his ‘wide-tent’ definition of blackness and solidarity with other people of color would help mitigate the kind of intra-racial infighting and interracial friction with indigenous populations that plagued many prior African colonization attempts.

## Racialization of Filipinos and African Americans

One of the central questions for white Americans, African Americans, and Filipinos alike in assessing black colonization was precisely where Filipinos would fall in America’s racial hierarchy. Also at stake was the political structure of the Philippine state. Fortune observed that every “intelligent Filipino” he met was dumbfounded at the absurdity of “American race prejudice.” Fortune also noted however that Filipinos “argued, and correctly, that the same prejudice would be extended to them.”<sup>62</sup> On the homefront Booker T. Washington broached this question at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences at the exact same time that Fortune was in the Philippines. Washington told his white audience that “[j]ust now the Filipinos seems to be going through the interesting process of being carefully examined” as to their racial status.

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<sup>60</sup> See Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>61</sup> Unknown Author to Theodore Roosevelt, 1904 in Washington papers.

<sup>62</sup> Fortune, “The Filipino,” (May 1904).

Washington noted to his white American audience that "you seem as yet to be quite undecided as to how and where [the Filipino] shall be classed – that is whether you will rate him as a black man or white man." Washington, speaking before this largely white audience, proclaimed that "from a selfish standpoint, I should urge that the new subjects be classed as Negroes," however, when thinking "unselfishly" he hoped that they would be treated as fully privileged white citizens and not "looked upon as a problem, instead of a man."<sup>63</sup> In his 1902 Congressional Testimony, Governor Taft confirmed that the second option, treating Filipinos like African Americans, may have already been underway. Taft noted that many of the American businessmen in the Philippines were following the examples of the Spanish, English, and Germans to "call the Filipinos negroes."<sup>64</sup>

This question of the blackness of Filipinos was also raised in the black press when a Filipino boy was Jim Crowed in Princeton, Indiana after he tried to enroll himself at a local all-white school. The editorial in the *Colored American* newspaper took no official stance on whether "the Filipino [is] a white man or a Negro" only saying that Jim Crow was wrong no matter what and that in the debates over taxonomy "[w]e leave it to the expert philologists."<sup>65</sup> Pauline Hopkins, editor of her own *Colored American Magazine*, was more optimistic. Like Fortune, she argued that the incorporation of Filipinos, Cubans, and other people of color into the American state would confuse categories and reshape the face of America. In a strange twist of irony, Hopkins hoped that America's

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<sup>63</sup> Booker T Washington, "Speech Given to Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences," in Washington Papers, Feb 26, 1903.

<sup>64</sup> "Affairs in the Philippine Islands," Hearings Before the Committee on the Philippines of the United States Senate, April 10, 1902, Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 104.

<sup>65</sup> *Colored American* (Washington, D.C.), October 10, 1903.

racialized empire would unknowingly mean “the death knell of prejudice” and the “downfall of cruel discrimination based solely on color.”<sup>66</sup>

While many scholars today assume that white Americans were firmly committed to a fixed set of racial classifications that they were intent on exporting to the colonies, white Americans on the ground appeared highly uncertain about how to classify Filipinos. Conflicts between different ethnic groups on the Philippine islands were often characterized by white Americans as rooted in “racial differences.” Marriages between Ilocano and Tagalog peoples, for example, were understood as interracial in nature.<sup>67</sup> Rumors were rampant on the islands about a “white tribe” of Filipinos living on the islands of Mindoro and Mindanao. This mythical white tribe was accompanied by spottings of a blonde haired blue-eyed “Woman Almost White Dressed in a Gee String.”<sup>68</sup> The American state thought the matter sufficiently important to dispatch “Dr. [David P.] Barrows of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes” to Mindoro so that he could investigate the existence of this lost tribe of white Filipinos. Dr. Barrows was in charge of the Department of the Interior’s annual “Ethnological Survey for the Philippine Islands,” which in 1903 was a twenty page report complete with photos and quantitative data designed to scientifically categorize various Filipinos into distinct tribal/racial groups.<sup>69</sup> His working theory was that the lost tribe of white Filipinos were “a branch of

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<sup>66</sup> *Colored American Magazine* (March, 1902), 276.

<sup>67</sup> *Manila American*, February 13, 1903.

<sup>68</sup> *Manila American*, February 28, 1903. See also *Manila American*, May 17, 1903.

<sup>69</sup> “Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1903, 789. Part of ethnological survey (formerly the Bureau of Nonchristian Tribes) Appendix K, 769-789 by David P. Barrows.

the Caucasian family” that had migrated to the Philippines while the volcanic islands were supposedly still connected to China.<sup>70</sup>

Other theories held that Filipinos might be “part Negro,” which according to one black newspaper posed an obvious contradiction if white men were allowed to marry Filipino women abroad while officially condemning interracial marriage at home.<sup>71</sup> While much of today’s contemporary scholarship assumes that Filipinos were understood by white imperialists through a direct reference to African Americans or Native Americans and that racial ideology mapped neatly onto the Philippines from America, defining race on the ground was a much more fluid and complicated enterprise.<sup>72</sup> Much like Filipinos developed their own understanding of a Filipino national identity through colonialism, so too did Americans attempt to make sense of the highly diverse set of local ethnic identities they encountered in the islands.<sup>73</sup>

Racial uncertainty regarding how Filipinos would be categorized in the American racial hierarchy was only completed by the presence of multi-hued African American bodies. One white skinned African American soldier used a strategy that Fortune and future NAACP leader Walter White would also use to great effect—doing counter-intelligence work behind the mask of a white skinned African American body. Sergeant Patrick Mason of the 24th infantry allowed white officers in the Philippines to “speak their opinion” on racial matters “in my presence thinking I am white.” Walking around

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<sup>70</sup> *Manila American*, May 15, 1903.

<sup>71</sup> *Topeka Plaindealer*, June 15, 1906.

<sup>72</sup> For a summary of this literature, where race in America is simply exported to the Philippines, see Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). Kramer conversely argues that the process of empire in the Philippines interacted with existing notions of race (rather than replicated them) to create new conceptualizations of difference that were then applied (and reapplied) both at home and abroad.

<sup>73</sup> For more on this process among Filipinos see Rafael, *The Promise of the Foreign*.

the army camp cloaked in a white body, Mason and others with a similar visual presentation would learn by listening to white imperialists that: “[t]he first thing in the morning is the ‘Nigger’ and the last thing at night is the ‘Nigger.’” Mason, however, actually relished the subversiveness of his racial performance, stating that “I love to hear them talk that I may know how they feel.” After his undercover observation of whiteness, he set about producing a counter-colonial knowledge of his own. After hearing the most vile and unfiltered American racism he could imagine, Mason concluded at the end of his covert investigation to the *Cleveland Gazette*: “I feel sorry for...all that have come under the control of the United States. I don’t believe they will be justly dealt with.”<sup>74</sup>

Conversely, darker-skinned black soldiers might have found themselves mistaken not for being white but for being Filipino. This happened to C. W. Cordon of the 25th infantry who experienced coloniality as a Filipino for a brief moment in 1899 when a white regiment of soldiers came to relieve his black unit. Cordon recounted that when the white troops arrived they "thought some of us were natives." He and two of his fellow brothers-in-arms decided to play along. Unlike Mason, they did not move "beyond the veil" but hid behind a different one normally reserved for Filipinos. After an initial day of crossing a color line that African Americans had never previously broached, the men woke up the next morning and continued the performance. Cordon and his comrades wandered over to the white regiment's tents and when asked questions in English they responded with "meo no entaends" (I don't understand). After some time the white soldiers "looked at them with a funny expression" perhaps trying to

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<sup>74</sup> *Cleveland Gazette*, September 29, 1900.

figure out if they were being duped. Others from inside the tents reacted to this racial uncertainty with fear, shouting out: "they've got us surrounded haven't they?" At that moment Cordon and his friends, uncertain if they were about to die as Filipinos, thought it best to break character. The thought of being shot by the American state for being Filipino "was too much for us and we had to laugh." This brief reprise of comedic relief in a still active war zone, proved an extreme example of the kind of everyday uncertainty that confounded people of all backgrounds trying to read one another's bodies in a colonial context. For Cordon, his political outlook was forever altered after occupying the preverbal skin of a Filipino for a few days. Through this performative act of intentional racial misunderstanding he came to abandon his previous assumption that Filipinos had some "peculiar traits and customs." He instead concluded that Filipinos were "immensely 'human.'" Spurred in part by walking a mile in Filipino shoes, Cordon reported that he soon reached out as a black man to the local Filipino population and was honored to have some "very warm friends among them."<sup>75</sup> He would later conclude that Filipinos, like African Americans, were a decidedly multiracial people that he saw as his racial kindred. He boasted that "[t]here are here some of the best mulatto people I have ever seen in my life."<sup>76</sup>

Beyond such dramatic performances, a certain fluidity in bending racial definitions was also a defining characteristic of everyday interactions for black residents in the Philippines. Sgt. M. W. Sadler of the all black 25th infantry also felt a racial connection to Filipinos, arguing that they are "men of our own hue and color." Yet, he balked on the question of "[w]hether it is right to reduce these people to submission,"

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<sup>75</sup> *Cleveland Gazette*, February 3, 1900.

<sup>76</sup> *Cleveland Gazette*, December 2, 1899.

reasoning that this “is not a question for the soldier to decide.” Clearly not wanting to jeopardize his job by getting publicly entangled with messy debates over Philippine independence, Sadler held that “our oath of allegiance knows neither race, color nor nation.”<sup>77</sup> Even if he saw Filipinos as his brothers and sisters, he had taken an oath to do a job and was committed to doing that job regardless of his personal sentiments. These conflicted loyalties and political slippages were, of course, not unique to black soldiers nor limited to that particular American war.

While claiming to just be doing his job, Sadler remained conflicted, knowing that “as the situation now stands we moisten the soil with our precious blood, stain the colors with our oozing brains, only to make an already popular race more famous.” Far from oblivious, Sadler was fully conscious, as were most foot soldiers, that the Philippine American War was a white man’s war and a brown man’s fight. White newspapers in the Philippines were well aware of the ironies of black soldiers fighting for the American state against a people that many, black and white, thought were black. According to Sadler these white papers characterized black-on-Filipino military engagements as a battle of “Greek against Greek.” Sadler himself seemed to have also understood such encounters as intra-racial warfare. He called the Philippine American War the first armed conflict “between civilized colored men” in “recorded history.” Sadler further saw black Americans and ‘black’ Filipinos in league with one another in a way that complicated relationships with white American imperial desires. In the end,

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<sup>77</sup> *The Freeman* (Indianapolis), November 18, 1899.

Sadler resigned himself and other African Americans to the fact that “in the usual old way we are here as an experiment.”<sup>78</sup>

As this “experiment” with race in the Philippines began trending towards Jim Crow, many African Americans, like John W. Galloway of the 24th infantry, worried that “the future of the Filipino, I fear, is that of the Negro in the South.” Galloway was horrified at the treatment of Filipinos as he found that white soldiers were apt to “spit at them, call them damned ‘niggers,’ abuse them in all manner of ways, and connect race hatred with duty.” While much has been made of white perceptions of Filipinos as ‘black’, less has been made of how black perceptions of Filipinos as ‘black’ helped shape racial ideology and policy, specifically as it related to black migration to the Philippines. For African Americans, observing the process of Philippine racialization was not an unthinking process that they accepted passively or had no control over. As Galloway noted “[s]ince coming here the boys bosoms have expanded greatly. Their ideas have indeed broadened.”<sup>79</sup> The extent to which these “expanded” ideas of American imperialism and black coloniality were brought back to America or used to address racial formation at home or abroad is hard to trace. What is clear is that black soldiers’ experiments with race in the context of American empire no doubt influenced the black reading public’s feelings towards Filipinos and shaped the possibilities of inter/intra racial coalitions through black colonization to the Pacific.

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<sup>78</sup> *The Freeman* (Indianapolis), November 18, 1899.

<sup>79</sup> *Richmond Planet*, December 30, 1899.

## Traveling with Jim Crow

Based on these early reports from black soldiers, black public opinion was soon clamoring for more information on black colonization. Fortune's eight-thousand-mile journey to Manila began in New York City, the bustling heart of American capitalism.<sup>80</sup> During a brief stay in San Francisco while awaiting his steamship to Manila, Fortune took the time on December 8 to speak to "a notable gathering of colored people at the First African Methodist Episcopal Church."<sup>81</sup> Fortune said privately that the reception he received "was one of the finest I have ever had."<sup>82</sup> Publicly, Fortune's plea throughout his address was for "organized effort" and the raising of funds to "test the constitutionality of a disfranchise law in one of the states." Collective effort and intra-racial unity were essential, he claimed, as "[t]he cardinal weakness of our race today lies in the fact that the individual thinks he is greater than the cause." Despite internal riffs, Fortune promised that "the cause will live on." African Americans must "[o]rganize, be honest, put away a nestegg for your children, keep them off the streets at night and in school by day, trust in God and keep your powder dry." This gathering of local black San Franciscans responded by offering songs of praise from the Zion church choir and the passage of "resolutions complimentary to President Roosevelt."<sup>83</sup> This mix of black political organizing and ready stores of gun powder combined with religious piety, economic empowerment, and a genteel commitment to educational attainment was in

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<sup>80</sup> For more on New York City and its role as the financial capital of an ever-expanding set of global exchanges see Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>81</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 9, 1902.

<sup>82</sup> Fortune to Washington, December 10, 1902 in Washington Papers.

<sup>83</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 9, 1902.

classic Fortune style at this stage in his career. It also blurred any neat lines between progressive, radical, and conservative black politics.

Fortune brought this approach with him to his next waypoint in Honolulu, Hawai‘i. Arriving on December 17, he checked into a room at the plush Royal Hawaiian Hotel with a panoramic view of the city.<sup>84</sup> He would later dine at the highly exclusive and world famous Pacific Club with white American business leaders, including future Hawaiian governor George Robert Carter and future Hawaiian Supreme Court justice and former Civil War officer of the famed Massachusetts 54<sup>th</sup> Infantry, Alfred Stedman Hartwell. Fortune was “assisted in [his] work by all the forces in the Territory” while meeting with small business owners and large sugar planters alike. He was shown around the islands by friendly representatives from the “Planters’ Association and the Chamber of Commerce.”<sup>85</sup> These were the same people who kept plantation records based on race, issued *bango* tags to their workers, and were participating in ‘black birding’ in the South Seas of the Pacific.

While Fortune met with them as part of his investigation, he was never beholden to them. He also met with local trade unions and, in the end, bemoaned the fact that Hawai‘i had been “gobbled up by a few rich men, and the poor man has no earthly show.”<sup>86</sup> As a representative of the American government he expressed sympathy for the plight of the colonized Hawaiian people, noting after his return that “Americans robbed them of their country, stole their lands, and remanded them to a social scale that

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<sup>84</sup> Fortune to Washington December 10, 1902 in Washington Papers. See also Fortune, “Politics in the Philippine Islands” for room description. *San Francisco Chronicle* December 25, 1902 cable from Honolulu confirms Fortune’s arrival date one day ahead of schedule.

<sup>85</sup> Fortune to Washington, December 22, 1902 in Washington Papers.

<sup>86</sup> *The Freeman* July 4, 1903.

would upset the reason of King Kamehamehai [sic].”<sup>87</sup> It seems unlikely, however, that Fortune visited an actual plantation as he cheered the New England missionaries for supposedly establishing “a civilization based on the Christian virtues in which race prejudice had no part—in State, Church, or society.” He was quick to note, however, that this apparent sentiment had not been universally embraced by native Hawaiians, who apparently expressed significant prejudice against African Americans.<sup>88</sup> In a call for pan-Third World solidarity, that he would later reiterate in the Philippines, he asked, “why this feeling on the part of the dark people towards other dark people?”<sup>89</sup> In summing up his trip to Hawai‘i, Fortune was happy with the “open-armed hospitality and courtesy” he received from white planters that made him feel “buoyant and self-reliant.” He seemed largely unaware of the more sinister design they had in mind. At the same time, however, his criticism of the inequalities and injustices that American empire and capitalism produced put him in a precarious position as an ambassador of the American state. As the demons of Jim Crow and corporate plutocracy crossed the Pacific along with American travelers, Fortune and other African Americans found themselves in distant lands but familiar territory.

Despite his misgivings, Fortune believed that small scale, private sector initiated black colonization to Hawaiian sugar plantations might be possible, albeit on a much more modest level than what he envisioned in the Philippines. In an interview given in Honolulu the day after he arrived, Fortune stated that “the right sort of agents” may be able to attract ten thousand African Americans to relocate to Hawai‘i within six months.

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<sup>87</sup> Fortune, “The Filipino,” (May 1904).

<sup>88</sup> Fortune, “Politics on the Philippine Islands.”

<sup>89</sup> Fortune, “The Filipino,” (May 1904).

One such agent who was actively promoting the idea of black migration to Hawai‘i was Ernest Hogan, one of the founding fathers of ragtime music and a bona fide black celebrity. Using gendered language that would be employed by American men of all colors in their colonial pursuits, Hogan saw Hawai‘i as a place where African Americans might “stand as men among men.”<sup>90</sup> In response to Fortune’s proposal for Hawai‘i one black paper responded saying “we can spare ten thousand” with the understanding that these African American migrants would be going strictly “as an experiment.” The same paper held that “the bulk of the Negroes cannot be induced to leave the land in which they have invested so much of brain and brawn” and recommended that the “adventurous element” of “young middle-aged Negroes who have no family instinct, and who have no future to speak of in the South or anywhere on continental America” should be the ones to answer Fortune’s call. These young adventurers were called upon to “develop the pioneer spirit” and “see what there is in [Hawai‘i] of substance and profit.”<sup>91</sup>

Just as in the Philippines, however, these experiments were set against the threat of competition from Chinese and Japanese workers that both Hawaiian labor unions and Congressional xenophobes were trying to prevent. Big business interests, including the Merchant’s Association and the Builders’ and Traders’ Exchange, were pushing for legislation that would allow Chinese workers legal entry into Hawai‘i “for plantation work only, under certain restrictions.” Fortune argued that “[i]n the Southern States and in the Carolinas the negro made the industries what they are” and as such African

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<sup>90</sup>As quoted in Reginald Kearney, *African American Views of the Japanese: Solidarity or Sedition?* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 11.

<sup>91</sup> *Colored American*, January 24, 1903.

Americans had earned the right to seek better employment opportunities in Hawai‘i without having to compete with Chinese labor.<sup>92</sup> Apparently his concerns about not positioning people of color against one another had met their limits. Also unanswered was whether African Americans would simply be trading one form of plantation-style labor for another and if the New England fashioned planters in Hawai‘i would in fact devise a legal, political, and economic model that, unlike the Jim Crow South, would foster black upward mobility, land ownership, and ultimately independence. Questioning the fundamental logic of modern industrial capitalism itself seemed an ocean away from the idealistic Fortune of 1884—who had written “the future struggle in the South will be, not between white men and black men, but between capital and labor.” His anti-capitalist commitments had given way to the urgency and pragmatic requirements that Jim Crow demanded of African Americans.<sup>93</sup>

### “The Philippine Question is a Question of Business”<sup>94</sup>

After spending New Year’s Eve in Hawai‘i and making brief stops in Japan, China, and Hong Kong, Fortune landed in Manila on February 17, 1903. He would soon discover that business was booming. Recent free trade agreements enacted on March 8, 1902 had cut import tariffs on all Philippine goods sent to the United States and also exempted certain Philippine exports (mostly hemp) from all export tariffs if they were

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<sup>92</sup> *Montgomery Advertiser*, December 25, 1902.

<sup>93</sup> Fortune, *Black and White*, 241.

<sup>94</sup> *New York Sun*, November 4, 1899 quoting from the *Richmond Times*.

sent directly to the continental United States.<sup>95</sup> Real estate prices had skyrocketed with the assessed values of all property in the city of Manila alone approaching one hundred million dollars in October of 1902.<sup>96</sup> Imports to the islands for personal consumption, excluding government purchases and military supplies, were up 48% between 1900 and 1902 totaling over 21 million dollars for the first eight months of the year.<sup>97</sup> Exports from the islands had remained relatively flat during this same period, amounting to only 15 million dollars for the first eight months of the year but this was apparently due to “the meager supply of labor available.”<sup>98</sup> Labor scarcity was severe enough in 1902 that it warranted Congressional Hearings on the Philippines in Washington, D.C.

While some of the state interests on the islands seem to have coalesced with those of America capital in the Philippines, the state also had its own, often competing, designs. Just days before Fortune’s arrival, the colonial government passed an act appropriating “100 mules and \$25,000” from the public trust to develop a state run rice plantation “for the purpose of demonstrating to the people the advisability of cultivating this cereal by modern methods.”<sup>99</sup> The government already owned a rock quarry on the island of Talim and Governor Taft promised to bring it to bear on the construction of new streets, sewer pipes, and water lines in Manila.<sup>100</sup> An offer to privatize the government owned ice plant was also on the table, with a Chicago firm offering to purchase the government’s interests in the factory for six hundred thousand dollars with

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<sup>95</sup> P.L. 57-28: “An Act Temporarily to provide revenue for the Philippine Islands, and for other purposes.” (32 Stat. 54; March 8, 1902).

<sup>96</sup> Governor Taft’s annual report as reprinted in *Manila American* January 9, 1903.

<sup>97</sup> *Manila American*, January 20, 1903.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Manila American* February 12, 1903.

<sup>100</sup> “Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1904,” Volume XI, Report of the Philippine Commission, Part 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), 115-118.

the promise of investing another three hundred thousand dollars in capital improvements to expand and modernize the facilities. Perhaps holding out for a better deal or content with the revenue it was already realizing, the government declined.<sup>101</sup> An “immense stock-breeding farm” on the island of Culion was authorized by the Philippine Commission, which planned to “conduct it on the same plan as any large ranch in the States” and import “higher grade” livestock from the West Coast to “improve the breeds of domestic animals of the islands.”<sup>102</sup> In an effort to raise capital for such ventures, Governor Taft suggested that government backed securities, in the form of Philippine municipal bonds, should be sold in the global financial marketplace with the added incentive that they be exempted from all federal, state, and local taxes in America.<sup>103</sup> This level of state concern and public aid to develop state-run industry was every American businessman’s nightmare.

These examples, however, did not preclude the state from promoting private accumulation in other sectors either directly or indirectly. Even industries not directly subsidized by the state were still doing well including a vibrant financial services and investment banking sectors. One ad in a local classified section promised “23% on \$73,000.00” for anyone willing to purchase stock in the Manila Publishing Company, a shell corporation planning a leveraged buyout of *The Manila Times* newspaper. With control of the paper, investors would not only reap a healthy return on investment and a complimentary subscription to the paper, but they would also be part of a newly

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101 *Manila Critic*, March 28, 1903.

102 *Manila Times*, January 1, 1903.

103 Governor Taft’s annual report as reprinted in *Manila America* January 9, 1903. Bonds in Puerto Rico still carry this status even today. For more on the intersection of race and government bonds see Destin Jenkins, “Bonded Metropolis: Race, Wealth, and the Search for Capital in Postwar San Francisco” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2016).

capitalized information source dedicated to “the proper exploitation and development of these islands.”<sup>104</sup> Overall, American business interests didn’t get everything they wanted but they got enough to make the Philippines a place that, in their minds, offered the “greatest opportunity for large returns on [a] small investment.”<sup>105</sup>

Industry was also never shy about petitioning the state for aid in its “exploitation and development.” The local Iloilo Chamber of Commerce representing the sugar producing island of Panay had a long list of suggestions for Governor Taft after his visit to the island in 1903, which overlapped with Fortune’s trip to Luzon. Among other things, the local business people were asking the government to dredge their major transportation river, subsidize rice cultivation, build a “light railway,” and pay for telegraph equipment and operators. The Chamber boldly reasoned that these infrastructure improvements and state investments would help them “keep the profits resulting from labor in the country.”<sup>106</sup> While such appeals might have gained traction under Spanish rule or under an independent Philippines, the American state saw projects developing internal markets that would offer a public benefit largely as unnecessary.

The incestuous relationship between American business interests and the colonial state was never absolute, however, especially when Governor Taft was at the helm. In response to the requests of the Iloilo Chamber of Commerce Taft held that the government would help improve the ports and waterways but that “the merchants could not expect the government to build railways which might result in a loss.” Instead, Taft

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<sup>104</sup> *Manila American*, March 25, 1903.

<sup>105</sup> *Manila American*, March 27, 1903.

<sup>106</sup> *Manila American*, February 28, 1903.

offered to let municipalities “grant franchises” to private entrepreneurs who were willing to assume the risk of investing the initial start-up capital in these ventures. The state would provide land grants and protect corporate rights to operate a profitable monopoly, all while propagandizing the merits of a supposedly free market system.<sup>107</sup>

State capitalism, however, was never fully hegemonic. In a strange twist, Taft during this same period of support for railroad monopolies begrudgingly pardoned local Filipino labor organizer Isabolo De Los Reyes. While this was a positive development for Filipino workers, the motivation was purely rooted in a colonial mentality. Taft’s pardon was on the technical grounds that his imprisonment was not in line with American jurisprudence which, at least in principle, protected “[t]he right of laborers to unite for the purpose of enhancing labor.” The Philippines had to appear fair (and American) to legitimize the colonial state. Taft held that Reyes was convicted using the then superseded standards of Philippine territorial law that classified peaceful labor organizing as a “danger to the state.”<sup>108</sup> This did not mean that labor conditions or unionization efforts improved during American rule, it simply meant that the rhetoric governing the islands contained a heightened measure of self-righteousness. In short, Taft had his own agenda that involved exalting the American legal system (positioning himself for a future U.S. Supreme Court nomination), expanding government coffers, and insuring that “the expenses of government could be met and the repayment to the United States of the \$20,000,000 paid to Spain on the acquisition of these islands.” This, at times, caused him to bump heads against the American business class. Taft

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<sup>107</sup> *Manila American*, February 28, 1903. For more on the illusions of free markets and the state violence and deprivation of rights that accompanies it see Harcourt, *The Illusion of Free Markets*.

<sup>108</sup> *Manila American*, January 31, 1903.

brazenly told these American titans of industry that if they “found fault with the way the government was being run here, they could leave the islands.”<sup>109</sup>

This heavy handedness extended to the realm of civil liberties. One American writer in the midst of a particularly brutal New York winter joked that “[t]he constitution may not extend to the Philippines, but it is evident that the Philippine rainy season has been annexed to the United States.”<sup>110</sup> Constitutional protections were not a joking matter. For Filipinos and African Americans, whose half-subject and half-citizen status left them persistently in a state of legal limbo, this was an obvious problem. At the same time, it was increasingly becoming a problem for white Americans as well who were operating in the rather murky legal territory of the Philippines not far removed from military rule and an active police state. Fortune noted that the territorial government practiced “a very severe censorship” over local Filipinos in their dramatic and artistic expressions.<sup>111</sup> *Habeas corpus* rights had been all but suspended, opening up the possibility of indefinite detention at the local level that could only be reversed by the Philippine Supreme Court.<sup>112</sup>

Corruption was also rampant as state officials often acted in their own interests and against those of the particular agency that they were supposedly representing. “Disbursing Officer Wilson of the office of the Captain of the Port” was apprehended in Canada after allegedly “embezzling funds from the government of the Philippine Islands” and fleeing to avoid capture.<sup>113</sup> The alcoholic postmaster of the city of Tacloban

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<sup>109</sup> *Manila American*, February 28, 1903.

<sup>110</sup> *Manila American*, January 9, 1903.

<sup>111</sup> Fortune, “The Filipino,” (March 1904).

<sup>112</sup> *Manila American*, March 5, 1903.

<sup>113</sup> *Manila Critic*, February 7, 1903.

supposedly became “tangled up with a ‘woman of the dark type’” whose blinding influence landed him in court where he was forced to argue that a missing safe containing twelve hundred dollars of stolen government gold had been under his care but was “cleverly carried off by other parties.”<sup>114</sup> Fortune himself noted at least one American provincial treasurer was “convicted and sentenced to a long term” for allegedly “embezzling public money.” Fortune took particular glee in noting that the man’s “race prejudice will wear itself out in Bilibid prison where he must consort on terms of equality with all the colors on the globe.”<sup>115</sup>

In response to these conditions, Americans in the Philippines were asking if there was “some misapprehension on the part of Governor Taft” with respect to the principle that “all modern governments are run for the benefit of the governed.” The directionality of power between government, industry, and everyday people called into question “the real purpose of American and foreign residents and businessmen in the Philippines.”<sup>116</sup> This “real purpose” proved to be a deeply contested notion that Fortune and the possibility of black colonization would only serve to complicate.

With this ‘wild west’ backdrop and the arbitrary enforcement of the rule of law, Fortune’s reception in the Philippines was altogether unlike the *aloha* he experienced in Hawai‘i. White American journalists, soldiers, businessmen, and state officials all confronted him with roadblocks at every turn in his journey. When news of his pending arrival hit the islands, Fortune reported that the English language newspapers, numbering nearly a dozen, “opened up a broadside against me, and all Afro-Americans,

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<sup>114</sup> *Manila Times*, January 2, 1903.

<sup>115</sup> Fortune, “The Filipino,” (June 1904).

<sup>116</sup> *Manila American*, February 28, 1903.

and they kept it up until I left the Islands.”<sup>117</sup> Fortune was shocked that “such a disproportionate amount of the editorial and news columns of the papers” were dedicated to the “misrepresentation and abuse” of African Americans both in the Philippines and on the American mainland. One particular American newspaper on the islands “called upon the American residents of Manila to invite me not to leave the steamer on which I should arrive, but to return to the United States, as I, or any other Afro-American, was not needed or desired in the Philippine Islands.”<sup>118</sup>

Fortune attributed much of this hostility to a direct importation of Southern Jim Crow culture to the Philippines. He noted that “an abnormally large number of Southern white men” were in “controlling positions in the civil and military establishments.” Unlike in Hawai‘i, former Confederates dominated the “business and social life in Manila.” Looking back to America, Fortune held that these powerful interests in the Philippines were “as violently Democratic and race-hating as those of Memphis or Atlanta.”<sup>119</sup> In his first letter from Manila, Fortune promised Booker T. Washington that “I have lived in the middle of the road ever since I left Red Bank, and I'm determined still to do so” but his determination was always in tension with the fact that “[t]he Filipinos hate the whole tribe of southerners here, and so do I.” In a policy suggestion to Washington that was anything but centrist, Fortune held that because of the violent repression that he found in Manila “[n]o southern white man should be allowed to hold an administrative office in the Philippines.”<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Fortune “The Filipino,” (May 1904).

<sup>118</sup> Fortune “Politics in the Philippine Islands.”

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> From Fortune to Washington February 26, 1903 in Washington Papers.

After first meeting with the Manila Colored American League,<sup>121</sup> Fortune's next major move was an open letter to "leading business men and officials" asking for their input "relative to the question of the immigration of negroes from the south." Fortune began by noting the "large body of unoccupied lands in the Philippine Islands, much of it public property which will ultimately be available for homestead purposes." He then stressed that any American settlers would need to "invite the confidence and friendship of the native people"—a bar he believed that white Americans were incapable of crossing. In suggesting African Americans for colonization, Fortune hoped for a united citizenry, "whether Filipino born or American born." He petitioned for a harmonious relationship between the federal government and the territorial government. By comparison, he lamented the failure of governance that existed in the American South where "several states in their sovereign capacity" were being protected by the Supreme Court's twisted view of the Constitution and able to act in ways that "the Federal Government cannot control nor regulate." Fortune saw in the Philippines an opportunity for African Americans to start anew with a potentially sympathetic territorial government where African Americans could "still remain under the protection and inspiration of the American flag, the flag which they have followed to victory in every war waged by the Federal Republic."<sup>122</sup> In this way, Fortune aimed to overcome many of the obstacles and deficiencies of prior colonization plans, as well as the prevailing conditions in the Jim Crow South, that required African Americans to essentially give up their citizenship and make their own way in a resource drained environment. The disorder of the Philippine islands, and the large number of Southern

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<sup>121</sup> *Manila American*, February 18, 1903.

<sup>122</sup> Fortune's circular letter as reprinted in *Manila American*, March 1, 1903.

segregationists mismanaging it, must have made Fortune wonder, however, if things would really be any different on the margins of the Pacific Ocean.

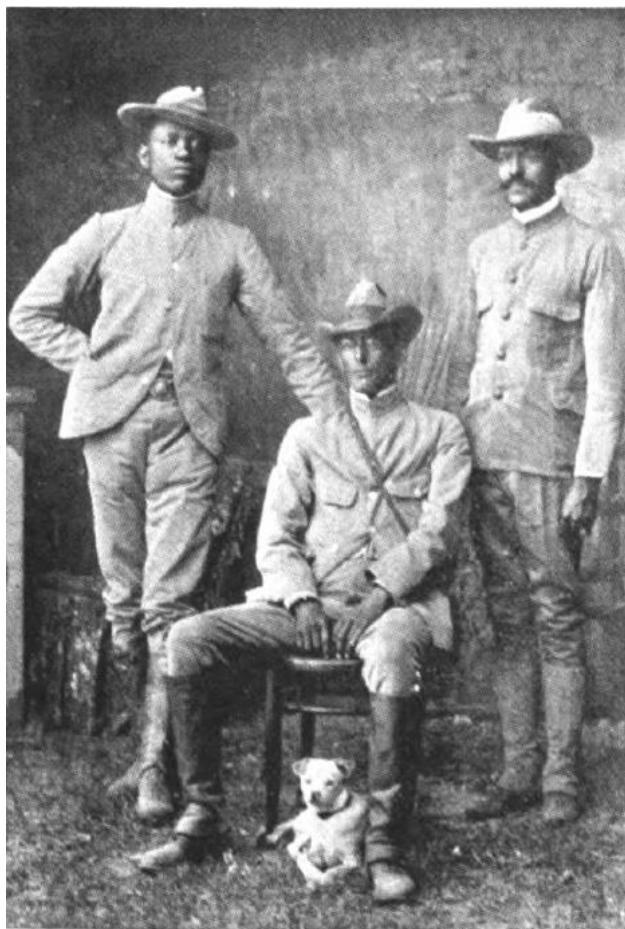
## Visions of Race

After making his presence known, Fortune left the city of Manila, and its frequent disregard for democracy, for a one-month expedition through the rural countryside of northern Luzon. The four-hundred-mile journey was part diplomatic mission, part land survey, part photo journalism exposé, and part novice anthropological field work. Fortune along with “five Filipino servants” and the former black military governor of Isabella province, Captain Robert Gordon Woods, traveled by train, foot, horse, carabao, river raft, and steam boat to over a dozen towns and villages stretching from Manila to the island’s northern coastal city of Aparri.<sup>123</sup> In the dense tropical rainforests he met with local townspeople, village chiefs, revolutionary Filipino nationalists, white Southerners, provincial colonial officials, and dozens of African Americans scattered throughout the countryside. Fortune concluded that the sparsely populated land of northern Luzon lying close to major shipping ports, with its rich soil and abundant water resources, would make an ideal location for black colonization.

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<sup>123</sup> Fortune, “The Filipino,” (June 1904). Dr. Wormsley was a former army captain who was practicing medicine while running his own drug store and managing his “several large tobacco plantations” in Tuguegarao.

**Figure 7. Fortune with Robert Gordon Woods and Dr. W. C. Wormsley**



Captain Robert Gordon Woods (L), T. Thomas Fortune (C),  
and Dr. W.C. Wormsley (R)  
in Tuguegarao, Philippines, 1903  
Source: *The Voice of the Negro*

Throughout his excursion Fortune made a conscious effort to visualize empire and organize the Philippine islands through a series of photographs that he commissioned as part of his investigation. The subjects he selected, as well as the return gaze that they offered back into the camera, spoke volumes about the interactions between Filipinos and their variously shaded American visitors from across the Pacific. Unlike the strictly imperial lens described by historian David Brody in his examination of white Americans as they built a visual archive of the Pacific, Fortune's more

sympathetic eye saw Filipinos through the prism of global anti-blackness.<sup>124</sup> Building solidarity and finding new points of reference *within* the frame of American empire was the primary concern. While the political project of black colonization certainly depended upon empire, it also hoped to remake it. Fortune's choice to publish his images in *The Voice of the Negro* magazine as part of his assessment of the Philippines clearly signaled that white Americans were not his primary audience. While visual culture was critical to Americans of all backgrounds as they tried to make sense of empire, for African Americans specifically trying to imagine an extension of the diaspora through the Pacific, emancipatory possibilities were also part of that vision—both for themselves and for other people of color in the Pacific.

Sharply contrasting the comfortable surroundings of the Royal Hawaiian hotel, Fortune was quick to mark space and define place in the Philippines.

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<sup>124</sup> See David Brody, *Visualizing American Empire: Orientalism and Imperialism in the Philippines* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

**Figure 8. Photographs of Everyday Filipino Scenes from the Luzon Expedition**



A Filipino Native Home  
Source: *The Voice of the Negro*

These photos, likely commissioned from a local Filipino photographer, memorialized and honored humble scenes of everyday life including a local marketplace, a canal, and a “Filipino Native home.” These images can be read as both an attempt by Fortune and his photographer to honor the spaces that were central to the lives of everyday Filipinos and, at least for Fortune, call attention to their difference for an (African) American audience. Rather than simply paint a picture of depravity and backwardness, Fortune and his Filipino companion ended up framing ordinary places

with a seriousness and dignity that no doubt reflected their co-produced understanding of what was visually important.

Perhaps at the suggestion of his photographer, Fortune was also careful to balance depictions of everyday Filipino poverty with a “Magnificent Driveway,” a “Catholic Cathedral,” and the well-appointed and fortified home of revolutionary Filipino independence leader Emilio Aguinaldo.

**Figure 9. Contrasting Photographs of Grandeur from the Luzon Expedition**



Source: *The Voice of the Negro*

For Fortune, these photos were clearly meant to demonstrate the ‘progress,’ success, and potential, of the country if not of his Filipino companion. In contrast to

white American travelers, whose visions of the Philippines have now been well documented in recent scholarship, Fortune, in working with local peoples, saw the landscape with a sharply different eye.<sup>125</sup> He emerged with an editorial insistence that the Philippine islands were not a one-dimensional, monolithic, blank slate to be imposed upon. Fortune's partnership with his photographer was emblematic of the kind of interracial cooperation that he hoped would define black colonization to the islands. It was an ethos that he also hoped would build a new "iconography" of the Philippines in a way that had thus far eluded American eyes.<sup>126</sup>

This inclination became more pronounced, but also more complicated, when Fortune directed the camera towards the people he met in the Philippines. While most of the landscape scenes included the intruding presence of at least a few people on the periphery—as if refusing to be made invisible—the photos that focused intently upon human subjects reveal glimpses of Filipino agency in ways that most of the written sources from this period have obscured. Traveling with the dark-skinned Captain Woods, Fortune may not have been immediately recognizable as a black subject to either his Filipino photographer or the local Filipino residents that they met. Fortune's coterie may very well have been seen by Filipinos as an interracial one, as the islands' residents were still learning the nuances of the complex system of American racial categorization. Whom they were expected to perform for, who was observing them, and how they would represent themselves became a tangled set of decisions for individual Filipinos who were staring down Fortune's (African) American lens.

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<sup>125</sup> For one of the best examples of the literature on America's imperial gaze see Nerissa Balce, *Body Parts of Empire: Visual Abjection, Filipino Images, and the American Archive* (University of Michigan Press, 2016).

<sup>126</sup> For more on the visual production of iconic images of empire see Servando D. Halili, *Iconography of the New Empire: Race and Gender Images and the American Colonization of the Philippines* (Diliman, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2006).

Fortune's picture of a "Fine Group of Young Filipinos" exemplified the mixed emotions that local people exhibited while being observed.

**Figure 10. Photograph: "A Fine Group of Young Filipinos"**



A Fine Group of Young Filipinos

Source: *The Voice of the Negro*

Confidence, shame, boredom, resistance, anxiety, and suspicion all find their way into the camera. While Fortune's final objectives may not have been transparent to the average Filipino that he met, his presence was cause for notice. When analyzing this picture, the first two boys on the left display a confident, relaxed friendship and familiarity with each other as one casually stands with his hands in his pockets while his good friend rests an elbow on his shoulder. Together they look directly into the camera with a courage and resolve that seems to emanate from their togetherness. The next boy

is clearly annoyed and oppositional to the camera as his boredom and dislike for the entire procedure is reflected in his impatient hands resting on his hips. The next three boys seem guarded and suspicious as two have their hands crossed in defiance and a third gives a stone-cold stare into the camera. Perhaps most striking of all, the youngest boy, placed centrally for all to see, is photographed stark naked with his hands embarrassingly guarding his genitals as if to protect his emerging Filipino manhood from the probing gaze of the visiting American cohort. The boy seems acutely aware at a very young age of his own racial difference relative to his visitors. He appears to have full knowledge that his nudity was an acceptable code of dress in one social context but would be looked upon disdainfully in another. The oldest boy/man is holding a stick and is the only one in the group wearing shoes and smiling which begs the question of his relationship to the other boys and why he carries the switch. The last three boys fade into the background of the picture with at least one looking off in another direction and the last in line having his face blurred almost unrecognizably. While many American and African American viewers of this photo may have seen in it a need for racial uplift and the civilizing of the Filipino, Fortune's insistence that the boys were "fine" might argue otherwise. The boys' assertions of their own subjectivity likewise proved to the careful observer that, as Fortune insisted, "the Filipino is all right." The audience was not being asked to look down upon Filipinos but, through Fortune, required to "put yourself in his place."<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Fortune, "The Filipino," (March and June 1904).

## The Prison Industrial Complex and Jim Crow Imperialism

After returning to Manila, Fortune encountered one more thriving industry on the islands—the American-run police force. While enjoying a night on the town with Captain Woods and “a negro lawyer named Garner,” Fortune and his party found themselves arrested by the Manila police on dubious charges.<sup>128</sup> While accounts vary widely, it seems likely that the white officers demanded that the black men “get off the sidewalk” which led to a verbal altercation and the arrest of Garner, Woods, or possibly another black man driving a carriage.<sup>129</sup> Fortune and the remaining members of his party followed their handcuffed friends to the police station where they continued to protest the charges and attempted to post bail for their incarcerated companion. At some point Fortune decided to pull rank and announce “I am T. Thomas Fortune. I am the special agent of the United States Treasury. That’s who I am.” Afterwards the confrontation quickly became physical as Captain Woods was “clubbed” and Fortune was charged with “resisting officers of the law.”<sup>130</sup> No stranger to courtrooms, violence, and legal challenges to injustice, Fortune brought countercharges against the arresting officer.<sup>131</sup> Only with the help of the Vice-Governor of the Philippines, who appeared with Fortune in court, were the charges against him and the other black men dropped.<sup>132</sup> State violence had jailed them and only an equal amount of access to state power would

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<sup>128</sup> Teresa Dean, “*The Widow*” in the South (New York: Smart Set Publishing, 1903), 130.

<sup>129</sup> *Manila American*, May 7, 1903.

<sup>130</sup> *Cleveland Gazette*, May 23, 1903.

<sup>131</sup> Fortune individually and with the help of his forerunner to the Afro-American Council, the Afro-American League, launched one of the first legal challenges to segregation in 1890 when Fortune was refused a beer at a local tavern in New York City and successfully sued the owner for violating New York’s civil rights laws. See *New York Age*, June 7, 1890 and November 14, 1891. Fortune had also been arrested previously under the pretense of blocking a sidewalk during another protest against a Jim Crow theater in Brooklyn. See *New York Sun* November 1, 1897 and *Richmond Planet*, November 6, 1897.

<sup>132</sup> *Manila American*, May 8, 1903 and May 6, 1903.

free them. Fortune hastily left the islands on the next steamship back to the American mainland.

The incident left an indelible mark on Fortune's mission and its future prospects. White papers in the Philippines resented the fact that Fortune saw the police as "po whit trash" and that he was their equal." One paper offered the arrest as proof that African Americans were "the cause of the racial trouble in Dixie land" and that "the Black Man has Not Yet Demonstrated that he Can Run the Philippines." The paper's reporter called him "T. Thomas Titmouse" and hoped that the event would let him know exactly "where he fit."<sup>133</sup> A white newspaper in Trenton, New Jersey viewed the arrest as reflecting poorly not only on Fortune but the state of affairs in the Philippines in general, saying Fortune had "brought no credit to his adopted state."<sup>134</sup>

When the news reached African Americans on the home front, many expressed disgraced to learn that their representative had been involved in what was now being sensationalized as a "street brawl" instead of an act of police brutality and Southern (in)justice abroad. Strangely echoing white papers in Manila, many African Americans read the arrest as a sign that colonization would prove disastrous. A black newspaper in St. Louis offered the arrest as proof that Fortune "was a dangerous leader and should be keep[sic] in the background."<sup>135</sup> A black state senator from Ohio, John P. Green, in an open letter to Fortune told him: "you speedily made an ass of yourself and disgraced

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<sup>133</sup> *Manila American*, May 6, 1903.

<sup>134</sup> *Trenton Times*, May 21, 1903 and June 29, 1903.

<sup>135</sup> *St. Louis Palladium*, May 23, 1903.

your office.”<sup>136</sup> Years later, *The Broad Axe* still remembered the event as one in which Fortune “brought dishonor on the entire Negro race.”<sup>137</sup>

The *Colored American* was one of the few papers that saw through the propaganda coming from white papers in Manila and declared that Fortune “ran up against the scum of the Army” in the form of “idle vicious southerners” who were “the material from which lynching parties are recruited.” The paper championed Fortune’s battle against Jim Crow abroad and lamented the reign of former Confederates in the Philippines who “afflict the brown skinned Philippino [sic] as they and their class afflict the Southern Negro.” The paper proudly declared that the Manila police force had “awakened the wrong customer” as Fortune was “an exceedingly warm proposition under any circumstances.” The paper hoped the event would cause “some of Manila’s official heads to fall into the basket of decapitation before the Commissioner [Fortune] consents to let up.”<sup>138</sup> The *Colored American* was joined by the *Freeman*, which encouraged everyone to “ignore the dirty mouthing of those sap-headed imbeciles over in the Philippines who hounded [Fortune] and hampered his efforts during his recent official sojourn there.”<sup>139</sup> While it is unclear if Fortune ever pursued further action in response to his arrest, when he returned home the storm of controversy surrounding the future of black colonization to the Philippines went well beyond the Manila police department.

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<sup>136</sup> *Washington Bee*, September 12, 1903.

<sup>137</sup> *Broad Axe*, September 2, 1905.

<sup>138</sup> *Colored American*, June 13, 1903.

<sup>139</sup> *The Freeman*, February 6, 1904.

## Selling Colonization

While questions certainly remained, Fortune received a hero's welcome by many African Americans upon his return to America despite his very public arrest. On June 26, 1903, an extravagant banquet was held in Washington D.C. to honor Fortune and hear about his future plans for the Philippines. In covering the event the *Colored American* decided on the subtitle: "Two Races Outside of the Constitution, but Under the Flag." Billed as "a feast of reason and a flow of soul," forty members of Washington D.C.'s elite black community dined on Roquefort cheese, little neck clams, filet of beef, fresh salmon, and other delicacies while smoking cigars amidst the candelabras and "huge boquets [sic] of American beauty and Marciel Neil roses." As the evening's distinguished guest, Fortune was lauded as "The Wizard of the Colored Press" and a "veteran Chieftain" by his cohort of fellow black luminaries that included Gov. P.B.S. Pinchback, Judge Robert Heberton Terrell, and Recorder of Deeds John C. Dancy. Fortune, as "Our President" was heralded "today the most popular leader" in the black community. As he took to the podium he called upon his fellow black citizens to "speak out in clarion tones for justice to the wronged and oppressed, for human rights, and for law and order." He boomed that "[w]e stand upon the threshold of great events" where "[e]rror cannot prevail if truth will combat it." Surprisingly, the Philippines had injected him with a new optimism and a confidence that things might finally be different for African Americans and that "the great republic will not disregard their prayer." Fresh off his trip, and with plans for future colonization stirring about, Fortune promised that "all men who fear God and love their country may take heart of hope." Continuing prophetically in this religious register, Fortune, as if shouting from Zion, proclaimed:

“Behold, the dawn cometh, and the black shadows of night shall be pierced by the rays of God’s light.”

Moving from superlatives to specific considerations, Fortune said that in the Philippines “here is another and mighty problem of race squarely under the American flag and clean out from under the American Constitution.” In referring to the plight of Filipinos, Fortune re-stated his prior contention that “we are companions of theirs” and “stand largely where they stand—outside of the American Constitution, but under the American flag.” While admitting that some may see African Americans and Filipinos as “strange bedfellows,” Fortune argued that black migration to the Philippines might “suggest a solution of two race problems” rather than one. His interracial Philippine alliance would banish white Americans from the islands as “the white man cannot live in the Philippines except as a parasite; he may suck blood there, but he can create none.” African Americans, on the other hand, could give “new life” to the Philippines by developing the islands’ “agricultural and mineral resources” that were abundant “beyond the dreams of avarice.”<sup>140</sup>

This rousing speech, reprinted widely in the black press, spoke directly to an African American populace that even before Fortune landed in Manila had already been moved “into a fever of excitement over the specter of an exodus supposed to be in process of incubation.” The “Special Commissioner T. Thomas Fortune” was lauded “incubator in chief.”<sup>141</sup> The continued excitement showed little signs of abating as Fortune officially recommended that Booker T. Washington be appointed governor of

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<sup>140</sup> *Colored American*, July 4, 1903.

<sup>141</sup> *Colored American*, January 24, 1903.

the Philippines to move the project forward.<sup>142</sup> Upon hearing the news, one black newspaper said “[w]e beg to amend by nominating T. Thomas Fortune” for Governor of the Philippines instead. The paper reasoned that Washington was too valuable on the home front to strike out into a new arena that Fortune had just spent the last six months getting to know so well.<sup>143</sup> Several other papers set their sights a bit lower on the colonial administrative pole and instead asked “[w]hy not push that most eminently qualified philosopher, economist and man of affairs, T. Thomas Fortune for a place on the Philippine commission?”<sup>144</sup> Simultaneously, other black thinkers called for “a further investigation on the part of the Government by a commission of white and colored Americans, and natives of the foreign possessions” to explore in depth the feasibility of black colonization from all angles. This inclusion of all major stakeholders in the shaping of a future Philippine nation echoed Fortune’s insistence upon an interracial democracy for people of color in the Philippines. According to those supporting Fortune’s plan, such a course was deemed necessary in part because “the United States Government is now a world power” and “[n]o great world-power can afford to allow its usefulness to be circumscribed by color-prejudice.”<sup>145</sup>

## Conclusion

In some ways Fortune’s mission was doomed from the start. In the first place, the political will simply did not exist to properly fund black colonization. Even if

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<sup>142</sup> *The Freeman* (Indianapolis), July 4, 1903.

<sup>143</sup> *Augusta Chronicle*, July 11, 1903.

<sup>144</sup> *The Freeman* (Indianapolis), December 5, 1903 under the heading “The Man in the Moon Might Tell.” See also *Colored American* December 19, 1903 under the heading “I Must a’ been a’ Dreaming.”

<sup>145</sup> *Colored American*, May 23, 1903.

funding could have been secured, however, the American empire and its governing institutions were utterly incapable of functioning with the level of coordination required to bring together private capital, military enforcement, and the various civilian branches of government that such a massive relocation of American citizens would have demanded. Black colonization to the Philippines would have required the marshaling of an unprecedented level of state mobilization and communication that the newly experimenting American empire simply did not yet possess. If nothing else, Fortune's journey demonstrated that this early American empire was not ruled by rational, competent technocrats capable of significant large-scale projects.

Much as historian Richard White has chronicled in the building of the nineteenth-century overland American empire, the diffused whims of local self-interest, personal relationships, and individual, free-range government agents often proceeded with minimal federal oversight and accountability in the Philippines—plundering wherever they found an opening.<sup>146</sup> Like the transcontinental railroad, American empire was not built by a highly organized, well-conceived federal state but by a series of violent failures underwritten only by a scant few, loosely defined principles. While powerful, American empire always projected a higher level of coherence and competence than it ever possessed. Rather than a twentieth-century orchestration of modernity, American empire stands as the scattered remnants of a nineteenth century still scrambling to be reborn.

For African Americans, already facing an inconsistently enforced set of highly-localized Jim Crow regulations, this idea of a ‘strong weak-state’ that lashed out

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<sup>146</sup> Richard White, *Railroaded*.

violently in its impotence was nothing new. As Fortune discovered in the Philippines, partnering with American industries and American political institutions in the hopes of liberating African Americans from many of these same forces—already working in different and often contradictory directions within the American empire itself—was a proposition fraught with difficulty. The line between friend and foe in this struggle for freedom was blurred at best. While hoping for a new life an ocean away from the Jim Crow South was an understandable desire, what Fortune brought back from the Philippines was an acknowledgement that African Americans would need to work beyond (and around) the federal government in any future liberation efforts.

Given these complex fissures, African Americans were rarely passive recipients of empire, but active agents contesting its everyday terms and shaping its course.<sup>147</sup> Fortune would return from the Philippines not as a watered-down moderate statesman but a more radical figure than ever. His insistence upon black organizing and direct pressure only accelerated. He also increasingly saw the world through an ever-widening international framework—finishing his life as the editor of Marcus Garvey's *Negro World* in the 1920's. By then, it had become clear to Fortune, and many other African Americans, that making compromises with an emerging American empire, or somehow

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<sup>147</sup> John Cullen Gruesser, *The Empire Abroad and the Empire at Home: African American Literature and the Era of Overseas Expansion* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012) gracefully details the wide arch of African American responses both for and against American empire and shows how these responses by individual black writers changed over time in response to the shifting racial conditions of African Americans on the home front. At the same time, however, other African Americans like Fortune, along with many of the black soldiers who lived in the Philippines, vacillated both internally and in their writings relative to American empire. At any given moment individual African Americans acted not simply as either vocal protestors or supportive cheerleaders but rather fully engaged political actors hoping to re-define the coordinates of the American state and empire itself. These black state crafters not only hoped to advance African American interests abroad but also demonstrated a deep concern for other colonized people and the various global economic concerns that they were jointly enmeshed in. In short, individual African Americans, much less black people as a whole, were rarely blind ideologues either for or against imperialism but displayed a much more complex, pragmatic, and nuanced set of approaches to American incursions abroad.

trying to grab its erratic wheelhouse and steer its course, was a fool's errand. America's inability to control itself or deliver on even its own most basic promises to its citizens and subjects proved the only constant—both at home and abroad. America's empire was an empire of chaos.

## **Chapter 3:**

### **Virginia in the Pacific:**

#### **Helen James and the Transnational Circuits of Industrial Education**

“Cotton may yet be king in the Hawaiian Islands”

----*The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, 1909<sup>1</sup>

On April 18th, 1910, Helen James, a black teacher from Connecticut, was back home “across the big waters.”<sup>2</sup> Her former student, Tsuma Hamada, had moved as well. No longer Helen’s pupil at the Kona Orphanage on Hawai‘i, Tsuma was adjusting to the rhythms of plantation life at the Ewa sugar mill on the neighboring island of Oahu.<sup>3</sup> Helen’s efforts, however, may have spared her former pupil from the back-breaking grind of perpetual field work and gang labor—practices Tsuma had previously known under Helen’s direction at the “orphanage farm.”<sup>4</sup> Tsuma, in a carefully handwritten letter, informed Helen that she was now serving white people in the plantation’s big house. She secured a job as a domestic tending to the children of a Mr. Alexander M.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, October 21, 1909. This quote was eventually picked up and critiqued by Southern newspapers including *The Charlotte News*, November 20, 1909 and the *Columbia State* (S.C.). The *Columbia State*’s critique found its way back to Hawai‘i where it was re-printed in full under the headline “Southern Paper Objects to Hawaii Cotton Claims” in *The Hawaiian Star*, December 31, 1909.

<sup>2</sup> Tsuma Hamada to Helen James, April 18, 1910, Folder 3, Box 3, Frank P. and Helen Chisholm Family Papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the Kona Orphanage see the section below as well as the file about its founder Alice Beard at the Jean Greenwell Archive at the Kona Historical Society, Kealakekua, Hawai‘i.

<sup>4</sup> The Kona Orphanage was called an “orphanage farm” by Alice Beard’s obituary writer in *West Hawai‘i Today*, November 19, 1989.

McKeever, the “head *luna*” [overseer] of the Ewa plantation.”<sup>5</sup> McKeever rode a horse and carried a whip. Tsuma was fifteen years old.

In addition to American agribusiness, another force loomed large over the lives of both Tsuma and Helen. Just four miles to the east of Ewa was the bustling port of Pearl Harbor, the oldest American overseas military base in the world. American warships making a right turn out of the harbor in route to their missions in Asia could easily observe and monitor the sugar production at Ewa. This was no idle presence. When workers in Hawai‘i organized an ‘olohani (strike) the U.S. military was known to intervene on behalf of the planters with intelligence, counter-surveillance, and even overt violence.<sup>6</sup> Older workers on the plantation would have certainly told Tsuma many *mo‘olelos* (epic stories) chronicling the events of 1893. That year American marines landed in nearby Honolulu Harbor to consolidate the white planters’ *coup d'état* of the entire Kingdom of Hawai‘i. Tsuma was in occupied territory.<sup>7</sup> Even with her Hampton-trained teacher thousands of miles across the Pacific Ocean she knew she was being watched.

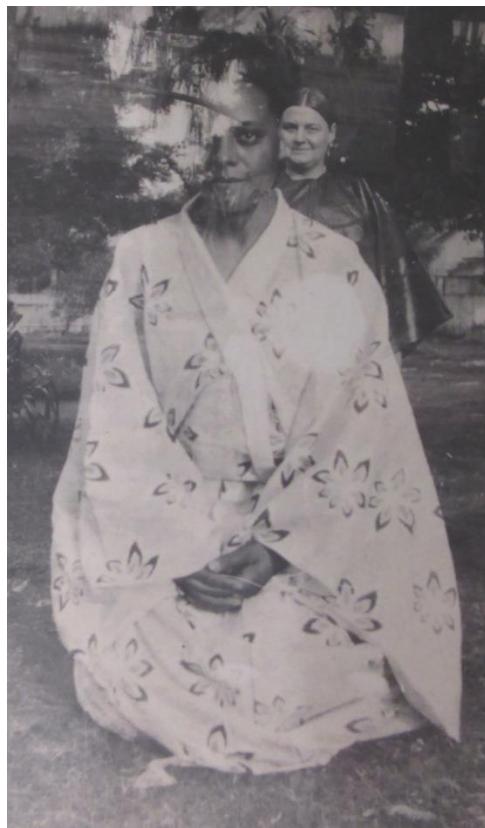
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<sup>5</sup> Hamada to James, April 18, 1910, Chisholm Papers. For more on McKeever who would leave the Ewa plantation in 1919 to manage a new mill on the island of Negros in the Philippines on behalf of its owner, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association see *Sugar: An English-Spanish Technical Journal Devoted to Sugar Production*, Vol. 21, No. 1, New York, January, 1919 and *The Louisiana Planter and Sugar Manufacturer*, Vol. 63, No. 2, New Orleans, July 12, 1919.

<sup>6</sup> For evidence of military counter-surveillance and intelligence on behalf of the planters as early as 1920 see Folder 40, Box 2, Pioneer Mill Company Records, Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives, Hawaiian Collection, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Library. For the expansion of this practice into full blown martial law during World War II see Moon-Kie Jung, *Reworking Race: The Making of Hawaii’s Interracial Labor Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 132–40. For perhaps the most spectacular use of state resources to put down striking workers see the account of the Hanapēpē Massacre in John E. Reinecke, *The Filipino Piecemeal Sugar Strike of 1924-1925*, Vol. 3. (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1996), 75–88.

<sup>7</sup> For more on The Kingdom of Hawai‘i’s legal status as an sovereign constitutional monarchy occupied by the American military see Sai, *Ua Mau Ke Ea Sovereignty Endures*; Sai, "The American Occupation of the Hawaiian Kingdom" and Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*.

**Figure 11. Helen James, c. 1902**



Source: Emory University Archives

Indeed, the pressure seemed to be getting to Tsuma. The freedom she once imagined in Kona had given way to the stifling presence of American life and Western modernity more broadly. It extended daily to her very body. In the hot Hawaiian tropics she was forced to wear “quite long dresses which I hate, and also shoes and stocking which I very much dislike.” The rigors were so invasive that Tsuma actually yearned for better days gone by when she worked barefoot at Kona’s industrial orphanage tilling the fields, picking the coffee, and milking the cows.<sup>8</sup> She also yearned to be reunited with her loving teacher. “I do not attend school. I only wish that I could, but I still keep on trusting and hoping to attend school some day again,” she said. But Tsuma was now in

<sup>8</sup> *Report of Kona Orphanage from December 1899 to June 30, 1904*, (Honolulu: Hawaiian Gazette, 1905) in Mary Beard Folder, Jean Greenwell Archive, Kona Historical Society, Kealakekua, Hawai‘i .

the grasp of American capitalists. The industrial education that had promised her so much had revealed its true design. It now appeared shallow and insincere. Her high hopes had been shattered—her spirit nearly crushed. Rather than inspire and liberate, Tsuma’s industrial education, imparted to her by her well-meaning black teacher, had silenced her. While struggling to stay upbeat, Tsuma told Helen somberly, “you will remember how I used to whisper in school hour, well now I’m as quiet as a lamb, no talking.”<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 12. Child Workers Tilling the Fields at the Kona Orphanage**



Source: the Jean Greenwell Archive at the Kona Historical Society

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<sup>9</sup> Tsuma Hamada to Helen James, April 18, 1910, Chisholm Papers.

This chapter explores how the transnational forces of American slavery, emancipation, and empire linked together the lives of black internationalists like Helen James with everyday people of color in Hawai‘i like Tsuma Hamada. It does so primarily by tracing those forces through the voluminous letters of Helen James. Between 1902 and 1909 Helen taught at the Kona Orphanage on Hawai‘i, worked the kitchen at the Kamehameha School for Girls on Oahu, and taught again on the Sea Islands of Georgia. Building upon the work of Gary Okihiro, this story unfolds amidst the fluid transnational history of industrial education.<sup>10</sup> This arm of American empire first began in Hawai‘i during the slave era and was then transmitted to Freedman’s Bureau schools after emancipation before returning back again to Hawai‘i and other colonized islands through Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes in the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> At every step in this indoctrination process the end goal was always the same—to extract as much labor as possible from African Americans and Hawaiians both after and during their industrial education. Helen’s tenuous position meant that she was both subjected to the racialized discipline of this American educational empire while at the same time being asked to promulgate it abroad among her students in Hawai‘i. In mapping her intellectual trajectory this persistent tension was never fully resolved. She came to Hawai‘i professing answers, but many of her own questions about the reach of American

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<sup>10</sup> See Okihiro, *Island World*, 98–134.

<sup>11</sup> For more on the exporting of industrial education to American occupied Haiti see Brandon R. Bryd, *An Experiment in Self-Government: Haiti in the African-American Political Imagination, 1863-1915* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming). For this process in Cuba see Frank Andre Guridy, *Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a World of Empire and Jim Crow* (University of North Carolina Press, 2010). For Puerto Rico see Jose-Manuel Navarro, *Creating Tropical Yankees: Social Science Textbooks and U.S. Ideological Control in Puerto Rico, 1898-1908*, (New York: Routledge, 2002). For the Philippines see Glenn Anthony May, “The Business of Education in the Colonial Philippines, 1909-30,” in Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, eds., *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009). For a domestic account of industrial education in the South and how it played into black freedom struggles during Reconstruction see Hilary Green, *Educational Reconstruction: African American Schools in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

slavery and its empire remained largely unanswered. Hawai‘i, if anything, revealed how deep and wide the gap between labor “discipline” and opportunity really were.

### “The Things that Were Behind”<sup>12</sup>

Slave patrols chased Helen James her entire life. Despite being born in the North on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1876, the memory of America’s domestic slave catchers stocked her earliest childhood moments in Hartford, Connecticut. Both of her parents were fugitives who had run away from slavery with little more than a demand for self-ownership. Her mother was a white-skinned, mixed-race woman whose white Alabama father was also her master.<sup>13</sup> Much like Ellen Craft, her mother evaded slave patrols as a child by cross-dressing as a white boy until she reached her refuge in New Haven, Connecticut.<sup>14</sup> Helen was told by her mother that during the escape several wanted posters described “one boy and three girls” so “[m]y brother was dressed as a little girl and my sisters and I as boys. We traveled by night and rested by day.”<sup>15</sup> Helen’s white grandfather accompanied Helen’s mother and no doubt helped bolster this new narrative. Once in New Haven, however, their white bodies became black again as they once again identified with both the race and the gender that they had been assigned at birth.<sup>16</sup> Helen’s grandfather established a trust fund for his newly freed family before returning again to Alabama. When he arrived home, his family— who were the co-

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<sup>12</sup> Helen James, “Ancestry,” Folder 8, Box 12 Chisholm Papers. This partial memoir was written 1918.

<sup>13</sup> Helen James Chisholm, “Unto the Third and Fourth Generation,” Folder 8, Box 12, Chisholm Papers. This partial memoir was written 1918.

<sup>14</sup> For more on the escape of William and Ellen Craft see Barbara McCaskill, *Love, Liberation, and Escaping Slavery: William and Ellen Craft in Cultural Memory* (University of Georgia Press, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Helen James, “Ancestry,” Chisholm Papers.

<sup>16</sup> For more on how the categories of race, gender, and sexuality intersected for African Americans see Siobhan B. Somerville, *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000). Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

owners of his mistress and children—shot him dead for stealing their property. As Helen traveled around the world, this violent family origin story traveled with her as well.<sup>17</sup>

Her father was more guarded but no less haunted by American slavery. Helen remembered that “my father was never in communication with any of his people” down South. “Whatever ‘the things that were behind’ from which he ran we never knew to forget. If there was sadness or sorrow or misery, our little spirits were never saddened by the tales of them.”<sup>18</sup> His only outlet was song. Helen remembered her father gathering up his children after work and singing “stories to those who climbed upon his knee.”<sup>19</sup> He would chant the intelligence reports, otherwise known as Negro spirituals, that helped him survive slavery and its slave “padder-rollers” [patrollers]. Helen reflected on “[w]hat a terrible impression the padder-rollers must’ve made on dear father, for those baby day tales were full of padder-rollers.”<sup>20</sup> As a dark-skinned black man Helen’s “father was different in type from mother. He showed plainly that his ancestors were of African extraction.”<sup>21</sup> He thus had fewer options in his racial performances than either Helen or her mother.

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<sup>17</sup> Helen James, “Unto the Third and Fourth Generation,” Chisholm Papers.

<sup>18</sup> Helen James, “Ancestry,” Chisholm Papers.

<sup>19</sup> Helen James, “Unto the Third and Fourth Generation,” Chisholm Papers.

<sup>20</sup> Helen James, “Ancestry,” Chisholm Papers.

<sup>21</sup> Helen James, “Unto the Third and Fourth Generation,” Chisholm Papers.

**Figure 13. Helen James, c. 1914**



Source: Emory University Archives

These internal family dynamics meant that Helen and her siblings all had quite different racialization experiences. Helen remembered that “[l]ike baby kittens, the children varied in looks. Some were like mother and some like father.” She remembered as a child that she and her siblings “sometimes compared to see whose hands were white and whose were not.” Random white people in her life would do the same—something Helen had no patience for. When a white dentist pulled her tooth and thought it appropriate to ‘compliment’ her on “how white your hands are” and how she “must have white blood” Helen defensively growled that “I have not one drop of white blood. My mother and father are both colored.”<sup>22</sup> This assertion of racial pride, undergirded by Helen’s conceptualization of a wide umbrella of blackness, was only a

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<sup>22</sup> Helen James, “Unto the Third and Fourth Generation, Chisholm Papers.

partial lie. While it did involve a measure of concealment and deceit—different yet familiar to the white-skinned African Americans who would deny having any black ancestry—it was also a common black social practice and political refrain at the time.<sup>23</sup>

Yet despite Helen's assertions, her mother was most often read publicly as white. Helen remembered with great pain that her childhood teacher told her with astonishment “one would not know that your mother was a colored woman” to which Helen snapped back “why should they?”<sup>24</sup> By challenging the naturalness of race as located in the body and insisting upon her and her white-skinned mother’s blackness beyond a visual register, Helen may not have known it, but she was making room for her own travels within, around, and even through the color line abroad. The visual regime of race that she confronted in her childhood would only become complicated when she moved to Hawai‘i.

But race was a multi-sensory construction for Helen as well. The fact that her mother grew up in a relatively comfortable, educated, and integrated black middle class in New Haven, meant that Helen and her siblings didn’t audibly sound like many of the black Southerners she would soon meet at Hampton University. While receiving private drama lessons, Helen’s white teacher remarked on how ‘well’ she spoke by stating “[w]ere I in a room where I could not see you, but heard you speaking, I should never suspect that you had Negro blood.”<sup>25</sup> The implication that Helen’s voice did not match her body (and that her black body would be better if it remained hidden) was a

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<sup>23</sup> For more on the less prevalent practice of white-skinned African Americans who abandoned their families and denied their black ancestry see Allyson Hobbs, *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> Helen James, “Unto the Third and Fourth Generation,” Chisholm Papers.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

problematic assumption for Helen's teacher—as well as a problem for Helen. It was a disjuncture that they both attempted to remedy. A strange translation procedure soon began as this white drama teacher tried to teach Helen how to 'act black' and more importantly how to 'talk black.'<sup>26</sup> Perhaps Helen undertook this study as a means of preparing herself to blend in at Hampton University and to avoid any accusations that she was somehow 'acting white.' Not surprisingly, this attempt to learn how to be black from a white drama teacher—who was herself only familiar with a gross caricature of blackness—did not work. As the drama teacher "gave me recitations in Negro dialect...I was quite dismayed to find that I had not that form of speech well developed." This dismay of not fitting into the discrete categories demanded by American racialization may have made life more difficult for Helen in the U.S. but it would also soon make her a capable black internationalist. She would always undertake her journey abroad, however, with the baggage of these early childhood experiences with race, much like her parents before her. Helen readily admitted "those personal thrusts always hurt."<sup>27</sup>

When she arrived at Hampton University in 1897 it proved a welcome sanctuary. While the historically black college was not necessarily designed to offer young women like Helen a refuge from American racism, black teachers and students had already begun turning it into just that. Originally, Hampton and other historically black colleges

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<sup>26</sup> For more on the concept or 'translation' in the black diaspora see Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003). For the performativity of race, especially among black women, see Jayna Brown, *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2008); Daphne A. Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2006). For how these everyday performances intersect with more formal dramatic stagings of race see Karen Sotropoulos, *Staging Race: Black Performers in Turn of the Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Louis Chude-Sokei, *The Last "Darky": Bert Williams, Black-on-Black Minstrelsy, and the African Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> Helen James, "Unto the Third and Fourth Generation," Chisholm Papers.

and universities (HBCUs) were decidedly not part of any black community building project at all but, instead, the transnational outgrowth of an American colonial project in the Pacific. Shortly after arrival at Hampton, Helen would certainly have been informed that the industrial education that she was about to undertake in Virginia originated on the island of Hawai‘i. What she did not know was that she would be teaching in the Pacific herself within a few short years.<sup>28</sup>

### “Influences of Life in Hawaii”<sup>29</sup>

The early twentieth century world of industrial education that Helen encountered was rooted directly in the wider global movements of slavery, empire, and Reconstruction in the nineteenth century. Samuel Chapman Armstrong, the founder of her beloved Hampton University, was born in Wailuku on the Island of Maui in 1839. He would eventually become the architect of the American model of industrial education made famous by his prized student Booker T. Washington. While Washington and Armstrong were royalty by the time Helen reached Hampton, Armstrong owed his start to the white planter/missionaries of the Hawaiian Islands. Washington stated that “[w]e always felt that many of the ideas and much of the inspiration [Armstrong] used to such good effect in this country he got in Hawaii.”<sup>30</sup> Armstrong himself called Hampton

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<sup>28</sup> For more on the links between Hawaiian and American industrial education see Gary Okihiro, *Island World*.

<sup>29</sup> Samuel Chapman Armstrong, “Influences of Life in Hawaii,” Hawai‘i, Correspondence Box, Samuel Chapman Armstrong Papers, Hampton University Archives, Hampton, Virginia.

<sup>30</sup> *Dedication of the General Samuel Chapman Armstrong Memorial*, January 30, 1913, Pauahi Hall, Oahu College, B, Ar683d, P, Hawaiian Mission Children’s Society, Honolulu as quoted in Okihiro, *Island World*, 117.

University “[a]n idea transplanted from the Pacific ocean [that] has flourished wonderfully in old Virginia.”<sup>31</sup>

Armstrong knew that “[i]t meant something to the Hampton school and perhaps to the ex-slaves of America, that, from 1820 to 1860, the distinctively missionary period, there was worked out in the Hawaiian Islands the problem of the emancipation, enfranchisement, and Christian civilization of a dark-skinned Polynesian people in many respects like the negro race.”<sup>32</sup> This linking of African American slavery with the Hawaiian plantation was something that Helen and other black observers of Hawai‘i, including T. Thomas Fortune, would readily note as well.<sup>33</sup> The idea that industrial education techniques had supposedly solved the labor problem in Hawai‘i, and could do the same in the postemancipation America South, proved an enduring one.

Armstrong’s parents were among the earliest white Americans to arrive in this “distinctly missionary period.” Yet proselytizing was not the only item on the agenda. New England abolitionists, desperate to prove that their wage labor system could successfully manage workers of color better than slavery, mixed cotton, sugar, and other staple crop production along with their Hawaiian missionary work. This caused Armstrong to note that “[t]he missionary fathers, like the slaveholders, practically regarded the Hawaiians as a type inferior to themselves.”<sup>34</sup> Industrial education was quickly deemed necessary to close this supposed gap, but in doing so, the exploitive,

<sup>31</sup> Samuel Chapman Armstrong, undated autobiography, Folder 28, Series 1, Box 3, Armstrong Papers, Williams College as quoted in Okihiro, *Island World*, 116.

<sup>32</sup> Edwin Start, “General Armstrong and the Hampton Institute,” *New England Magazine*, no. 6 (May 1892), 444.

<sup>33</sup> See Thomas Fortune, “The Filipino: The Filipinos Do Not Understand the Prejudice of the White American Against Black Americans,” in *The Voice of the Negro*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (May, 1904); T. Thomas Fortune, “Politics in the Philippine Islands,” in *The Independent*, September 24, 1903 and Fortune’s editorial in *The Freeman* July 4, 1903.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Armstrong Folder, 1805-1860, M5, B, Ar5, Hawaiian Mission Children’s Society, Honolulu as quoted in Okihiro, *Island World*, 100.

coercive aspects of slavery that the abolitionist-inclined missionaries claimed to despise were soon being reproduced on Hawai‘i sugar plantations.

Indeed, missionary work, abolitionist thought, and labor exploitation were as integral to Armstrong’s early childhood as slavery was to Helen’s. Armstrong remembered hearing the Reverend Jonathan Green, founder of the Wailuku Seminary (which still stands today as the Bailey House Museum), preach the anti-slavery gospel in Armstrong’s hometown of Wailuku, Maui. Armstrong said that it was from this “devoted abolitionist” that “I obtained my first ideas of the Negro race.”<sup>35</sup> With no sense of irony, however, this same abolitionist preacher was also instrumental in some of the first industrial cotton production in the Hawaiian Islands. In 1835, ninety yards of cotton were produced at Reverend Green’s euphemistically named Wailuku Seminary.<sup>36</sup> On the day that Armstrong was born, one of the first things he may have seen were native Hawaiians picking cotton.

Not long after the Wailuku experiment, American planter Charles R. Smith grew fifty-five acres of cotton in the late 1830’s just down the coastline from the Armstrongs in Haiku, Maui.<sup>37</sup> Other early examples of cultivation soon sprouted up in Hana, Maui in 1836, and at the port of Kailua, Hawai‘i in 1837, where “Governor Kauakini erected a stone cotton factory.”<sup>38</sup> That factory may have still been standing when Helen arrived in Kailua and was located only a few miles north of the Kona Orphanage. By 1856 Sea

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<sup>35</sup> Samuel Chapman Armstrong, “Influences of Life in Hawaii,” Armstrong Papers.

<sup>36</sup> The Pacific Commercial Advertiser, April 30, 1857.

<sup>37</sup> The Pacific Commercial Advertiser, April 30, 1857.

<sup>38</sup> The Pacific Commercial Advertiser, May 13, 1904.

Island cotton and the cotton gin had both taken hold in Hawai‘i as part of the global cotton boom.<sup>39</sup>

As cotton production in Hawai‘i continued through the antebellum period, the planter’s ties to slavery and to the United States deepened as well. When Armstrong left Hawai‘i to lead black Union troops in the Civil War, for example, some of the thread being worn on his soldiers’ uniforms had likely travelled across the ocean from Hawai‘i as well.<sup>40</sup> Much of Hawai‘i’s Sea Island cotton landed in Northern thread manufacturing plants to stitch together the cloth of Union military garments.<sup>41</sup> But Armstrong also brought a more personal knowledge of black culture with him from Hawai‘i. His first encounters with African Americans were in Hawai‘i as “[a] few colored men had appeared at the Islands, and the first colored clergyman I ever heard was in Honolulu.”<sup>42</sup> Above all else, however, it was this intimate knowledge of Hawaiian plantation culture and industrial education that he brought back to America. His father, as a pioneer in the field, was put in charge of managing the entire school system of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i and the elder Armstrong brought his son along for tours of the industrial education programs taking shape around the islands. After careful study, the younger Armstrong reportedly said that “[i]n making the plan of the Hampton Institute, that of the Hilo School seemed the best to follow.”<sup>43</sup> Known later as the Hilo

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<sup>39</sup> For more on this “Empire of Cotton” see Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Vintage, 2014) which does not cover Hawai‘i and gives short treatment to the Pacific in general.

<sup>40</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>41</sup> *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, August 29, 1895. The Advertiser (which exists today as the *Honolulu Star Advertiser*) was one of the papers started by Whitney the other being *Ka Nupepa Kū'oko'a*. For more on the material culture of Civil War clothing see Sarah Weicksel, “The Fabric of War.”

<sup>42</sup> Samuel Chapman Armstrong, “Influences of Life in Hawaii,” Armstrong Papers.

<sup>43</sup> Arthur Howe as President of Hampton University to Ernest A. Lilley as Principal of the Hilo Boarding School, September 16, 1936, Folder 9, Box 1, Hilo Boarding School Records, Lyman House Memorial Museum, Hilo, Hawai‘i.

Boarding School, founded by David Belden Lyman in 1836, this institution served as a venerable lynchpin in the transnational industrial education circuit later advanced by Armstrong.

The model in Hilo was relatively simple. The school survived on child labor, government subsidies, land grants, water rights, corporate partnerships, and missionary donations. Privatizing lands belonging to the Kingdom of Hawai‘i was the first step. Subsequently, expanding these holdings soon became one of the Hilo Boarding School’s earliest missions. After an initial forty acres for the school were “appropriated by the Govt as an endowment to the school” the school’s leadership in 1854 had their eyes on “some 200 or 300 more in prospect for the same object.”<sup>44</sup> With this land they hoped to expand their practice of a “rigid economy in reference to expenditures,” along with a “constant effort to obtain as much labor as practicable from the scholars.”<sup>45</sup> When not put to work on school property, the “scholars” were further ‘trained’ by hiring them out to the Olaa Sugar Company, among others, despite the fact that according to the principal “most of our boys prefer not to go back to the plantation.”<sup>46</sup> Students often revolted by running away from the school and the plantation but not before also running up a debt at the school sundry store.<sup>47</sup> In addition to shaking down impoverished Hawaiian parents and wealthy East Coast churchgoers for further capital, the school constantly applied for increased subsidies from the Kingdom’s public coffers.<sup>48</sup> Yet as

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<sup>44</sup> Titus Coan to Rev. R. Anderson as Secretary of the A.B.C.F.M., June 12, 1854, Folder 2, Box 3 Hilo Boarding School Records.

<sup>45</sup> D.B. Lyman to R Anderson, June 29, 1946, Folder 2, Box 3, Hilo Boarding School Records.

<sup>46</sup> Ernest A. Lilley as Principal of Hilo Boarding School to Gilber Hay as Assistant Manager of the Olaa Sugar Company, June 5, 1935, Folder 22, Box 4, Hilo Boarding School Records.

<sup>47</sup> Unknown Hilo School Official to “Vidal,” August 2, 1919, Box 4, Folder 22, Hilo Boarding School Records.

<sup>48</sup> W. Smith as Secretary of the Education Office to D.B. Lyman, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1848, Folder 3, Box 4, Hilo Boarding School Records.

the city of Hilo grew and the municipal government began to take on the task of providing water to its residents, the Hilo Boarding School held hostage the water they now controlled in an effort to force the city to pay them a higher rate.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, the school was giving away their surplus water free of charge to the Hilo Sugar Company, likely to maintain their ongoing nearly century long partnership with the industry.<sup>50</sup> New England-style capitalism, rebranded as industrial education, thus became the Hawaiian alternative to slavery. This Hawaiian-inspired labor regime would be copied almost to the letter by Armstrong's postemancipation schools in the American South.

Over time the Hilo Boarding School would also foster deep institutional links between and among African American and Hawaiian industrial schools. This thick network would tie together Hampton, Tuskegee, Hilo, Kamehameha Schools, and eventually the Kona Orphanage at which Helen would later teach. These connections went right to the very top of these organizations. In 1889, Miss Cassie A. Reamer, the principal of the Kamehameha Boys Preparatory School in Honolulu, was invited to transfer to the Hilo Boarding School and run it instead.<sup>51</sup> By 1919 these two Hawaiian schools were so intertwined that they contemplated the "interesting suggestion that Hilo Boarding School and Kamehameha be merged."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> C. Wendell Carlsmith to A. H. Armitage as President of the Board of Trustees of the Hilo Boarding School, April 3, 1940, Folder 22, Box 2, Hilo Boarding School Records.

<sup>50</sup> C. Wendell Carlsmith to "Mr. Whyte" at the Hilo Sugar Company, April 4, 1940, Folder 22, Box 2, Hilo Boarding School Records.

<sup>51</sup> Nettie Hammond Lyman, "Notes on the Hilo Boarding School, 1836-1929," Folder 8, Box 1, Hilo Boarding School Records.

<sup>52</sup> E.T. Winant as Trustee of the Bishop Estate to Levi C. Lyman as Hilo Boarding School Principal, Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>, 1919, Folder 21, Box 2, Hilo Boarding School Records.

Once Hampton had been fully established, however, it quickly eclipsed Hilo as the site from which ideas and personnel originated from. The principal of the Kamehameha School for Girls in 1900, Ida M. Pope, came to Hampton while Helen was a student there “to see and study your methods, which have made Hampton Institute so justly celebrated.”<sup>53</sup> Helen and Pope would be reunited in Hawai‘i at Kamehameha and they stayed in contact while Helen was there. Helen would also interact with Charles Barlett Dyke, a former Hampton administrator who had become the principal of Kamehameha by the time she arrived. Kamehameha was trying to actively fill at least one other position at the time with a Hampton employee. Not surprisingly, they wanted “a man of sound judgment and business ability.”<sup>54</sup>

Accounting practices traveled across the Pacific as well. Kamehameha asked Hampton about “your method of dealing through the books with the trade departments.” The central question was whether those manufacturing departments would “charge market rates for your products” to be billed against the books of other Hampton departments as they consumed those products. In determining the profit and loss of each Hampton department, Kamehameha also wanted to know how to book and allocate expenses that were shared school-wide, such as general overhead, administrative staff, and “steam power.” Looking for a more hands-on explanation, Kamehameha’s accountant told his counterpart at Hampton, “I hope someday to visit.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> W.T. Allen as Trustee of the Will of Bernice P. Bishop to Rev. Frissell as Principal of Hampton, Feb 13, 1900, Hawai‘i Correspondence Box, Armstrong Papers.

<sup>54</sup> Education Committee of the Estate of B.P. Bishop to H.B. Frissell as president of Hampton University, April 26, 1904, Hawai‘i Correspondence Box, Armstrong Papers.

<sup>55</sup> W.W. Bristol as Registrar and Business Agent of the Kamehameha Schools to Dr. H.B. Frissell as president of Hampton University, April 11, 1902, Hawai‘i Correspondence Box, Armstrong Papers.

As the institutions' foot soldiers, everyday African Americans like Helen were also shuffled between Hampton and various industrial schools in Hawai'i. Shortly after Helen arrived at the Kona Orphanage, two black Hampton graduates, Mr. and Mrs. John H. Evans, joined her as part of the instructional staff. Mr. Evans was in charge of supervising the children's work on the coffee plantation while Mrs. Edwards taught them at night after they finished work.<sup>56</sup> While at Kona, Helen would also meet David Lyman's son when the Hilo Boarding School's administrators came to visit the upstart Kona Orphanage.<sup>57</sup> Helen desperately wanted to bring Booker T. Washington to the Kona Orphanage in order to further these transpacific exchanges, but Washington died before making it to Hawai'i. In his response to "Miss James" and Alice Beard, Washington expressed regret for not being able to "spare the time" to visit as he was "urged to do so repeatedly" and was "greatly interested in the work you are doing there."<sup>58</sup> When Oahu College in Honolulu, the alma mater of Samuel Chapman Armstrong (and later Barack Obama), unveiled its memorial tribute to Armstrong in 1913, "Mr. C.A. Cottrill, a negro who is collector of the Internal Revenue of this Territory...spoke for the Negro and Hampton."<sup>59</sup> Later, a Hampton graduate Charles Stringer moved to Hilo and in 1936 was known, if not employed, by the Hilo Boarding

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<sup>56</sup> Alice Beard to Helen James, May 26, 1903, Folder 6, Box 2, in Chisholm Papers and *The Southern Workman*, v. 33 (1904), 253.

<sup>57</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 1), April 6, 1903, Folder 6, Box 14, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>58</sup> Booker T. Washington to Alice F. Beard, February 6, 1903, Private Collection of Tom Beard. Much *mahalo* to Pixie Navas at the Kona Historical Society for putting me in contact with Mr. Beard.

<sup>59</sup> A. F. Gribbbs [?] as president of Oahu College to Dr. H.P. Frissell as president of Hampton, January 20, 1913, Hawai'i Correspondence Box, Armstrong Papers.

School.<sup>60</sup> It was this thick network of black, white, and Hawaiian currents that Helen James stepped into when she left Hampton for the Kona Orphanage in 1901.

### **“I’ll Be the Master as Soon as I Can”<sup>61</sup>**

Helen’s primary motivation for migration mirrored that of so many other black soldiers, farmers, cooks, and teachers in the Pacific. “I needed money,” she said. Recruited by a white Hampton teacher, Helen was drawn by the “very good salary” and the chance to “earn very much more in a year than I was earning.” Despite her middle class upbringing she didn’t even have the money to return home to Connecticut to say goodbye to her family before she left. Her mother had passed away and “[f]ather objected very much to the change.”<sup>62</sup> His fear of slave patrols and their legacy made him reluctant to allow her to even return to his home state of Virginia to attend Hampton University. “He felt sure that I would be lynched.” But Helen’s independent mind would not be swayed and she left for Hawai‘i where she believed “[e]verything was beautiful.”<sup>63</sup>

She started by washing dishes. While working the kitchen at Kamehameha Schools in Honolulu was far from a dream job, the layover gave her time to see the bustling city while waiting for her teaching contract to begin in rural Kona. Her first impression was that “Honolulu was a modern city but not a city of Europeans.” She marveled that “you could find any racial admixture out there that you might happen to

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<sup>60</sup> Arthur Howe as President of Hampton University to Ernest A. Lilley as Principal of the Hilo Boarding School, September 16, 1936, Folder 9, Box 1, Hilo Boarding School Records.

<sup>61</sup> Helen James, “Unto the Third and Fourth Generation,” Chisholm Papers. This line was one of the nursery rhymes that she remembers her father singing to her which went “patty – cake, patty – cake, baker’s man, I’ll be the master as soon as I can.”

<sup>62</sup> Helen James, “Ancestry,” Chisholm Papers.

<sup>63</sup> Helen James, “Ancestry,” Chisholm Papers.

seek.” This “island Bohemia” made her feel quite at home, since “the gradations are so subtle that one has the feeling of being with a colored population.” Yet much like today when so many romanticize Hawai‘i’s mixed race population into a post-racial utopia, Helen also saw Honolulu as a place where “[r]aces lose their identity and race distinctions and prejudices become lost.”<sup>64</sup> For Helen, this was clearly more aspirational than observational. Still, if Hawai‘i’s visual diversity could offer her some cover and reprieve after riding the Jim Crow car from Virginia, then so be it. But Helen did not lose her blackness in Hawai‘i. If anything, she found it.

Before she could, however, she had to confront the starkly different racial habitus in the Hawaiian Islands. The social currencies associated with race were, in fact, dramatically different and more complex than in the United States.<sup>65</sup> While Helen herself was often visibly distinct from the average monoracial white person, depending on the season, this didn’t necessarily mean that her body was always read as black in Hawai‘i. Both white Americans and Hawaiians often assumed she was part of that great “island Bohemia” of identities in Hawai‘i. Those who knew her association with Hampton did not make this mistake but meeting new people for Helen was a constant multidirectional game of interracial guessing. Native Hawaiians did not always or immediately see her as racially distinct from themselves. Strangers in the street would

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<sup>64</sup> Helen James, “Ancestry,” Chisholm Papers.

<sup>65</sup> For an excellent example of how the theories of Pierre Bourdieu can be productively applied to mixed race and racially ambitious bodies see Kimberly DaCosta, *Making Multiracials: State, Family, and Market in the Redrawing of the Color Line* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

often ask her questions in Hawaiian expecting her to understand. Helen admitted this was “discomfiting me a little.”<sup>66</sup>

This unwanted racial misidentification was quite similar to what her white-skinned (but black identifying) mother experienced when she was assumed to be white. But in Hawai‘i there was a twist. When Helen was read as Hawaiian as opposed to white, it put her in league not with whiteness but with a group of fellow colonized people of color. Conversely, white teachers, missionaries, and others residents she encountered likely did not see her as one of their own. In Hawai‘i, however, these white residents were willing to interact with her socially as a faux Hawaiian in ways that they might not have with an African American in the U.S. After shedding her Connecticut pale in the deep Hawaiian sun, it appears that Helen was normally read as black, Hawaiian, or on at least one occasion as Puerto Rican, but almost always as someone non-white. This forced her familiar double consciousness into a new form of triple consciousness. It was an extra step that her mother knew all too well. Helen in Hawai‘i had to not only see herself through her own eyes and through the eyes of racist white people projecting black stereotypes but also through the eyes of Hawaiians and whites who were both (*mis*)seeing her as something else altogether. The mental gymnastics required to survive as a white-skinned black women in Hawai‘i who never knew whether she was being treated as black, white, Hawaiian, or something else altogether was, as her letters indicate, exhausting.

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<sup>66</sup> Elisabeth Petry, ed. *Can Anything Beat White?: A Black Family’s Letters* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), 135. This family history written by Ann Petry’s daughter was based on many of the letters in the Yale University collection as well as oral traditions from the family.

After meeting with the deposed Queen Lili‘uokalani and dining with the wife of the man who violently overthrew her, Sanford Dole, Helen was off to Kona.<sup>67</sup> Coffee, cane, and horses dotted the landscape in the rural village as the towering Mauna Kea and the volatile Mauna Loa stood ready to erupt with either lava or ancestral blessings at any given time.<sup>68</sup> In her unpublished memoir, as well as a lengthy essay that later appeared in the Hampton-run *Southern Workman*, Helen detailed her time at the “Kona Orphanage and Industrial School.”<sup>69</sup> She explained to her black and white American audience that “[t]he routine of the school is much as at other industrial schools, the day being from 5 A.M. until 8 P.M.” The time was broken up into three hours of class, one hour of religious services, three square meals, and approximately ten hours of manual labor. Unlike other schools in Hawai‘i or America, however, the school’s founder, Alice Beard, believed in gender equity for her workforce. “The boys cook, wash, and perform all indoor duties as well as the girls,” while the girls were able to “enjoy equally with them the pleasures and benefits of the outdoor work such as picking coffee, cultivating gardens, caring for grounds, etc.” Unlike Kamehameha, which was only open to native Hawaiians, Helen was happy to report that she and Mrs. Beard “made a home for children who really needed a home regardless of the nationality of the child.”<sup>70</sup> Whether this egalitarian, gender neutral, familial domesticity was truly an act of benevolent idealism or simply a pragmatic effort to maximize labor output,

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<sup>67</sup> Helen James, “Ancestry,” Chisholm Papers.

<sup>68</sup> Helen was in Kona to witness the 1903 eruption of Mauna Loa as detailed in Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 2), October 7, 1903, Folder 6, Box 14, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>69</sup> Her Hawaiian years are covered in her memoir under the section “Ancestry” and the untitled essay quoted here is in Folder 9, Box 12, January 15, 1902, Chisholm Papers. It was later published with slight edits as Helen James, “In and About the Kona Orphanage, Hawaii,” *The Southern Workman*, vol. XXXII no. 1, (January, 1903), 338-341.

<sup>70</sup> Helen James, Ancestry, Chisholm Papers.

Helen had convinced herself that this routine was “good exercise for all.”<sup>71</sup> She herself, however, would constantly complain of exhaustion in her diary at one point saying she was “tired to the point of irritation.”<sup>72</sup>

**Figure 14. Children at the Kona Orphanage**



Source: the Kona Historical Society

Coffee, not cotton, was the main export product at the Kona Orphanage. The children “did a large part of the work on a 40 – acre plantation, where coffee was cultivated for the market.” They also worked “on the school farm where the food supply

<sup>71</sup> Helen James, untitled essay, January 15, 1902, Folder 9, Box 12, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>72</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 1), April 8, 1903, Folder 6, Box 14, Chisholm Papers.

was raised.” Small hands proved useful in the cultivation process from picking the berries to separating the seeds (often described as beans) and spreading them out “on large wire trays to dry.” Helen tried to be a hands-on manager, claiming that “I have been in the fields with the children to pick coffee and in the coffeehouse with them when they pulp the coffee and arrange the trays.” The parallels to the cotton plantations that her father and mother had worked as slaves certainly crossed her mind. As children processed the “great sacks carried by horse to the coffeehouse,” older crops were aged three years or longer because “[a]ging it flavors it” and transforms it into “the coffee that brings the best price when sold on the plantations.” That this bitterly labor-intensive commodity was integrated into the global economy is reflected in Helen’s boast that “[f]rom our plantation we shipped to Japan and the United States.”<sup>73</sup>

While coffee kept the lights on, sugar sweetened the deal. In July of 1903, Mrs. Beard had left Helen in charge of the Orphanage as she visited Hampton University to recruit more black teachers and learn new techniques. During that time Helen was putting her accounting skills to work calculating the profit of the Orphanage’s fourteen acres of sugar cane. In the process she procured bids from several competing sugar mills. Helen admitted that sitting across the table from white plantation owners and mill operators while dictating her terms to them was “one of the delights of my position.” After a Mr. Conaul offered her ninety dollars per acre, she struck a deal instead with a “Mr. Edwards of So. Kona” for one hundred dollars per acre. “He was a

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<sup>73</sup> Helen James, Ancestry, Chisholm Papers.

typical Englishman and a perfect gentleman. I enjoyed his visit immensely gaining much as he talked of sugar, coffee, and vanilla production and of the land cultivation.”<sup>74</sup>

However, the cutting of cane did not come without its costs. Given the prevalence of small children and sharp objects, workplace accidents were common. Less than a week before Helen finalized her deal with Mr. Edwards for sugar cane one of the students “Kou cut the end of his finger off” perhaps while cutting the very cane that Helen was selling. On the way back from the doctor, Kou and another orphanage family member Yonekura were thrown from their horse “spilling the carbonic acid which Yonekura was carrying on them and burning them.”<sup>75</sup> Earlier that year, another student Harry Ah Nu also had “a finger cut off in the feed cutter.” Housing conditions were similarly hazardous as the high elevation at Kona meant that often “the children complained so of the cold.”<sup>76</sup>

Adequate food and water were also not guaranteed. Due to an ongoing drought in January of 1904, students had their water rationed and were “compelled to calculate as to the use of the water.”<sup>77</sup> When Territorial Governor George Robert Carter came to visit the orphanage a month later, Helen “[l]earned that Lily Haupu told members of the Governor’s party that she did not have enough to eat.”<sup>78</sup> This seemed to be a consensus in Kona with Mrs. Beard telling Helen that several people had written her while she was away at Hampton complaining that “the children are not well fed.”<sup>79</sup> Given their hunger, the children resorted to desperate means. Helen found out that “Carregaro,

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<sup>74</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 2), July 17 to August 4, 1903, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>75</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 2), July 28, 1903, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>76</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 1), February 22, 1903, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>77</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 2), January 27, 1904, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>78</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 2), February 17, 1904, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>79</sup> Alice Beard to Helen James, undated, Folder 6, Box 2, Chisholm Papers.

Kou, Hikaru, Otto, Loui and Harry have been carrying on a regular business of stealing bread from the safes." After "[b]eing detected through crumbs in Otto's bed," Helen's desire to instill a respect for private property rights in the children meant that "punishment had to be meted."<sup>80</sup>

Indeed, the hungry children were never safe from physical abuse. On April 8, 1903, on the same day that Helen was feeling "tired to the point of irritation," she "spanked Alfred with the hairbrush until he cried for mercy." Helen "[w]as glad to find it so easy a task."<sup>81</sup> A few days later "John Sanders got a spanking from Mr. Snodgrass." That same day Helen expressed "[a]nger and a desire for an exhibition of my physical power" after several students were "saying bad things against me." She "was ready to hairbrush the Baker's dozen." Only when "Albert came crying to me and asked me to forgive him" did she experience "calmer moments, moments of reflection and prayer, then peace."<sup>82</sup> A few days after that, however, Helen "found the boys out for cane so spanked Harold, Fusa, Arthur and Charlie." She "learned by experience that a good spanking followed by a hot dinner is worth ten other punishments." After administering the spanking, she complained of being "woefully tired."<sup>83</sup>

When too tired to whip the children, locking them up was also an option. When young Harold Hendrickson was caught "entering Miss Wilcox room and ransacking her bureau drawers" he was "shut up below" in some kind of basement.<sup>84</sup> This was not the first time "Halo" was subject to confinement. A month early he had escaped from his

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<sup>80</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 1), April 26, 1903, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>81</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 1), April 8, 1903, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>82</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 1), April 12, 1903, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>83</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 1), April 16, 1903, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>84</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 2), June 3, 1903, Chisholm Papers.

prison and told Helen that “Mr. Snodgrass had let him out to play.” After Helen “locked him up again he got out” once more and in “meeting Mr. Snodgrass told him that I had let him out.”<sup>85</sup> With the children in full revolt Helen soon “lost my patience” and beat a little girl named Virginia who was, by her own account, “only a baby.”<sup>86</sup> Helen finally admitted that “[t]he atmosphere of the school is atrocious. It makes me feel that I would like to fall asleep and wake up just in time to go home.”<sup>87</sup>

At least Helen had the option of going home. Children who tried to run away were chased down much like Helen’s parents were by the slave “patter-rollers.” On March 30, 1903, “John Bull tried to run away” leading Helen to conclude that “a general feeling of discontent prevails.”<sup>88</sup> A week later “John Sanders ran away but was soon brought back.”<sup>89</sup> That summer “Nakawai departed yesterday feeling that the work was too heavy.”<sup>90</sup> In one case Helen personally took on the role of a runaway child catcher—dare we say padder-roller—when “Miya had taken her clothes at break of day and gone home.” Helen “dressed quickly, donned my writing skirt, ordered two horses and was determined to bring her back.” Luckily for Miya, her mother appeared to “set things right” and return the girl to her orphanage home.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 2), May 6, 1903, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>86</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 1), August 11, 1903, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>87</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 2), February 17, 1904, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>88</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 1), March 30, 1903, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>89</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 1), April 6, 1903, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>90</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 2), August 27, 1903, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>91</sup> Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 2), August 18, 1903, Chisholm Papers.

**Figure 15. Helen James (c. 1903) with an unidentified child**



Source: the Emory University Archives

In this light, characterizing the place as an orphanage was inaccurate in more ways than one. Beyond the deplorable conditions, few of the children were actually orphans in any common sense of the term. Most, like Miya, had parents that Mrs. Beard had judged to be unfit for one reason or another and thus the children were given a new ‘family’ to replace the allegedly dysfunctional one that they already had. Helen

rationalized this by saying that “[t]he Hawaiian Islands has a large class of children that it is hard to classify. They may not be orphans, yet they may need a home.”<sup>92</sup> This intrusion into the lives of families in Hawai‘I, while dispossessing parents of their parental rights, foreshadowed the increasing roles that local governments would soon take in regulating and disciplining childrearing practices in the name of child welfare. Deeming a child an orphan, when often they were simply born to unwed mothers, was all the more easy in an environment where “[t]he statement that there are not half a dozen respectable Japanese women in the district seems to be generally accepted one.”<sup>93</sup>

Helen believed in this family model, however, especially as it related to race relations. In commenting on the school’s multiracial student body, she claimed that “their relation to each other is that of a harmonious family. There was no clashing of races, few of those petty fights in which children of various nationalities express their feeling of race pride or content.”<sup>94</sup> She did report one instance, however, where a Japanese boy named Fusa was “boasting that Miss Katayma didn’t give anything to the American boys only Japanese.”<sup>95</sup> Like factory workers of different ethnicities engaged in American labor struggles, a common class consciousness among Hawai‘i’s multiracial workforce effectively reshaped racial boundaries.<sup>96</sup>

For Helen, however, anti-black racism continued to affect her in Hawai‘i despite being frequently misidentified as Hawaiian. Once her blackness was known the old prejudices from America returned. As the head of the school, one of the people Helen

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92 Helen James, “Ancestry,” Chisholm Papers.

93 Helen James, untitled essay, January 15, 1902, Chisholm Papers.

94 Helen James, “Ancestry,” Chisholm Papers.

95 Hawaiian Diary of Helen James (Part 1), April 3, 1903, Chisholm Papers.

96 See for example David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1999). See also Moon-Kie Jung, *Reworking Race*.

was supervising was a white southerner from North Carolina who taught the children carpentry and agriculture. He left the school briefly to marry a woman from Tennessee and then brought her back to Kona. By her reckoning, Helen herself had “no prejudice against the people who come out from Tennessee.” At the same time she had “the feeling that they would bring their prejudice with them.” Her assumptions turned out to be correct. When the new Tennessee bride arrived at the school and had dinner with Helen for the first time, it was clear that Hawai‘i’s multicultural environment was no elixir for American racism. After Helen “welcomed them to the school, and took my place at the table,” the bride “whispered to one of the teachers that she had never eaten in a dining room with a ‘darkey’ before.” The woman from Tennessee also likely never had to take orders from a black woman before but Hawai‘i was a bold new world. Helen, who was once described by George Washington Carver as “the most naturally gracious person I have ever met,” reacted to this act of white Southern racism with characteristic forgiveness if not a hint of pretension.<sup>97</sup> She only said that “knowing from the remark that she [the Tennessee bride] had need of a broader culture, I was willing to help her in getting it.”<sup>98</sup>

Helen also encountered a “dashing young Baltimorean” in Hawai‘I, who after getting to know her, declared that “if the colored people in the South were like you, there would be no race problems there.” Helen “hastened to inform him that in the South were hundreds whose advantages had been superior to mine, but that his opportunity had not been to meet them.”<sup>99</sup> As a strong black woman whose upbringing gave her

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97 Frank Chisholm, “A Dream Come True,” eulogy of Helen James, Folder 4, Box 1, Chisholm Papers.

98 Helen James, “Ancestry,” Chisholm Papers.

99 Ibid.

“that innate feeling of respectability which comes to those whose parents are respectable and respected” Helen clearly relished the chance to prove her moral and intellectual superiority to white racists.<sup>100</sup> She saw part of her mission as educating such individuals who, when placed in a new context, were forced to deal with black women on a different, and more egalitarian, level. In reflecting upon the racism she experienced in Hawai‘i, and harkening to an argument that Dr. Martin Luther King would make nearly fifty years later, James stated that:

“I very positively believe that if people are not allowed to know each other, by reason of too strict social laws or local customs, that individual prejudices will make difficult the realization of that heaven which is round about us. And I do believe that given the opportunity to know each other, petty prejudice will disappear, and we shall know as we are known.”<sup>101</sup>

### **“Who then could answer my whys?”<sup>102</sup>**

Upon returning to the United States, Helen understandably looked beyond Hampton University’s model of industrial education to answer her “whys.” She enrolled at Atlanta University to “study in History, Economics and Sociology, under that very careful student and masterful teacher, Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois.”<sup>103</sup> This experience would further inspire Helen’s passion for the life of the mind. Dispelling any misconceptions that Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois represented an either/or proposition, Helen carried her two years of training from Du Bois back to industrial schools in the former heart of American slavery hoping to understand the peculiar institution that

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<sup>100</sup> Helen James, “Unto the Third and Fourth Generation,” Chisholm Papers.

<sup>101</sup> Helen James, “Ancestry,” Chisholm Papers.

<sup>102</sup> Helen James, “Unto the Third and Fourth Generation,” Chisholm Papers.

<sup>103</sup> Helen James, “Ancestry,” Chisholm Papers.

shaped her life. Teaching at the famed Penn School in St. Helena on the South Carolina Sea Islands, Helen had literally and figuratively traced back the source of the seeds that Hawaiian planters, missionaries, and industrial education advocates had been planting so long ago. While studying slavery from the freedpeople in the Sea Islands, Helen hoped to exchange with them her experiences as a black internationalist. She believed that because the Gullah Sea Islanders “are not a reading people” they needed to learn via “contact with people of broader experience” like herself.<sup>104</sup> After two years in the Sea Islands, Helen also had a brief stint at the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College in Tallahassee, Florida where she contracted malaria and heard the gunshots that pierced the hanging body of a black man who had been lynched.<sup>105</sup> In both places, she consciously connected the struggles of her students in Hawai‘i with the struggles of former slaves.

On June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1910 she married Frank Chisholm, a Tuskegee graduate and Booker T. Washington’s most productive fundraiser in the North.<sup>106</sup> They had two children and she became an active club woman, joining the PTA, the League of Women Voters, and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. But perhaps most importantly, she wrote. Her training with Du Bois, her experiences as a black transnationalist in industrial schools, and her desire to know her family’s roots fostered an obsession with black history and genealogy. She published articles on black women’s achievements and educated those around her on the transnational role of slavery in American life.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Helen James, “Speech Given Before the Asylum Ave. Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut,” August 5, 1907, Folder 2, Box 2, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>105</sup> Helen James, “Alabama in 1850,” Folder 8, Box 12, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>106</sup> Memorial of Helen L. J. Chisholm, Folder 4, Box 1, Chisholm Papers.

<sup>107</sup> See for example Helen James, “Achievements of Negro Women,” *The Hartford Daily Courant*, February 14, 1932.

“[A]fter I lived on a coffee plantation for several years, and had spent two winters in the midst of cotton plantations,” she wrote, “I began to understand the subjects of slavery and labor, the Civil War and the perplexities of class adjustment which followed.”<sup>108</sup> She augmented this practical understanding with a turn to the formal discipline of history in an attempt to answer her “whys.” She said that “I have studied much history, and studied it carefully, to find an explanation of the history of my family and race.” This journey led her not to a parochial vision of the past but to “the study of the history of three continents” along with “years of travel in the south” all “to answer the whys which came ever before my childish mind.”<sup>109</sup>

Helen James died on March 8, 1970 in Old Saybrook, Connecticut at the age of 93. While it would be tempting to caricature her as a simple cog in the wheel of American empire and justifiably condemn her for the brutal treatment she levied upon her Hawaiian charges—as well as perhaps her African American students—her story proves much more nuanced. The transnational scope and breadth of industrial education placed it well beyond the control of any one person, state, or nation. The global legacy of slavery that was infused into transnational industrial education networks produced lasting ripple effects that black women like Helen James could only hope to navigate, challenge, and occasionally re-direct. In one sense, her presence alone in Hawai‘i undercut American racism from within—even as the wheels of colonialism continued to turn. Yet, behind all of her personal failings and human shortcomings her desire to seek out international answers to her most intimate demons reveals black transnationalism’s power to remake meaning for everyday black people in a

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<sup>108</sup> Helen James, “Ancestry,” Chisholm Papers.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

postemancipation world still haunted by slavery. While she ultimately could not change or escape the world she had inherited, she fought and struggled within that world for 93 long years to understand it. For her, and many others of her generation, that struggle would continue to unfold on an international terrain.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Teaching and Learning Black History Abroad: Carter G. Woodson, John Henry Manning Butler, and the Political Thought of Filipino Children**

“[W]hat advantage is it to the Negro student of history to devote all of his time...  
to the record of those nations whose outstanding achievement  
has been rapine, plunder, and murder for world power?”

—Carter G. Woodson<sup>1</sup>

“Then he began to study himself and realize his misfortune.”

— José Rizal<sup>2</sup>

The global circuits of industrial education—so crucial to both the American occupation of Hawai‘i and the postemancipation establishment of a Jim Crow America—would never be comfortably contained within those geographies. Commensurate with the overseas expansion of American empire, efforts to condition colonial workers to the discipline of American governance and its global labor markets soon expanded to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.<sup>3</sup> Later it would also move on to Guam, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Washington, D.C.: Associate Publishers, 1933), 150.

<sup>2</sup> José Rizal, *The Philippines: A Century Hence* (Manila: Philippine Education Company, 1912).

<sup>3</sup> For more on the global deployment of American educational institutions in the service of empire generally see A. J. Angulo, *Empire and Education: A History of Greed and Goodwill from the War of 1898 to the War on Terror* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) and Clif Stratton, *Education for Empire: American Schools, Race, and the Paths of Good Citizenship* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016). For Puerto Rico see

Hampton University's role in this process was likewise not limited to sending Helen James and other black teachers to Hawai'i.<sup>5</sup> By March of 1901, Hampton was also working with the newly formed U.S. Philippine Commission's Department of Education—placing teachers directly in the Philippines. As the most storied Historically Black College and University (HBCU) of its era, Hampton was one of only a handful of Southern colleges, black or white, appearing on the Department of War's list of collaborating institutions. The field of colonial education was otherwise dominated by Northern purveyors of American education, both large and small, including Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and the University of Chicago.<sup>6</sup> While Southerners disproportionately brought imperialism to the Philippines with a bayonet, Northerners were more likely to wield the teacher's cane.

In addition to elite northern universities, Hampton also had competition in securing teaching positions for its graduates abroad from at least one transnational, for-profit corporation. The Fisk Teachers' Agencies (which was entirely unrelated to Fisk University) was a private headhunting firm that was also conducting teacher placements in the Philippines. The agency's promotional material signaled that the field of colonial education was fast becoming big business in twentieth-century America. In an open solicitation to the Department of War, the company boasted that it operated nine

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Navarro, *Creating Tropical Yankees*. For Cuba see Frank Andre Guridy, *Forging Diaspora*. For the Philippines see Glenn Anthony May, "The Business of Education in the Colonial Philippines."

<sup>4</sup> For American educational aspirations in Haiti see Brandon R. Byrd, "An Experiment in Self-Government: Haiti in the African-American Political Imagination." For the Dominican Republic see Lauren Hammond, "Conceptualizing Black Modernity in U.S. Empire: Frederick Douglass and the Case for Dominican Annexation, 1869-71" American Historical Association Annual meeting, January 8, 2017, Denver, Colorado. For Guam see Laurel Heath, "Education for Confusion: A Study of Education in the Mariana Islands, 1688-1941" in *The Journal of Pacific History*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1975), 20-37.

<sup>5</sup> See previous chapter.

<sup>6</sup> "U.S. Philippine Commission Department of Education February Appointments," Record number 2717-4, Entry 1-3 5-A, Box 294, RG 350, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

teacher placement centers around the nation. These office locations all stood ready to aid in the educational aims of the American colonial project. By 1901 the company had already filled “positions at salaries aggregating \$9,822,210.00” in all fifty states as well as in Hawai‘i, Puerto Rico, Europe, Mexico, Canada, South America, and the West Indies. Apparently, spreading American education and ideology around the globe was not only patriotic but extremely profitable.<sup>7</sup>

While most of the placements were for ordinary teachers in high schools, grammar schools, vocational schools, and normal schools, the Fisk Teachers’ Agencies also claimed to have filled 887 professorships and 9 college presidencies. Harvard, Yale, Stanford, and the University of Chicago were not only their rivals for teaching positions in the Philippines but were also their satisfied customers.<sup>8</sup> With this dense network of private, public, for-profit, and not-for-profit institutions all aligned behind the American colonial project, the expansion of an industrial education model—already rooted in the forces of slavery, emancipation, and imperialism—seemed to many like a boundless proposition. From their inception, both the curriculum and the institutional frameworks delivering this global educational product began projecting an unfailing commitment to a hyper-rational modernity, deeply rooted in American progressivism. Rather than view teaching as a creative calling, or an artisan-like trade guild, American education, through empire, was fast becoming an assembly line.<sup>9</sup>

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7 The Fisk Teacher’s Agencies Promotional Brochure, Record number 2717-2, Entry 1-3 5-A, Box 294, RG 350, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

8 The Fisk Teacher’s Agencies Promotional Brochure.

9 Schools mimicking the form if not the ideology of industrial capitalism and its assembly lines are typically traced and critiqued through Horace Mann, Taylorism, and the implementation of the so-called Prussian Model of education. See for example, Henry Geitz, Jürgen Heideking, Jurgen Herbst, eds. *German Influences on Education in the United States to 1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). For the use of

Yet within this context, a handful of black teachers also migrated to the Philippines to work for the Department of War—but with a slightly different set of objectives. While certainly a nominal part of the much larger empire building process (that was happening with or without them), these black teachers were also attempting to escape a domestic strand of empire that they had long been subjected to as well. While many embraced if not exemplified American modernity, they were also fully cognizant of its dark underbelly and saw their teachings work as a means of subverting, rather than reproducing, social hierarchies.<sup>10</sup> With only limited control over the institutional power governing America's educational efforts around the world, black teachers did their best to survive within its framework while teaching their Filipino students to do the same. This unique positionality meant that black teachers were forced to navigate both the institutional gatekeepers to those teaching positions as well as the ever-shifting American colonial state that governed them. Additionally, the dozens of black teachers in the Philippines also felt a duty not only to an often idealized sense of the American nation but also to the urgent needs of their Filipino/a students and their black

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education in reinforcing social hierarchies see Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (New York: Verso, 2014) and Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*, trans. Richard Nice, (London: Sage Publications, 1977). For an earlier iteration of this concept of how education reproduces class relations see Mikhail Bakunin, “On Education,” in *L’Égalité*, July 31, 1869. Here Bakunin argues that unequal access to education and scientific discourse served “a specific social function,” namely, the sorting of different kinds of laborers and “the retention of the class system.” While demanding access to education for workers, Bakunin held that “bourgeois science” and the social power of education caused “the exacerbation of the slavery of the proletariat.” While these and other historians and theorists have detailed the connections between the rise of industrial capitalism and the function of compulsory education in economic production, social control, political indoctrination, and various other iterations of the ‘hidden curriculum,’ few have connected this process to the simultaneous rise of the colonial bureaucratic state.

<sup>10</sup> For more on how black people throughout the diaspora were, in many ways, the archetypal modern Western subject even as they struggled to shape its overall direction in a more egalitarian fashion see Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Chude-Sokei, *The Last “Darky”*; Sotiroopoulos, *Staging Race*.

communities back home who were anxious to learn about the political, cultural, and migratory possibilities that the Philippines came to represent in the black imaginary.

But while these black teachers ostensibly traveled to the Philippines to teach, they also ended up learning. In conversation with their students (mostly in rural Philippine provinces) these black teachers soon expanded their understanding of the global reach of American empire and the ways in which the legacy of slavery continued to inform it. Much like Helen James in Hawai‘i, several of these black teachers in the Philippines eventually took to writing black history as a way of connecting the experiences of their Filipina/o students to their own experiences as formerly enslaved peoples and their descendants. While many of these black teachers were born after slavery, the dream of emancipation and Reconstruction proved alive and well during their lifetimes. This memory of slavery informed (and soon became informed by) their daily interactions in the Philippines.

This chapter will follow the lives and political thought of black teachers and their Filipino students as they all attempted to make sense of their shared lives within an uncertain American colonial regime. Through the juxtaposition of official government correspondence, the writings of black teachers, and several extant Filipino/a student essays, the deep solidarities and tensions pervading the Black Pacific become clear. Exchanges between black teachers and Filipino students also show how everyday children in the Philippines influenced the political thought and historical methodology of several highly influential black educators, including Carter G. Woodson and John Henry Manning Butler. Through their transpacific communications back home, these black teachers became not only respected translators for black communities—trying to

imagine an extension of the project of Reconstruction in the Pacific, but also served as thought-shapers for American empire builders who were likewise aware of the connections between slavery and empire. As for children in the Philippines, black teachers taught them much more than their ABC's. Black history and culture were also on the agenda. As black teachers began deliberately inserting into the curriculum lessons they had learned in the Atlantic world, this transoceanic exchange soon became an invaluable touchstone for an emerging Philippine nation trying to read a new colonial power and decode the ever-evolving racism that their expert black teachers knew all too well.

## Examining the Examiners

Of all the black teachers ho lived and worked in the Philippines none parlayed their experience to greater international acclaim than Carter G. Woodson. Most biographies of Woodson, however, downplay or outright ignore his time in the Philippines.<sup>11</sup> One biographer, for example, includes Woodson's time in the Philippines as part of a preamble chapter called "Preparing for Life's Work," followed by the second chapter where Woodson is "Beginning Life's Work."<sup>12</sup> The notion that Woodson's work on black history might actually have *begun* in the Philippines is not seriously considered. A concerted analysis of his writings and his personnel file at the Bureau of

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<sup>11</sup> The most recent biographies on Woodson include Pero Dagbovie, *The Early Black History Movement, Carter G. Woodson, and Lorenzo Johnston Greene* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Jacqueline Anne Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson : A Life in Black History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993).

<sup>12</sup> Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson*.

Insular Affairs in the Philippines, however, reveals a quite different story. Overlaying these experiences with those of other black teachers in Philippines reveals even more.

But before Carter G. Woodson and other black teachers could administer exams to their Filipino students they were themselves subjected to a battery of state-mandated examinations. While some of these standardized tests evaluated black teachers (and all other government employees) for general physical aptitude or the particular academic subject matter necessary to perform their jobs, even these seemingly benign evaluations in the hands of a newly empowered colonial infrastructure held profound connotations.<sup>13</sup> Harkening to the days when his ancestors had their bodies examined on an auction block, Woodson and other black teachers, as part of their preliminary medical examinations, were literally stripped naked and physically evaluated by a group of armed white authorities to quantify their precise atomized values to the colonial state. The first step in insuring the purity of this bureaucratic process was to remove all family, community, and interpersonal relationships from the equation. Woodson was loudly chastised, in all capital letters, in his “Record of Medical and Physical Examination” form that: “THIS CERTIFICATE MUST NOT BE EXECUTED BY THE FAMILY PHYSICIAN OF THE APPLICANT.” To insure the presumed objectivity of the observer, the colonial state required that its always-already pre-conceived form could only “be filled in by some medical officer in the service of the United States.”<sup>14</sup> Thus the state’s own (highly subjective) evaluation was deemed the exclusive site of objective truth

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<sup>13</sup> For more on the racist history of standardized tests see Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2016), 311–12. and V. P. Franklin, “The Tests Are Written for the Dogs: The Journal of Negro Education, African American Children, and the Intelligence Testing Movement in Historical Perspective” in *The Journal of Negro Education* 76, no. 3 (2007): 216–29.

<sup>14</sup> “Record of Medical and Physical Examination” for Carter G. Woodson, File 8898, Box 533, Entry I3 5-A, Record Group 350, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

regarding Woodson's body. Black and white teachers thus needed to be sufficiently alienated from any compromised relationships with a "FAMILY PHYSICIAN" in order to join this presumably more rational, if not coldly detached, operation of empire.<sup>15</sup>

To comply with this injunction, Woodson was compelled to appear before "the Army, Navy, Indian, or Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service" and submit his body to several dozen medicalized test procedures before he could teach in the Philippines. The particular manner in which Woodson was characterized by his military doctor was quite revealing. While Woodson's "[d]egree of robustness" was somehow determined to be "excellent," his "speech"—as a future Harvard PhD recipient—was only characterized as "good." Both evaluations likely indicate that Woodson was being examined by a white doctor whose racialized assumptions would have led him to see Woodson's physical body as "robust" (and suitable for physical labor) but his "speech" (as a marker of his mental capacity) as merely adequate.<sup>16</sup>

Ironically, for a man so deeply attune to America's racial caste system, Woodson's own "color perception" was categorized by the military doctor as "[b]ad." Apparently, the founder of Black History Month had difficulty seeing particular shades of green.<sup>17</sup> The soon-to-be-renowned scholar of African American life would thus champion a very color conscious history while being at least partially blind to color. Far from insignificant, this deficiency in color perception held robust implications in early

<sup>15</sup> For more on colonial and state knowledge production see James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). and Phillip B. Wagoner, "Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 45, Issue 4 (October 2003) 783-814. For more on the epistemic violence that such truth systems entail see Reiland Rabaka, *Against Epistemic Apartheid: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Disciplinary Decadence of Sociology* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> "Record of Medical and Physical Examination" for Carter G. Woodson, File 8898, Box 533, Entry I3 5-A, Record Group 350, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

twentieth-century America. Scientists and philosophers at the time were already hard at work trying to determine the ontological nature of color itself. Woodson was stepping into the potentially disastrous epistemological chaos that the biological subjectivity of color perception held for the Enlightenment era's commitment to scientific rationality and modernity at large.<sup>18</sup> If Woodson, and the history he would write, were allowed to see color differently and subjectively, any faith in a singular, universal, rational truth could be rendered obsolete. In this way Woodson's subsequent black history project was not simply a scholarly challenge—it was an epistemological threat and an existential crisis for the entire Western world.

While these apparent results—that rendered Woodson's unique perception of the world deviant—were no doubt telling of the state's own racialized assumptions, the nature of the actual tests themselves were even more revealing. Reminiscent of enslaved Africans who were brought above deck in the Atlantic World and forced to exercise to satisfy the health requirements of their white overseas, Woodson was compelled by the American government to “[h]op on one foot a distance of 12 feet” to insure his fitness and “agility” for work within its empire in the Pacific. He was also forced to remove his ten pounds of clothing and present his 159 pound body, stark naked, to a white medical expert. There, his anus was examined for any sign of “hemorrhoids,” his testicles were grabbed to feel for any nascent “hernia,” and his sexual histories were probed to discover any hint of “venereal disease.” Knowing full well the ways in which horses, mules, and slaves had their teeth counted before purchase,

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<sup>18</sup> For more on the importance of color perception to the development of modern scientific discourse, epistemology, and the American nation see Michael Paul Rossi, “The Rules of Perception: American Color Science, 1831–1931” (PhD Dissertation: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2011). For color’s importance to the visual culture of capitalism see William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 39-70.

Woodson was forced to open his mouth to have his teeth tallied and inspected for their utility to the federal government. On this last front, Woodson was officially deemed to be “defective.” Apparently, he was missing almost all of his top and bottom molars. Luckily, his “incisors [were] perfect” and thus he was ultimately cleared by the War Department for teaching in the Philippines.<sup>19</sup>

Interestingly, women were exempt from this gauntlet of demeaning tests. Female teachers simply needed to “furnish a certificate from a reputable physician showing that they are unquestionably physically qualified for employment in the Philippine Civil Service.”<sup>20</sup> Perhaps this exception reflected a patriarchal chivalry, a sexual prudishness, or part of the long trope of protecting women from an imagined masculine public sphere.<sup>21</sup> For black men specifically, this reprise would have come as a particularly welcome relief as shielding black women from the white men, sexual violence, and compromised working conditions that reigned during slavery were considered critical postemancipation demands.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> “Record of Medical and Physical Examination” for Carter G. Woodson. For more on the intersection of empire and public health abroad see Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2006). For an account on the more domestic front see Harriet A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Doubleday Press, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> “Record of Medical and Physical Examination” for Carter G. Woodson.

<sup>21</sup> For the rise of this bourgeois value among white northerners see Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). For its development in a more working class antebellum white Southern context see McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*.

<sup>22</sup> For this tendency in postemancipation black patriarchal structures as well as black women’s efforts to resist it see Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract*; Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). For an alternate take on this question see Thomas C. Holt, *Children of Fire: A History of African Americans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 166-67, 175 which found that postemancipation African American families understood the collective control of their marriages and family lives, in many ways, to be the very foundation of freedom. Husbands, wives, and children collectively positioned their families as an assertion of citizenship and a key part of rebuilding black communities in the pursuit of even wider political mobilizations. Holt thus rejects many of the presentist critiques of the apparently patriarchal structuring of black families in the 19<sup>th</sup> century along with the

Exemplifying what we might refer to today as ‘biopower’, these highly gendered tests were ultimately much more than an attempt to ‘objectively’ measure Woodson and other black teachers against a standardized template and set of normalized human characteristics.<sup>23</sup> Taking measurements down to a quarter of an inch and feigning a precision that obfuscated the utter chaos taking place behind the scenes, this abstract administrative empire was attempting to project a rational sense of modernity both to itself and to the wider world through its “iron cage” of bureaucratic institutions.<sup>24</sup> As was the case during slavery, this justification demanded the disciplining of black (and now white) bodies within the American empire’s emerging medical discourse.<sup>25</sup>

At the very least, this gendered double standard in medical exams proved how utterly unnecessary this exceptional physical scrutiny was to fulfilling the actual job requirements of being a teacher in the Philippines. The exemption of female teachers is an open admission that at the end of the day, the test results didn’t really matter. The process was what counted—a process that appeared mostly about asserting sovereignty, authority, and control. In this light it becomes clear how utterly self-serving and (in a

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misunderstanding that ‘manhood’ tainted language was *exclusively* a means to oppress black women. Both critiques fail to acknowledge that patriarchal assertions were often simply a public language by which black families could demand equality, state protection, political representation, and citizenship within a specific historical context—a context where these public rights could often *only* be expressed through a patriarchal discourse and appeals to manhood.

<sup>23</sup> Biopower (sometimes referred to as biopolitics) was a term originally coined in Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976* (New York: Picador, 2003) and was further expanded upon by Foucault and subsequent thinkers with a wide variety of connotations. At its core, biopower represents the effort to control a large population of people by managing human bodies and even life itself often through subtle bureaucratic procedures, bodily measurements, demographic statistics, and other knowledge production techniques. This idea is closely related to Foucault’s notions of discipline, governmentality, and normalizing discourses. It is also central to Foucault’s understanding of racism. For more on biopower see Veron W. Cisney and Nicolae Morar, *Biopower: Foucault and Beyond* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> The notion that modern bureaucracy life represents an iron cage can be found in Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1930).

<sup>25</sup> For more on the intersection of race, medicine, and power see Dorothy Roberts, *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-Create Race in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: New Press, 2012) and Ruja Benjamin, “Catching Our Breath: Critical Race STS and the Carceral Imagination” in *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society*, Vol. 2 (2016), 145-156.

strange way) necessary these procedures were to legitimizing the knowledge, function, and moral righteousness of the American colonial state. The administration of these exams, confounded by their own circular logic, soon became a self-fulfilling prophecy. The state was needed to measure the things that the state deemed necessary of measuring. That this assertion of sovereignty and authority mirrored the logic of slavery (where the enslaved needed masters because masters had enslaved them) should come as no surprise.<sup>26</sup>

## The Asian Origins of Black History Month

Within this context, Woodson set sail for the Philippines in 1903. His education and on-the-job training in both a pedagogy of the oppressed<sup>27</sup> and the simultaneous operation of American empire<sup>28</sup> started the moment the S.S. Korea left San Francisco Bay on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1903.<sup>29</sup> It just as easily might have begun in the segregated train car to San Francisco that he boarded in Chicago. In either case, Woodson vividly remembered the one-month steamship journey to Manila. For him, it was a floating

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<sup>26</sup> The dialectic relationship between master and slave can be traced through Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, A.V. Miller, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), and Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

<sup>27</sup> For the formal theorization of Woodson's early instincts see Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Myra Bergman Ramos, trans. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

<sup>28</sup> For more on the how American empire functioned in the Philippines see Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government*; Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Univ of Wisconsin Press, 2009); Alfred W. McCoy, *Policing America's Empire the United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009); Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Dylan Rodriguez, *Suspended Apocalypse: White Supremacy, Genocide, and the Filipino Condition* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2009); Resil B. Mojares, *War Against the Americans: Resistance and Collaboration in Cebu: 1899-1906* (Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 1999).

<sup>29</sup> For more on the details of Woodson's journey and his correspondence with the War Department see Carter G. Woodson Correspondence, File 8898, Container 533, Record Group 350; National Archives at College Park, MD.

classroom. There, the eager, 27 year-old Woodson exchanged notes with older missionaries and teachers bound for the Orient. As he sought out conversations with everyday teachers he increasingly came to understand why it was important to, in his words, “study the history, the language, the manners and the customs” of subjugated peoples rather than simply reinforce the prevailing hegemony of dominant historical narratives.<sup>30</sup>

Woodson’s first tutor came from an unlikely source. On board he met an unnamed insurance-salesman-turned-teacher whose educational techniques Woodson would soon deploy in educating both Filipino children and, later, African American adults. Through his conversations with this veteran teacher, as well as his later interactions with Filipino students, Woodson came to develop a healthy skepticism of even his own elite educational credentials and pedagogical assumptions. This untrained insurance salesman<sup>31</sup> found success in the Philippines because, in Woodson’s words, “he understood people.”<sup>32</sup> This fact alone reinforced Woodson’s belief that “[m]en trained at institutions like Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and Chicago could not reach [Filipino students].” Beyond race, class, and culture divides, Woodson attributed this fact to the kinds of assumptions that elite, classically trained educators brought to their teaching. In the Philippines, elitist Anglo-centric teachers “entered upon their task by teaching the Filipinos just as they had taught American children.”<sup>33</sup> According to Woodson and his mentor, a different approach was needed that focused less on abstract, foreign concepts

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<sup>30</sup> Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, Charles H. Wesley and Thelma D. Perry, eds. (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1969 [1933]), 152.

<sup>31</sup> For more on the racial origins and implications of the insurance industry see Jonathan Levy, *Freaks of Fortune: The Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> Woodson, *Mis-Education of the Negro*, 153.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 152.

dictated by the American state and more on the tangible needs, concrete political realities, and the lived social positionalities of local students of color.

Material culture was a critical part of this shift towards a student-centered pro-Filipino pedagogy. Woodson praised the fact that his mentor “filled the schoolroom with thousands of objects from the pupil’s environment.” When it was time to learn about snakes, for example, the teacher “brought the reptile to the school for demonstration.” When “he taught the crocodile he had one there” as well. Student safety notwithstanding, this focus on materiality meant that much of the official colonial curriculum had to be discarded if objects could not be located “from the pupil’s environment.” When told by the Bureau of Education to teach Filipino children the song “Come shake the Apple-Tree,” for example, Woodson and his mentor refused on the grounds that their students “had never seen such an object.” Instead, they had their students “Come shake the Lomboy Tree” and gather the dark purple *duhat* fruits that are particularly beloved by children in the Philippines for their sweet taste and frequent penchant for turning their eater’s tongue a deep violet color. Woodson might have had his own experience during this lesson—likely seeing the purple fruit in shades of gray. This visceral, sensory, classroom technique meant that Woodson and his mentor “did not use books very much.”<sup>34</sup> Rather than imbue students with intangible ideas from written texts dictated by the colonizing power, Woodson, along with his mentor and presumably many of the other black teachers in the Philippines, starting plotting even as they were in route to the Philippines about how to offer an anti-colonial curriculum to Filipino students that celebrated local peoples and cultures.

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<sup>34</sup> Woodson, *Mis-Education of the Negro*, 153.

This orientation went well beyond material culture, however, and into the realm of history. In contrast to the conventional American colonial education that he was being asked to deliver, Woodson soon began conceptualizing education in general, and history specifically, as an anti-colonial project.<sup>35</sup> “Miseducation,” as Woodson would write later, needed to be resisted while a true education needed to be established that would serve as a means of community uplift and political empowerment. Consequently, American history textbooks in the Philippines came to be seen by Woodson as culturally biased and a prototype of the kind of miseducation he would later identify in African American history. He tossed his state-issued textbooks aside on the grounds that “those supplied were not adapted to the needs of the children.”<sup>36</sup>

Instead, Woodson did for history what his mentor did for Lomboy trees. He noted with glee that in teaching history he and his mentor “did not concentrate on the story of how George Washington always told the truth” because their Filipino students “never heard of him and could not have appreciated that myth if someone had told them about it.” As an alternative, subaltern history, they “taught them about their own hero, José Rizal, who gave his life as a martyr for the freedom of his country.”<sup>37</sup> This attempt to instill a national pride among Filipino students in the face of American colonialism meant that Woodson and his mentor, as employees of that same occupying force,

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<sup>35</sup> For more on the American system of colonial education see Olivia Anne M. Habana, “Appropriating America?: American Schoolbooks in Philippine Classrooms, 1900-1912” in *Travelling Goods, Travelling Moods: Varieties of Cultural Appropriation (1850-1950)*, Christian Huck, Stefan Bauernschmidt, eds. (Frankfurt, Germany: Campus Verlag, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> Woodson, *Mis-Education of the Negro*, 153.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 153.

eventually “got rid of most books based on the life of American people and worked out an entirely new series dealing with the life of Filipinos.”<sup>38</sup>

This critical insight, that clearly drove Woodson’s classroom experimentations in the Philippines, contained numerous implications for his later articulations of black history. By connecting how Filipino students were empowered and inspired by the study of Jose Rizal, Woodson had already begun developing in the Philippines a new kind of historical analysis and a fresh approach to questions of power, politics, and identity in the narration of the past. His approach to centering the marginalized, and writing black history for black people, just as he set about teaching a Filipino history for Filipino people, would eventually, in the distant future, serve as a forerunner to several modern methodological approaches including social history, comparative colonialism, subaltern studies, and critical race theory. While white teachers may have been following the colonial script and trying to “miseducate” Filipino students, Woodson was set on emancipating young minds and championing Philippine independence.

That Woodson’s early attempts to remake the discipline of history took place in the Philippines at the same time that an increasingly internationally-minded W.E.B. Du Bois was helping create the modern field of sociology (before himself turning to history with his *Black Reconstruction*) was not coincidental.<sup>39</sup> Both men were quite consciously attempting to make sense of their respective fields and their blackness in light of America’s emerging global empire.<sup>40</sup> By rejecting the mythmaking project that the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 153-154.

<sup>39</sup> Aldon Morris, *The Scholar Denied: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015).

<sup>40</sup> For more on how Du Bois was using *Black Reconstruction* to connect American overseas empire to slavery and emancipation see Moon-Ho Jung, “Black Reconstruction and Empire,” in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 112,

colonial state was peddling in its lionization of George Washington, Woodson and his students set about creating their own heroes for their own political purposes—a legacy that survives today in both the black intellectual tradition and the broader Ethnic Studies movement, including its Philippine/Filipino variants.<sup>41</sup> After seeing the power that such recovery projects had amongst his students in the Philippines, Woodson's later infatuation with black biography also makes all the more sense.<sup>42</sup> In this way, colonial, state-funded American schoolhouses in the rural Philippines became laboratories for some of the earliest experimentations in both a Pan-Third World solidarity and Woodson's own innovations in black history.<sup>43</sup>

## When Students Talk Back

While Woodson's mentor and the other teachers he met certainly played a critical role in formulating his approach to history, the real magic began once Woodson started

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Issue 3, (Summer 2013), 465-471 who contends that Du Bois's critique of American empire is “*Black Reconstruction*’s most revolutionary and enduring insight.” For more primary material detailing Du Bois’s thought on empire in the Pacific more specifically see Bill V. Mullen and Cathryn Watson, eds., *W. E. B. Du Bois on Asia: Crossing the World Color Line* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005).

<sup>41</sup> For more on the rise of ethnic studies movements see Ibram H. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Radical Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1956-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012) and Davianna Pōmaika‘i McGregor and Abraham Aoudé, “Our History, Our Way!,” in *A Nation Rising: Hawaiian Movements for Life, Land, and Sovereignty*, Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, Ikaika Hussey, Erin Kahunawaika‘ala Wright, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

For more on the black intellectual tradition see Christopher Cameron, Ashley Farmer, and Keisha Blain, eds., *New Perspectives on the Black Intellectual Tradition* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, forthcoming 2018).

<sup>42</sup> See for examples of Woodson’s commitment to black biography see Carter G. Woodson, *Negro Makers of History* (Washington D.C., Associated Publishers, 1928); Carter G. Woodson, *African Heroes and Heroines* (Washington D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1939); Carter G. Woodson *The Works of Francis J. Grimkè* (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1942); and Carter G. Woodson, *Negro Orators and Their Orations* (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1925).

<sup>43</sup> For more on Afro-Asian solidarity see Keisha Blain, “[F]or the Rights of Dark People in Every Part of the World’: Pearl Sherrod, Black Internationalist Feminism, and Afro-Asian Politics during the 1930’s,” in *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 17, Nos. 1-2 (June 2015), 90-112.

interacting directly with Filipino children. His first assignment was in the rural village of San Isidro in the Nueva Ecija province of northern Luzon. Luckily, the area supervisor for Nueva Ecija, Luther Parker, collected some of the voices of these Filipino children that are still preserved today at the University of the Philippines Diliman. The collective political thought of Woodson's students, when taken together, bear a striking resemblance to Woodson's own later proclivities. One of his potential students living in Nueva Ecija, J.M. Caldesi, freely expressed to his teacher through a classroom essay his desire to "build up and form the sacred alter [sic] for Independence." Like Woodson, Caldesi's notion of self-determination was not insular but outward looking. Caldesi longed for the day when "the Philippines will be proud to stand up and show candidly to the civilized world," as well as presumably to itself, that it was a self-governing nation.<sup>44</sup> While clearly nationalistic, Caldesi's vision unfortunately depended as well upon validation from the same colonial power and "civilized world" that he desired liberation from. While Woodson certainly picked up these impulses of independence brewing amongst his Filipino students, he also seems to have accepted, rather uncritically, the measuring of success through a politics of recognition that would be granted by a supposedly "civilized world."<sup>45</sup> The parallels between black respectability politics at home and a Filipino politics of recognition abroad were uncanny.<sup>46</sup> Whether Woodson

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<sup>44</sup>J.M. Caldesi, "Physical Education Should be Made Compulsory in the Elementary Schools," Student Essay, Folder 219, Box 9, Luther Parker Papers, Special Collections Section, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines.

<sup>45</sup> For more on the politics of recognition in the Philippines see Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines*. For a related take that frames this process as one of incorporation that played out among African Americans and Asian Americans more broadly see Helen Heran Jun, *Race for Citizenship: Black Orientalism and Asian Uplift from Pre-Emancipation to Neoliberal America* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

<sup>46</sup> For more on the politics of respectability see Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*.

was more on the giving end or receiving end of this particular multilateral exchange is unclear.

Just thirty miles north of Woodson, however, the students in the village of Muños were putting this ideology of independence directly into practice by forming the Pupil's Self-Government Club. In 1925, a collective of fifty-five students wrote their own constitution and code of conduct as part of an experiment in local grass-roots democracy.<sup>47</sup> These students were not waiting to be recognized by any outside authority and were not asking for permission from any external power. While the project definitely had the support if not the direction of the school's administration, after nearly a decade of colonial policy demanding the "Filipinization" of public institutions, the school's administration and its teachers would likely have been predominantly, if not exclusively Filipino. In their founding documents students demanded honesty, bravery, generosity, and justice along with a respect for the environment, kindness to animals, and, of course, "freedom".<sup>48</sup>

Like all good aspiring leaders, however, these Filipino students had to first get right with Lincoln. At the student's very first assembly for self-governance, their very first collective action in considering a new form of governance was to listen in raptured attention as "the phonograph...sounded the famous Lincoln's Gettysburg Address." This use of technology to channel the specter of Lincoln and harken back to the American

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<sup>47</sup> For more on the student self-government movement in Progressive Era America and its often complicated relationship to American empire building, self-policing, and the history of childhood see Larry Bauer, "Raising Small Citizens: Democracy and the Political Socialization of American Children in the Progressive Era" (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, TBD).

<sup>48</sup> Timoteo L. Vakilar, "How We Made a Success of Our Pupil's Self-Government Project", December 13, 1925, Folder 222, Box 9, Luther Parker Papers, Special Collections Section, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines. Vakilar was Principle of the Muños Elementary School and his report to Parker included a copy of the student's "Code for Self-Government" which he reproduced "exactly as it stood when finally completed and approved by the pupils themselves."

Civil War for inspiration into what constituted proper governance was an exercise that African Americans hoping for a new postemancipation America could relate to as well. The Filipino students considered the question of “[w]hat make [sic] you believe that Lincoln was a good American citizen?” Students, presumably well-versed in Lincoln’s pivotal role in American history, replied “[b]ecause he was honest” and “[b]ecause he was loyal.” The emphasis on Lincoln’s “loyalty” clearly indicated that Filipino students had already taken sides in the American Civil War. They undoubtedly saw their struggle for freedom and independence as standing in league not with Confederate rebels but with the Union army and, more significantly, with enslaved peoples.<sup>49</sup> At the very least, students had obviously received a proper Yankee education from their mostly Northern teachers who were apparently not yet ready to embrace the Lost Cause narrative and its warped history of sectional reunion.<sup>50</sup> If they were lucky enough to learn about the Civil War from a black teacher, much less a black teacher named Carter G. Woodson, Filipinos undoubtedly would have gotten an earful of emancipationist history.

The students’ attraction to ‘Honest Abe,’ and their desire for honesty more broadly, also reveals that they probably felt a great deal of disappointment in American governance and its string of broken promises by the 1920’s. Children, often equipped with an uncanny knack of knowing when they are being lied to, would certainly have heard stories in the Philippines about how American government officials, including Commodore George Dewey, promised independence to the Philippine Republic during

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<sup>49</sup> Timoteo L. Vakilar, “How We Made a Success of Our Pupil’s Self-Government Project,” Luther Parker Papers.

<sup>50</sup> For more on how the domestic efforts at post-Civil War reconciliation involved a re-writing of the historical narrative and a de-emphasis on the bloody shirt troupe that portrayed white Southerners as disloyal and treasonous see Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 211-299. The sectional divide in the colonies, with Southerners overrepresented in the military and Northerners overrepresented in the civil government, complicates Blight’s narrative considerably and indicates that American empire became a site where sectional conflict and the unsettled questions of the war continued abroad even if they were being ignored at home.

the Spanish American War and then almost immediately broke that promise.<sup>51</sup> In Lincoln, however, they saw a romanticized commitment to truth that they hoped the American colonial state would emulate.

The fact that Lincoln and the Civil War were invoked at all by Filipino students and their administrators in developing a new model of self-governance and freedom from colonialism at the very least put them in league with their white Northern teachers. Perhaps more importantly, however, this emphasis on Lincoln and the Civil War also connected them quite directly with Carter G. Woodson and other black teachers in the area who were likewise committed to the critical moment of rupture that the Civil War and emancipation entailed. Both African Americans and Filipinos were thus hoping to use their memories of the Civil War to work together in creating a world free of coercion in the Philippines—one that fulfilled the sacred promise of Reconstruction that the Great Emancipator never lived to see.

Unfortunately, once on the ground, many of these supposedly self-governing practices that the students and their administrators instituted more closely resembled a system of self-surveillance and self-discipline rather than a truly emancipatory program.<sup>52</sup> The students themselves mirrored the logic of the colonial regime by installing a “Police Force” led by the “Chief of Police,” neither of whom were elected, but

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<sup>51</sup> For more on the promise of independence by various American government representatives in return for the military support of the Philippine Republic see Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 91-96 who argues that such broken promises were the result of an American state not fully in control of its own bureaucracy and the “independent operators” who were not yet truly professionalized as diplomats.

<sup>52</sup> For more on the Philippines as the birthplace of America’s modern surveillance state see McCoy, *Policing America’s Empire*.

appointed by the “Principal Teacher.”<sup>53</sup> The job of this police squad was to identify fellow students who could be put on trial and punished for a variety of offenses including “cigarette smoking, speaking dialects, and promiscuous spitting.”<sup>54</sup> Sadly, this middle injunction against speaking native languages remained in force at a wide range of schools throughout the Philippines even well after American colonialism. This prohibition was emblematic of exactly how curtailed—by the school’s administration, by the American colonial bureaucracy, and by the student’s own self-regulation—that the project of self-governance would become in the Philippines.<sup>55</sup>

While these self-governing experiments taking place in Woodson’s locale may not have entirely delivered on Lincoln’s promise of emancipation, other students explored even more radical and downright subversive ideas. Filipino boys, as it turns out, were not the only ones seeking independence. Woodson may have also gotten a first-hand lesson in Filipina feminism from Felisa San Augustin who, on August 21, 1904, wrote an essay arguing that “the woman has more influence than you” and “a man will never live from youth to death without the care of a woman.” San Augustin rejected the notion that “a woman is considered to be a house keeper only” while insisting that women should have “the right to everything as a man has.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Romualdo Tabing, “Pupil Self-Governing Project,” Folder 222, Box 9, Luther Parker Papers, Special Collections Section, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines. Tabing was the Principal teacher in the nearby school in Guimba, Nueva Ecija.

<sup>54</sup> Timoteo L. Vakilar, “How We Made a Success of Our Pupil’s Self-Government Project,” Luther Parker Papers.

<sup>55</sup> For more on the fraught tensions between students seeking real democracy and adults attempting to contain any genuine democracy that students demanded in their student governments see Larry Bauer, “Raising Small Citizens.” Bauer further argues that self-governing projects in American schools were a means by which the lack of democracy in the American colonies could be obfuscated and white American children could be simultaneous put in positions of greater social standing and political self-governance than adults of color living in the American colonies.

<sup>56</sup> Felisa San Augustin, “What a woman worth” student essay dated August 21 1904 Folder 3, Box 1, Frederick G. Behner Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

As evidence of her theory, she, emulating Woodson's contemplation or the question of race, turned to history. She began with a feminist reading of the Bible citing Esther's leadership that achieved a "pardon for her frithened [sic] people." She then explored the deuterocanonical story of the heroic Judith who "went one night to the battle field dressed in the finest fashion" to behead her people's arch enemy, Holofernes. San Augustin clearly took great joy in the image of a powerful Judith, after gruesomely decapitating her male oppressor, "carrying back before her king the head of this named general.". Next, San Augustin jumped to Spanish history to reclaim another maiden warrior, "Bureta Countess" (Agustina of Aragón), who fought against Napoleon during his invasion of Zaragoza, where she "man[n]ed the cannon and kept firing at the enemy even when the strength and courage of man failed."<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps foreshadowing a third wave feminist perspective, San Augustin was not limited to masculine-inflected displays of gender sameness. She also valorized motherhood and femininity as marks of a differentiated gender equality. As one of a series of scientific analogies San Augustin sought to "compare man to the fire and woman to the water" where fire was the "strongest element" but water was the "quieter force" with the power to extinguish male strength. She argued that "[i]f there were not a woman in the world there would be no pleasure, nor beauty, nor decoration, nor enchantment." She concluded by asking her hypothetical male reader a poignant question: "Are you not born of a woman?"<sup>58</sup> We can only wonder how Woodson might have graded this essay.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

In addition to this insurgent feminism and attempts to stymie self-governance, other efforts focusing more on economic emancipation were initiated by students and community members through the school's infrastructure. In Woodson's own school in San Isidro he may have either laid the groundwork for and/or received inspiration from the cooperative economic programs that he would later champion. In 1925 the students, teachers, and community members in his village engaged in a sustainable local chicken farming enterprise with global implications. One of the student-participants, Lorenzo G. Abello, saw it as a path towards self-sufficiency. He hoped that by working together the village "will not import eggs and chickens from other countries but export instead." Well aware of international politics and the emerging dynamics of global capitalism, Abello asked "If China can do this why could we not at least supply our demand?"<sup>59</sup> Woodson would look back with envy upon these Filipino co-operatives and later bemoan the "absence of cooperative enterprise" among the "Negro peasant or proletarian."<sup>60</sup> While these moves towards a Philippine-centric curriculum and limited self-governance may have been an empty gesture for American bureaucrats, for Woodson, his students, and their parents it was serious business. It was also an opportunity to pressure and shame that same American empire that was constantly at risk of crumbling under the weight of its own hypocrisy.

Yet even as this pedagogy could be emancipatory when dispensed by altruistic teachers, a more sinister plot was also at work. The Department of War, intent upon fulfilling the ancient Chinese dictate to 'know thine enemy', instructed its teachers to

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<sup>59</sup> Lorenzo G. Abello, "Poultry," student essay, March 15, 1926, Folder 220, Box 9, Special Collections Section, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines. Same folder also contains reports of the San Isidro Elementary School's "Poultry Projects."

<sup>60</sup> Mis-Education of the Negro, 150-151.

gather intelligence on Filipino children as part of their daily teaching.<sup>61</sup> Teachers were expected to force students to disclose in writing their traditional folk stories, religious beliefs, and local customs. This move was part of a much wider project of colonial knowledge production and surveillance that included a small army of professionally trained anthropologists originally organized by the future president of the University of California, David P. Barrows, as the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes. Here, Filipinos were cataloged, photographed, surveilled, reported on, and made legible through congressional reports for a colonial regime intent upon knowing and containing them.<sup>62</sup> When Barrows was still director of the Bureau of Education he had the honor of offering his fellow University of Chicago graduate, Carter G. Woodson, his first appointment in the Philippines. He had written Woodson in 1903 saying that he looked forward to having “the benefit of your assistance.”<sup>63</sup> When Woodson wrote back to accept the position, he did so from an on-campus address using official University of Chicago letterhead.<sup>64</sup> Whether Woodson followed the particular aspect of his job description regarding surveillance, or ignored it like he did so many others, is not known. What is certain is that the political thought of Filipino children had a lasting effect on the founder of Black History Month and the field of African American Studies.

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<sup>61</sup>“Relation of Educational Work to that of Other Departments” in Folder 324, Box 15, Luther Parker Papers, Special Collections Section, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines, states that teachers were collaborating with the Bureau of non-Christian tribes by “making investigations for this bureau in their various localities.” The student assignments collected by Frederick Behner clearly indicated he was giving students writing assignments that asked for their local folklore and customs, likely to pass this information on the anthropologists at the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes. See Behner Papers, Bentley Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>62</sup> “Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1903,” Volume VI, *Report of the Philippine Commission* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904). Appendix K p. 769-789 by David P. Barrows as “chief of the ethnological survey of the Philippine Islands (formerly the bureau of non-Christian Tribes)”

<sup>63</sup> David P. Barrow to Carter G. Woodson, August 31, 1903, File 8898, Container 533, Entry I-3 5-A, Record Group 350, National Archives.

<sup>64</sup> Carter G. Woodson to Col. C.R. Edwards, October 22, 1903, File 8898, Container 533, Entry I-3 5-A, Record Group 350, National Archives.

## The Black Transnationalist Returns Home

As fraught as Woodson's position was in the Philippines, he nonetheless intended to make the islands his permanent home—even as late as 1912 after becoming the second African American behind W.E.B Dubois to earn his doctorate from Harvard University. As further evidence of his commitment to a life in the Philippines, Woodson also planned to have his entire family join him there. In 1904, just one year after Woodson's arrival in the Philippines, his sister Bessie and his two brothers wrote to the Bureau of Insular Affairs in a set of nearly identical letters saying “we have decided to move our family there as a whole on condition that the government gives employment to three more of us.”<sup>65</sup> In their response to Woodson's family, the same impersonal bureaucratic machinery that attempted to break the bonds between Woodson and his family doctor also stood in the way of reunifying Woodson with his extended family. The Bureau insisted that they would give no special treatment to family members of current employees as new Progressive-era Civil Service reform laws meant that family members would have to meet all of the requirements and follow all of the guidelines of the enclosed “Philippine Civil Service Manual.” Woodson's family members would have to pass all of the exams that he had endured, including the medical exams. His sisters would also have to list him as their patriarchal protector in the Philippines “on account of the present policy of the Philippine Government in appointing no women to the position of teacher unless they are the wives, fiancees [sic], or near relatives of teachers

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<sup>65</sup> R.H. Woodson to Col. C.R. Edwards, August 31, 1904, File 8898, Container 533, Entry I-3 5-A, Record Group 350, National Archives.

already in the service.”<sup>66</sup> The gendered nature of empire building demanded that Filipina women were always expected to be available to American men in the Philippines. Single American women roaming the jungles of the Philippines and encountering scantily clad Filipino men, however, would have upset the entire colonial order.<sup>67</sup> Just as Jim Crow America had learned to fear black male sexuality, so too did the American empire learn to fear Filipino male sexuality.<sup>68</sup>

Woodson would eventually find himself reunited with his siblings—but not in the Philippines as they all had hoped. In 1907 Woodson got sick and had to return to the United States to recover.<sup>69</sup> Although reappointed and scheduled to return to the Philippines in 1909, his illness suddenly returned and he was forced to stay in Boston to pursue his second choice—a PhD at Harvard University.<sup>70</sup> In anticipation of receiving his degree in 1912, he re-took the Civil Service Examination on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 1911, scoring an 85.5% on the teacher’s exam for the Philippines. With this threshold now passed, on April 27, 1912, he applied yet again for re-instatement as a teacher the Philippines, sending an updated resume and demanding a new salary of \$1800 per

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<sup>66</sup> Bureau of Insular Affairs to R.H. Woodson Sept. 6, 1904, File 8898, Container 533, Entry I-3 5-A, Record Group 350, National Archives.

<sup>67</sup> For more on the sexual dynamics of American empire and the ways in which sex and gender were central to the American colonial project see Marie T. Winkelmann, “Dangerous Intercourse.”

<sup>68</sup> For more on the fear of Filipino men during the first waves of Filipino immigration during the colonial period see Linda España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles’s Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006) and Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 109-116.

<sup>69</sup> Carter G. Woodson to Bureau of Insular Affairs, June 19, 1908, File 8898, Container 533, Entry I-3 5-A, Record Group 350, National Archives.

<sup>70</sup> Carter G. Woodson to Bureau of Insular Affairs, July 15, 1909, File 8898, Container 533, Entry I-3 5-A, Record Group 350, National Archives. The most recent full biography on Woodson, Jacqueline Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson*, implies that Woodson may have faked the return of his illness in order to accept a high school position teaching in Washington D.C. and finish his PhD, however, the uncharacteristically sloppy (even shaky) handwriting evident in Woodson’s letter resigning from his appointment in 1909 indicates that he was genuinely ill. Additionally, Goggin fails to mention that Woodson subsequently applied for a fourth time to teach in the Philippines in 1912 after retaking the qualifying exams again in 1911 both of which indicate Woodson’s continued desire to teach in the Philippines.

year.<sup>71</sup> While it is unclear exactly why Woodson did not return to the Philippines this final time, it may have simply come down to a question of money. The Bureau wrote back to him stating that their procedures made no consideration for Woodson's exceptional accomplishments at Harvard. They would not offer him a raise. He would have to come back to his old post in the Philippines with the same starting salary that he received nearly a decade earlier, \$100 a month.<sup>72</sup> There is no further record of Woodson corresponding with the American bureaucratic state about teaching in the Philippines.

Nonetheless, Woodson's time in the Philippines, and in the Orient more generally, shaped him into a globally-minded black transnationalist, not the parochial, insular 'race man,' as he is so-often portrayed. After leaving the Philippines in 1907, and before applying for reappointment in 1909, he spent a year "traveling and studying in Asia and Europe." While in India and Singapore, he "made a special study of their school systems" in the hopes of bringing British colonial techniques to bear on his already diverse pedagogical portfolio. He also spent time in Palestine, Greece, and Italy before studying "as a special student of European history in the University of Paris."<sup>73</sup> Foreshadowing other black internationalists and Pan-Africanists a generation later, Woodson would circulate his Parisian proclivities back to Africa, spending time in Egypt after no doubt reading Pauline Hopkins's 1903 *Of One Blood*, perhaps while in the Philippines.<sup>74</sup> Egypt specifically, and Africa in general, would continue to be a land that

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<sup>71</sup> Resume of Carter G. Woodson c. 1912, File 8898, Container 533, Entry I-3 5-A, Record Group 350, National Archives.

<sup>72</sup> Bureau of Education in Manila to Carter G. Woodson, June 24, 1912, File 8898, Container 533, Entry I-3 5-A, Record Group 350, National Archives.

<sup>73</sup> Carter G. Woodson to the Bureau of Insular Affairs, Jun 19, 1908, File 8898, Container 533, Entry I-3 5-A, Record Group 350, National Archives.

<sup>74</sup> Pauline E. Hopkins, *One Blood*. This book was originally published as a serial in *The Colored American Magazine* the same year that Woodson was in the Philippines. Black soldiers reported a frequent exchange of

would fascinate and capture the African American imaginary for years to come.<sup>75</sup> Travel to Africa, as well as other far off destinations, would also stand-in as a marker and validation of Woodson's competency as a modern black subject. One of Woodson's recommenders, Alonzo Hertzel Brown, made particular note of Woodson's authority as both a teacher and a scholar based on the fact that he had "studied extensively abroad and traveled in Asia and Europe."<sup>76</sup> For Woodson and other black intellectuals, travel was a form of currency and a way to accumulate social capital.<sup>77</sup>

Woodson believed that this worldliness and travel experience along with his ability to "speak, read and write French and Spanish freely" meant that he was "better prepared to serve the Bureau of Education."<sup>78</sup> His former teachers at the University of Chicago seemed to agree. Edwin Erle Sparks of the Department of History, in his letter of recommendation for Woodson, also noted how his "wide experience both in this country and abroad has fitted him in a particular way for the profession of teaching." Commensurate with the university's notorious focus on theoretical concepts, Professor Sparks, while admitting to never having actually observed Woodson teaching in a physical classroom, deduced nonetheless that: "I can think of no reason why he should

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black literature and newspapers across the Pacific at this time. For more on black literary culture and Pauline Hopkins during this time during this time see Chapter 5. For Hopkins more generally see Hanna Wallinger, *Pauline E. Hopkins*; Lois Brown, *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins: Black Daughter of the Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Alisha R. Knight, *Pauline Hopkins and the American Dream: An African American Writer's (Re)Visionary Gospel of Success* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012).

<sup>75</sup> For more on the lasting threads of Egyptomania and Ethiopianism running through black history see Kai Parker, "Redemption in the Godless City: Messianism and Black Chicago, 1932-1968" (PhD Dissertation: University of Chicago, TBD), Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, *Setting Down the Sacred Past: African-American Race Histories* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2010); Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Afrotopia: The Roots of African American Popular History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>76</sup> Resume of Carter G. Woodson c. 1912, File 8898, Container 533, Entry I-3 5-A, Record Group 350, National Archives.

<sup>77</sup> For more on the idea of social capital see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>78</sup> Carter G. Woodson to the Bureau of Insular Affairs, Jun 19, 1908, File 8898, Container 533, Entry I-3 5-A, Record Group 350, National Archives.

not be a success as a teacher in any school.” Sparks clearly knew Woodson well. He did not miss the chance to off-handedly mention Woodson’s soon-to-be-famous encyclopedic mind and its “special aptitude along current lines of general information.”<sup>79</sup> As fate would have it, however, Woodson would not finish his career in the Philippines. Instead he borrowed from his early experiences in Asia to re-write history, in contrast with how it was written both in the Philippines and in the United States. While the “iron cage” of America’s bureaucratic empire certainly enabled his education abroad, its inflexibility also cut his time there short. Woodson, however, was not the only black teacher trying to undermine the apparent hegemony of American empire from within.

### **“The New Spirit of Education”<sup>80</sup>**

John Henry Manning Butler was one of at least two dozen other black teachers who taught alongside Woodson in the Philippines. The two men clearly knew each other and likely met in the Pangasinan region where they were both stationed as supervising teachers at roughly the same time.<sup>81</sup> Hailing from Elizabeth City, North Carolina, Butler began his teaching career at his local neighborhood school, which had been established by the Freedman’s Bureau. By 1890 he had been named assistant principal of that school and was charged with carrying on the legacy of emancipation and the promise of education in his hometown. While teaching at the former Freedman’s Bureau school he

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<sup>79</sup> Letter of Recommendation for Carter G. Woodson from Edwin Erle Sparks, March 30, 1908, File 8898, Container 533, Entry I-3 5-A, Record Group 350, National Archives.

<sup>80</sup> John H. Manning Butler, “New Education in the Philippines” *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 3, No.2 (April 1934), 257-268.

<sup>81</sup> “John Henry Manning Butler,” *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (April 1945), 243-244.

was instrumental in securing state funding for an all-new normal school in Elizabeth City. His partner in this highly political endeavor was one of the last black politicians of the Reconstruction era to still holding office in the North Carolina assembly, Hugh Cale. Together, the two men got the bill pushed through the state legislature securing funding for a new institution that would be called the Elizabeth City State Colored Normal School (which still operates today as the Elizabeth City State University).<sup>82</sup> Butler was the university's first teacher and its first assistant principal when it opened its doors in 1892. After his death in 1944 the men's dormitory was officially named Butler Hall and continues to stand today as an honor to his legacy.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> For more on the history of the university which is and is both an HBCU and part of the University of North Carolina system see Glen Bowman, *Elizabeth City State University, 1891-2016: The Continuity of a Historical Legacy of Excellence and Resilience* (Virginia Beach: Donning Company Publishers, 2015). Thank you to Elizabeth City State University archivist Cynthia Horne for bringing this book and other documents on Butler to my attention.

<sup>83</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Elizabeth City State Teachers College, June 1, 1945, University Archives, Elizabeth City State University, Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

**Figure 16. John Henry Manning Butler, c. 1920**



Source: Elizabeth City State University

But interestingly, Butler did not remain in North Carolina to educate the formerly enslaved or their descendants. His vision of emancipation was more global. While Woodson's health prevented him from returning to the Philippines, Butler made a conscious decision to live the vast majority of his life among colonized Filipinos on the island of Luzon. He saw it as an emancipatory project both for himself and his students. He did this even as his wife, Fannie, continued to live in Elizabeth City where she

became the “Lady Principal” of the university.<sup>84</sup> The transnational exchanges between Butler, his wife, and one of North Carolina’s youngest HBCU’s lasted from 1902 until 1944, the year Butler died in the Mandaluyong district of Metro Manila. In many ways, Butler was the teacher that Woodson wanted to be. He lived the life that Woodson wanted to live.

Unlike Woodson, who ultimately found himself locked out of the Philippines because of the bureaucratic requirements of the colonial state, Butler managed to climb the government ladder to heights far less attainable to him in the Jim Crow metropole. In Butler’s obituary, published in the *Journal of Negro History* and very likely written by Woodson, his remarkable rise was chronicled for an anxious black audience. After establishing the first school in the Pangasinan town of Alaminos (at the same time that Woodson was working in region) Butler spent the next decade and a half teaching and training local teachers in Pangasinan. By 1921 he had become the Superintendent of the province of Isabela.<sup>85</sup> The region already had some familiarity with black leadership, as T. Thomas Fortune’s guide in the Philippines, Captain Robert Gordon Woods had been previously appointed military governor of the region while he was under command of his company in the famed 24<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry.<sup>86</sup>

By 1927 Butler was promoted once again, this time taking charge of all the schools in the Cagayan Valley. While bragging about Butler’s accomplishments to an African American readership, Woodson characterized Butler (and by extension himself) as an anti-colonial hero who “helped to free” the Philippines from “the stranglehold of

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<sup>84</sup> Glen Bowman, “Remembering John Henry Manning Butler: School’s First Teacher,” *The Daily Advance*, (Elizabeth City, NC) April 5, 2015.

<sup>85</sup> “John Henry Manning Butler,” *The Journal of Negro History*.

<sup>86</sup> For more On Woods see Chapter 2.

Spain and made possible their recent development towards independent status.”

Confirming the central preoccupation with modernity that many black internationalists embodied, Butler, not white America, was described by Woodson as having “made a contribution to the modernization of the Philippines.”<sup>87</sup> Butler would further articulate his own unique vision of this black modernity through his teaching, his textbook writing in the Philippines, and the transnational essays he sent back home.

### **“Missionaries of Learning”**

Just as Woodson was turning the historical profession on its head, Butler was skillfully co-opting a number of Progressive Era white discourses surrounding developmental psychology and educational sociology to the benefit of his Filipino students. In an essay published in the April 1934 edition of the *Journal of Negro Education*, Butler transmitted his pedagogy to a black audience and laid out his model for a “New Education in the Philippines.” Based on a deep reading of the latest educational theory coming out of the United States, Butler argued directly against “older schemes of learning” based on “the old memoriter system.” Citing philosopher William James’s *Talks to Teachers*, Butler urged a more pragmatic student-centric approach that abandoned ridged dogma and fixed universal positions. From Lightner Witmer, the founder of clinical psychology, Butler drew inspiration to understand the minds of his

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<sup>87</sup> “John Henry Manning Butler,” *The Journal of Negro History*.

individual students and stressed the need to understand their personal developmental needs rather than treat them as a uniform homogenous mass.<sup>88</sup>

Perhaps most significantly, however, Butler attributed his wider critique of rote memorization, repetition, and conformity to Joseph Mayer Rice. A doctor by trade, Rice became famous for his 1893 study of *The Public School System of the United States*. After observing progressive schools in Germany, Rice railed against what he saw as the backwards state of American education with its endless drills and mass repetition that were supposedly stymieing American individualism and ingenuity. In addition to this compulsory culture of uniformity, Rice believed that the relationship between teacher and student in America was far too hierarchical and far too authoritarian in nature. He lamented the old fashioned American classroom as a place where the teacher “reigns supreme; his rulings are arbitrary; his word is law.” In a passage that would have certainly rung true to Butler and other black readers, Rice said that teacher-dominated classrooms created a situation where “[t]he innocent child is thrust into bondage, the years of childhood are converted into years of slavery.”<sup>89</sup> Perhaps forgetting his country’s own history with actual slavery, and unaware of the attempts to reformulate it in the Pacific, Rice asked rhetorically “could we, Americans for one moment endure slavery?”<sup>90</sup> While Butler and other black teachers certainly got the point, the America they knew not only endured slavery but continued to operate under its legacy. Undoing that legacy and insuring that it not repeat itself in the Philippines was Butler’s ultimate takeaway.

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<sup>88</sup> John H. Manning Butler, “New Education in the Philippines,” 257.

<sup>89</sup> Joseph Mayer Rice, *The Public-School System of the United States* (New York: The Century Co., 1893), 95.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 250.

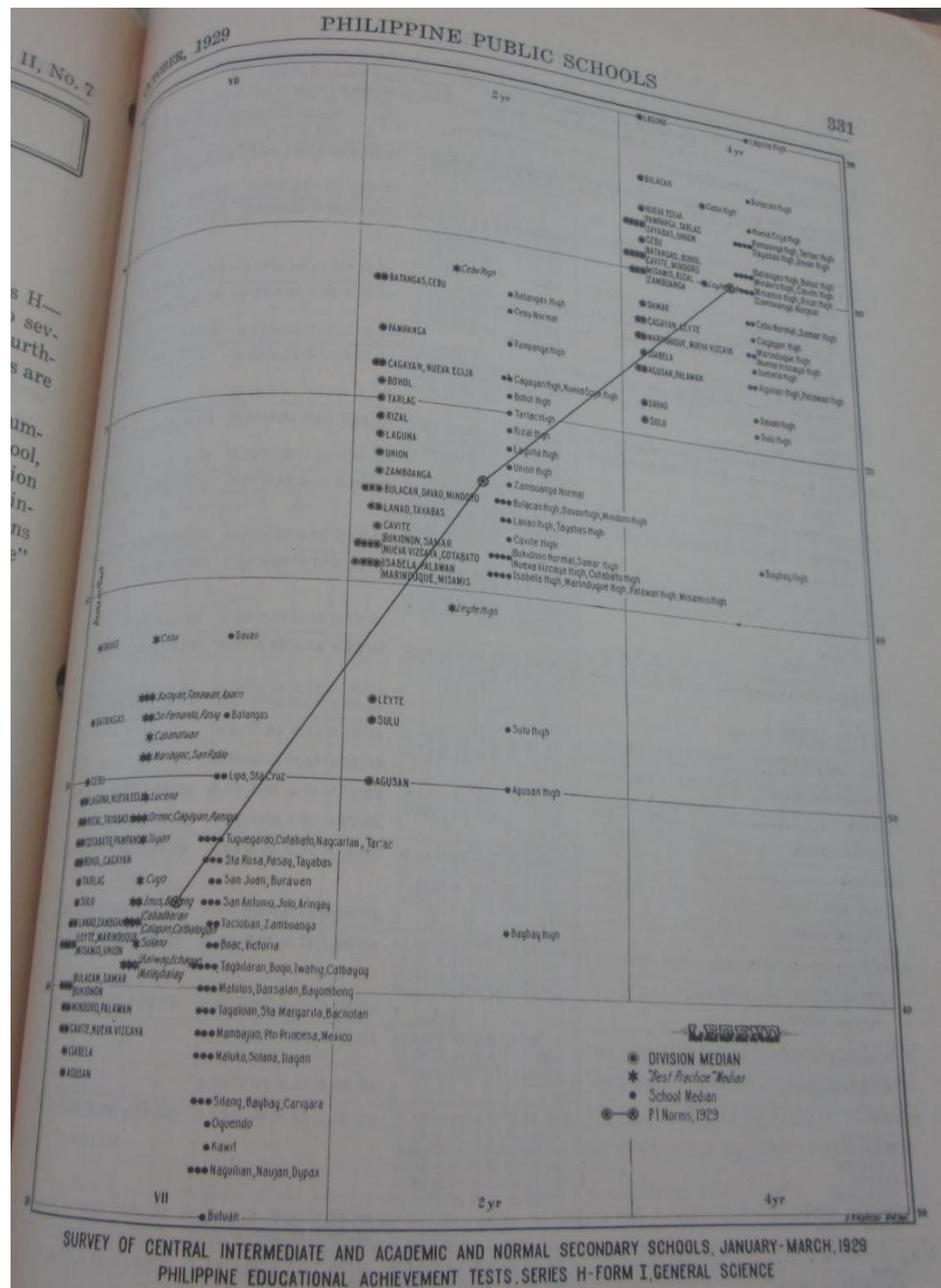
In following Rice, however, Butler's instituted a “positive scientific educational practice” that aimed to produce a “more effective” educational system.<sup>91</sup> This method, however, had its downsides. In order to measure the success of these apparently anti-hierarchical and more student-centric techniques, Rice and Butler, like other Progressive Era teachers, quickly embraced modernity’s infatuation with quantifiable data and pioneered the practice of standardized tests.<sup>92</sup> In a strange twist of irony that seemed altogether lost on Butler, attempts to foster student individuality and end the mindless repetition characteristic of traditional education meant a re-institution of its culture of conformity through standardized tests. Much like the standardized medical exams that reduced Woodson, Butler, and other black teachers to physical commodities to be evaluated against a preferred set of norms, the standardized tests that black teachers were forced to administer were part of a new, albeit less obvious system of control then developing through American empire and its bureaucracies both at home and abroad. While his students likely resented it, Butler pushed hard to ensure that his Cagayan Valley school district consistently remained above the “Best Practice” median in its test scores.

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<sup>91</sup> John H. Manning Butler, “New Education in the Philippines,” 257.

<sup>92</sup> For more on Rice’s efforts and his findings in perhaps the first large scale standardized tests administered on American students see Dr. J. M. Rice, *The Rational Spelling Book* (New York: American Book Company, 1898) and Dr. J. M. Rice, *Scientific Management in Education* (New York: Publishers Printing Company, 1913).

## **Figure 17. Philippine Public Schools, October 1929**



Source: National Archives, College Park, Maryland<sup>93</sup>

When not administering standardized tests, Butler threw himself into the study of history. Instead of re-writing black history for a black readership, as Woodson did,

<sup>93</sup> *Philippine Public Schools*, Vol. II, No. 7 (October, 1929), 331.

Butler instead chose to re-write Filipino history for its black readership in the same spirit. In doing so he offered the black middle class readers of *The Journal of Negro Education* a poignant lesson in comparative colonialism. Following Woodson in de-centering white America within his historical narrative, Butler stated that “[i]t should not be thought that the splendid education progress of the Philippines began with the American occupation.” Just as Woodson was writing an Afro-centric black history, Butler began writing a Filipino-centric Philippine history that valued indigeneity and the pre-Spanish era of the Philippines in a way that contemporary scholars of the Philippines would find familiar. Using local legends, archeology, as well as written records, Butler insisted that the famed explorer Ferdinand Magellan did not encounter a disorganized hoard of native heathens when he landed on the Eastern Visayas Philippine island of Limasawa in 1521. Instead, Butler described an indigenous system of “well-ordered governments” whose people were “intelligent” and “above the plane of barbarism.” Butler credited Islam in no small part for the level of pre-Spanish civilization in the Philippines, noting that “mathematics...had gone into Europe from Arabia” and the “teaching of the Koran” in the Philippines had formed the foundation of “regular schools.” While honoring this legacy, however, Butler refused to romanticize this pre-Columbian past, noting to his black audience that “serfs and slaves” were also indigenous to the Philippines and a key part of its history.<sup>94</sup> This connection between slavery in the Philippines and slavery in America was one that Butler would continue to press throughout his career.

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<sup>94</sup> John H. Manning Butler, “New Education in the Philippines,” 257-58. For more on the history of slavery in the Philippines and its rhetorical uses during the period of American colonialism see Salman, *The Embarrassment of Slavery*.

Further distancing himself from an American-centric historical narrative, Butler credited “Spanish civilization” with building upon these early indigenous efforts. He marked the initial Filipino contact with the Spanish empire through a very suggestive historical periodization clearly directed at his black readers. He noted that “Spanish civilization was brought into close contact with this Asiatic people early in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, about a hundred years before the introduction of slavery in Virginia [c]aused the Anglo-Saxon civilization to touch the black man.”<sup>95</sup> Toggling again between Filipino and African American history Butler also noted enviously that “[i]n 1865, when the Negro was being enfranchised, Santo Tomas University of Manila, had conferred 928 scholastic degrees.”<sup>96</sup> These direct comparisons made clear that Butler, and now his audience, were thinking actively of Philippine history and African American history as linked processes in the era of Western empire building. Colonialism in the Pacific and slavery in the Atlantic were connected—conceptually if not historically.

While not as critical as many postcolonial scholars today might be regarding the introduction of Spanish rule into the Philippines, Butler insisted throughout on crediting both Spanish and indigenous Filipino influences for the progress he saw in the Philippines. Indeed it was this very hybridity in the Philippines that Butler saw as providing a unique advantage to Filipinos. Butler said that it was this “intermingling and fusing of Oriental and Occidental civilization” that created Philippine modernity rather than just Spanish colonialism. The exchanges that took place in the past, as well as those he hoped to facilitate in the future, were the vehicles through which Butler

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<sup>95</sup> John H. Manning Butler, “New Education in the Philippines,” 258.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 265.

believed Filipinos “saw new visions and dreamed new dreams.”<sup>97</sup> Through this give and take, Filipinos also developed “a wider outlook on life in the East than folk of America are inclined to credit them with having.” After years of living in the Philippines Butler knew quite well the many influences that “[p]roximity to China, Japan, India, and the Malay portion of Asia” had on an already internally diverse and dynamic span of intermingled Filipino peoples.<sup>98</sup> Butler confirmed that Filipino elites “could look the advanced of any country straight in the eye and not be abashed because of deficient mental or general culture qualities.”<sup>99</sup> While observing that everyday Filipinos had a few “age-old vices, superstitions, and customs which caused others to consider them backwards,” Butler clearly did not share in the assessment of those “others.”<sup>100</sup> He instead compared Filipinos to the ancient Greeks, praising their “artistic temperament,” and lauding them as “venturesome and resourceful.”<sup>101</sup> This history put Butler far in advance of most American historians in the 1930’s, as the classically trained W.E.B. Du Bois would soon confirm through the cold reception his *Black Reconstruction* would receive in the academy just one year later.

Throughout his analysis of Spanish colonialism Butler argued for what many would describe today as a segmented incorporation or a selective assimilation of Spanish influences into the Philippines. This process was not dictated by Spanish authorities but carefully guided by Filipino elites responding to the demands of everyday Filipinos. For Butler, Filipinos were hoping to “divest themselves” from any premodern “age-old vices” that they may have “with the assistance of rules from a strange land.”

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 257-58.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 259.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 258.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 260.

Spain, not the Philippines, was Butler's "strange land" and it simply offered "assistance" for indigenous Filipino aspirations rather than conquering or subjugating a weak, powerless, or passive population.<sup>102</sup> Filipinos borrowed what they found useful while rejecting and resisting what they did not.

In the wake of the Philippine revolution that ousted the Spanish, Butler saw Filipinos working the same playbook on American imperialists. Filipino nationalists, according to Butler, were effectively using American expertise and resources to build their own nation. Filipinos may have "followed the lead of Americans in public works, improving sanitary and health conditions" but they did so in order to become a "powerful nation" like the United States not because they were incompetent or in particular need of uplift. Butler believed this process was well underway and predicted that the Philippines would one day rival the United States as "[h]emp, coconuts, tobacco, and sugar are easily raised in such abundance that some American agricultural groups are seeking either to limit the importation of these products on a free trade basis to the United States or give them a regular tariff status."<sup>103</sup> Butler went on and spoke with great pride that after Americans engineered the famous Benguet road to the 'summer capital' in the mountain citadel of Baguio: "Filipinos have run another road to the same point starting from another direction" and it was "constructed under the direction of Filipinos."<sup>104</sup> While he may have overlooked the violence and the vastly unequal power dynamics that characterized both American and Spanish colonialism, Butler took an unmistakable glee in at least imagining Filipinos getting the best of their

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 259.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 259.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 263.

imperial overlords. The desire to replicate this model in the context of African American's own internal "colonial status" was not far behind—and was likely not lost on his readers.<sup>105</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Butler encouraged African Americans back home to embrace a full-throated endorsement of Philippine independence. Rather than insist on an ever-lengthening finish line of progress to be met before Filipinos could be deemed ready or worthy of self-governance, Butler, in a thinly veiled parallel to black self-governance demands in Jim Crow America, stated that Filipinos had already "reached maturity" and were no longer in need of "Spanish tutelage, inspiration, and protection." Butler praised Filipino nationalists and their ongoing fight for independence. He boasted of their "finesse displayed on the chess board of statecraft at the time that Dewey...sailed into Manila harbor."<sup>106</sup> Jose Rizal, Dominador Gomez, the Luna brothers, and other Filipino *ilustrados* were singled out by name for their use of education as a strategy for securing "an independent government run by Filipinos."<sup>107</sup>

Confirming the tendency that he and Woodson shared in altering the official colonial curriculum, Butler selectively quoted from President William McKinley's "educational Magna Carta, so to speak, to the Taft Commission" while arguing that "[b]y

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<sup>105</sup> Du Bois formally explored the idea of African Americans occupying a "colonial status" (which he also conceptualizes as a "semi-colonial" and "quasi-colonial" condition) in W. E. B. Du Bois, "Colonialism, Democracy, and Peace after the War," in *Against Racism: Unpublished Essays, Papers, Addresses, 1887-1961*, Herbert Aptheker, ed. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985 [1944]). This idea would later be picked up most influentially by Harold Cruse, "Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American," in *Studies on the Left*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1962), 12-25. For contemporary discussions of this idea see Ramón A. Gutiérrez, "Internal Colonialism: An American Theory of Race," in *Du Bois Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2004), 281-295; Charles Pinderhughes, "Towards a New Theory of Internal Colonialism," in *Socialism and Democracy*, No. 25, Vol. 1 (March 2011), 235-256; and Robert L. Allen, "Reassessing the Internal (Neo) Colonialism Theory," in *The Black Scholar* Vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring, 2005), 2-11.

<sup>106</sup>John H. Manning Butler, "New Education in the Philippines," 258.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 265.

changing slightly the wording of these instructions of President McKinley” one could produce an emancipatory education in the Philippines. Butler described his ideal school system as “an evolution, growing out of the needs of the people.” It would be “so flexible and mobile as to permit adjustment to the diversifying needs of different sections of the country.” It would foster “world good will” and instead of working students ragged, it would make “wise use of leisure.”<sup>108</sup> Butler saw in education “the growth of civic consciousness, and a lively interest in community welfare.” He also saw education as having “decreased antipathies born of dialect differences” among Filipinos.<sup>109</sup> This final object of congealing the hundreds of Filipino ethnic groups into a unified nation under a common pair of languages (English and Tagalog) was particularly prophetic.<sup>110</sup> Butler noted what subsequent historians have only re-discovered recently, namely, that “Christian Filipinos have felt that their unenlightened brothers, if they remained unschooled, would retard the realization of desired independence.”<sup>111</sup>

These internal divisions among Filipinos were something that Butler believed were fostered and accelerated by the American military along with American racial ideologies. Butler was happy to report that Filipinos made “no distinction as to racial identity” among themselves. Instead, Butler saw them drawing the imposed colonial lines based on whether one was a “slavaje” (savage) or an “infidele” (infidel). While in his experience Butler found Filipinos “believing to the core in equality of races,” he

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 260.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 263.

<sup>110</sup> For more on the complex uses of language and translation as part of the formation of a national identity in the Philippines see Rafael, *The Promise of the Foreign*.

<sup>111</sup> John H. Manning Butler, “New Education in the Philippines,” 264. For more on the divides between Catholic and non-Catholic Filipinos and what Christianity meant for Filipino nationalists in signaling their ‘readiness’ for self-governance to American colonialists see Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines*.

chastised American racism for drawing new lines within the Philippines. He placed the blame on “the inability of the American soldier to understand the ordinary Filipino.” Butler also weighed in on the tendency of Americans to see Filipinos as black, stating that “[o]nly a thoughtless observer would consider the Filipino people Negroid.” While conceding that “[t]here are a few tribes of pigmy-like black folks with quasi-kinky hair and other physical characteristic which cause ethnologists to classify them with the Negro race,” Butler refused to accept this professional anthropological assessment.<sup>112</sup> He argued instead for a black and Filipino solidarity based not on sameness but diversity.

Still, there is no doubt that Butler, like Booker T. Washington before him, saw the struggles of black and Filipino colonial subjects as constituting a shared fate.<sup>113</sup> He announced that “[d]estiny has thrown the Negro and the Filipino under the tutelage of America” and “[b]oth of the races need to know more about each other.” In something of a call to arms, Butler’s closing argument advanced this project by challenging his African American audience to emulate the strategies of their Filipino brethren. He began by claiming that “no other colored race under the American flag has as bright an education prospect as the Filipino”—almost daring African Americans to prove him wrong.<sup>114</sup> The problem, according to Butler, was that African Americans were still clinging to a grave miseducation. They had failed to realize the ultimate source of their emancipation and their actual relationship to the American nation. “The Negro clings to America,” lamented Butler. “The Negro is contented, it seems, to rally around the flag

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<sup>112</sup> John H. Manning Butler, “New Education in the Philippines,” 265.

<sup>113</sup> For more on Washington’s understanding of black and Filipino solidarity see Chapter 1.

<sup>114</sup> John H. Manning Butler, “New Education in the Philippines,” 267.

which his race has followed in every American war.” Filipinos, on the other hand, asserted that “greater development is rooted in self determination.” Instead of seeing white America as a model to replicate, Butler believed that “[t]he Filipino has found [in] America a means of bringing his country into vital relationship with what his forbears have cherished.”<sup>115</sup>

Like any good teacher, Butler consequently assigned his African American pupils a lengthy reading list; asking them to begin studying the lives of Filipino revolutionaries including Jose Rizal, Andrés Bonifacio, Jòse Bugos, and the general who waged war against the American military for the freedom of his people, Emilio Aguinaldo. At the height of the Great Depression and in the depths of Jim Crow, Butler’s call for a revolution in America was not as outlandish as it may have seemed. While he preferred Filipino nationalism to what he saw as African American accommodationism, Butler nonetheless felt that a mutual exchange of political philosophies was in order. “With the exception of Booker T. Washington’s ‘Up From Slavery’ hardly anything is known by most Filipinos of the Negro Race,” he wrote. Butler therefore enjoined Filipinos, in perhaps one of the earliest calls for a pan-Third World Afro-Asian solidarity to return the favor and study the lives of Phillis Wheatley, Frederick Douglas, W.E.B. Du Bois, and, of course, Carter G. Woodson, who, he reminded them, was “once a teacher here.”<sup>116</sup>

While this piece in *The Negro Journal of Education* was certainly his most lengthy and articulate exposition of his views, it was not the first time Butler found himself translating the experiences of everyday Filipinos to American and African

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 268.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 268.

American readers. In 1928, while on leave in America, Butler returned to visit his wife in his native North Carolina. There he wrote a piece called “Tobacco Farming in North Carolina.” It was published back in Manila by the American colonial government’s Bureau of Education as part of their monthly magazine for teachers in the Philippines, called the *Philippine Public Schools*. Instead of speaking to a black audience, here Butler asked his largely white and Filipino readership to acknowledge the fact that Filipinos were receiving far better state funding for far better schools than African Americans were in his home state of North Carolina. Butler reported to his colleagues that in North Carolina “[t]he state department, I understand, has not established many rural high schools for the colored people.”<sup>117</sup> His point was not to pat himself or his fellow teachers in the Philippines on the back. It was a demand that teachers and colonial officials in the Philippines connect the shared struggles of rural African Americans and rural Filipinos. For Butler, the Jim Crow South looked like a colonial outpost. The Philippines had become his metropole.

### **Butler’s Cultural Turn**

While Butler’s history writing, pedagogy, and political theory circulated across the Pacific to white and black Americans, his students in the Philippines were always his first priority. In a series of additional contributions to the *Philippine Public Schools*, Butler made the case for his emancipatory pedagogy directly to his fellow black, white, and Filipino teachers in the Philippines. Using his talents for poetry and song, Butler

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<sup>117</sup> John H. Manning Butler, “Tobacco Farming in North Carolina,” in *Philippine Public Schools: A Monthly Magazine for Teachers*, Vol.1, No. 8, (November, 1928), 328 published by the Bureau of Education, Manila, P.I., Volume 675, entry 95, Record Group 350; National Archives at College Park, MD.

published in the December 1931 edition of the journal a complete classroom musical called “Pageant of Philippine Flowers.” Perhaps drawing inspiration from W.E.B. Du Bois’s 1911 *Star of Ethiopia*, the play was sung to standard tunes but contained Butler’s own original lyrics.<sup>118</sup> In staging and costuming the pageant, Butler did not encourage the kind of stifling, Western clothing that Helen James’s students hated so desperately in Hawai‘i, but instead enjoined his fellow educators to have their students express their pride in their local and regional culture by being “dressed in Filipino attire” and performing as “Philippine Flowers.” In the hopes that his play would foster “ethical and civic virtues,” Butler opened by asking Filipino children to sing aloud to their parents sitting in the audience:

Our country’s pride is children  
Now growing up to be  
The leaders of the day to come  
The leaders strong and free

Butler then asked the children to embrace their natural environment by transforming themselves into local flowers and communing with the landscape as a “Benguet Liliy,” a “sampaguita” and an “ilang-ilang.” By becoming these beautiful indigenous flowers the girls in the ensemble were told to announce themselves as a “[c]hild of the tropics, gracious queen” while celebrating their “Filipino character...[a]t home, abroad, and everywhere.” Even as “[t]he furious mob may tread,” Butler’s students asserted that “[s]omehow in after years ‘twill rise [w]ith a crown of deathless fame.” Butler was particularly certain to include the humble “mileguas” vine in his

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<sup>118</sup> Du Bois’s pageant was performed in 1913, 1915, 1916, and 1925 and was covered in *The Crisis*. See Rebecca Hewett, “Through the Eyes of Others: Representations of the Progressive Era Middle Class in W.E.B. Du Bois’s The Star of Ethiopia,” in *Theater History Studies* Vol. 30, No. 1 (2010), 187-201.

parade of flowers, a ground creeping plant whose life offered a potent analogy for both African American and Filipino daily life:

Mileguas may be crushed  
And mangled in the dust,  
Its odor sweet shall rise to bless  
Who to it was unjust<sup>119</sup>

Butler's themes knew no bounds whether its listener "be small or great." His work sought to "comfort some who weep," "give the downcast courage," and "woo men to the paths of peace." The flower/children commanded their community to "join in unity" and honor their "noble pedigree." But for the play's composer, it was not all flowers and sweet fragrances. Butler also hoped to convey the hard-scrabble African American cautionary folk wisdom that he no doubt carried with him from his native North Carolina, telling students to "trust those who are worth my love, [n]ot those who would cause me harm." Lest his audience overlook any of these analogies, Butler wrote explicitly in his biography of the colorless *ilang-ilang* flower:

I boast not of my color,  
Dream not of pride of race  
But when it come to quality  
I hold a ranking place

The curtain closed on his play with the children gathering together in the center of the stage and falling asleep to the hymn "Sweet Repose is Reigning Now."<sup>120</sup>

In addition to this play, which was clearly designed to empower his students with a sense of local and national pride, Butler was also interested in giving Filipino students survival skills in navigating American racism. Perhaps borrowed from the stories of

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<sup>119</sup> John Henry Manning Butler, "Pageant of Philippine Flowers" in *Philippine Public Schools*, Vol. IV, No. 9 (December 1931), Volume 677, Entry 95, Record Group 350, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>120</sup> John Henry Manning Butler, "Pageant of Philippine Flowers."

slavery he heard growing up, Butler also taught students the power of the African trickster. In a series of poems called “Golden Keys” designed to teach children polite phrases that would “ope[n] many doors,” Butler introduced ideas and imagery that just as easily may have applied to backyard classrooms in Elizabeth City. Butler knew that appeals to white paternalism, especially when delivered through the words of apparent deference, could mean the difference between life and death in either the Jim Crow South or the colonial Philippines. Butler’s instructions in manners were far from formalities. He began his lesson (also structured as a poem) by assuring his students of his radical sense of egalitarianism and that using good manners did not make one inferior. In his very first stanza he insisted that respect for others applied to all “[t]hough one be rich or poor.” But Butler’s heart was with working people. He taught children that by offering a loving greeting each morning to their working mothers:

To mamma’s face it brings sweet smiles  
While at her work she dishes piles

Knowing white supremacy in the way that he did, Butler transferred the black folk wisdom that he hoped could keep his students safe in the colonial Philippines even if it meant saying “I beg your pardon’ from the heart” as it “[w]ill often cause sharp pains depart.”<sup>121</sup> Just as a carefully worded (if not insincere) phrase might help one escape a lynching in North Carolina, it might also help curry favor and manipulate American imperialists in the Philippines who were in charge of Philippine regional fiefdoms.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> John Henry Manning Butler, “Golden Keys” in *Philippine Public Schools*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (January 1931), Volume 677, Entry 95, Record Group 350, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>122</sup> For more on the plantation politics of paternalism during slavery see Genovese. For the Jim Crow period see Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998).

Working skillfully within the existing social order, however, was not Butler's only, or even primary, lesson. Poetry was also not his only artistic medium. Previously he had written several magisterial songs including "Rise, Isabella, Rise" and "Cagayan" (the second of which became the province's unofficial anthem). In "Cagayan," which was also published for all to see in the *Philippine Public Schools*, Butler foreshadowed his themes of empowerment and a brutal realism that fully channeled the sorrows of everyday life. Residents in the Cagayan Valley were enjoined to "never tire Standing for the right" even though "the right be few." In singing Butler's tune, residents assured one another that their devotion was "not riches of the soil" but "treasures of the soul." No doubt harkening to his own migration and perhaps feeling nostalgic for his wife and hometown, Butler encouraged Filipino overseas workers from the Cagayan Valley to remember that although "my footsteps far away may stray" they "shall love thee Ever be where'er I may."<sup>123</sup>

In encouraging the neighboring Isabella province to "Rise," he again imagined a communion between the land and its people, covetously proclaiming: "Your soil is sacred." As a man whose own people were denied ownership of the land they lived and worked on, Butler commanded Filipinos to "never fear to fight great wrongs." The Filipino singers who responded to his call cried out: "to wrong we never will capitulate." Butler assured them that "your comrades wait to see you striding with a steady gait."

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<sup>123</sup> J.H.M. Butler, "Cagayan," in *Philippine Public Schools: A Monthly Magazine for Teachers*, Vol. 1 No. 8 (November, 1928), Volume 675, Entry 95, Record Group 350, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

The Filipino choir promised in return to “follow duty come to us what may, Rise, O, rise on to the way.”<sup>124</sup>

## Back to School

While some of these references to black and Filipino solidarity may have been easy to overlook, Butler also explicitly inserted black culture in to the daily lives of his Filipino students through his curriculum in hopes that it would help them achieve independence. In a now obscure teaching manual from 1927 called *Phonics for Filipino Teachers*, Butler provided not only the mechanics of English language acquisition but specific readings for his teachers to assign to their Filipino students. Butler chose these readings carefully—and they were designed to teach much more than reading. For example, using act one, scene three from Shakespeare’s *Othello*, Butler compelled classrooms filled with Filipino students to read aloud the monologue of Western literature’s most storied former slave as Othello told his story of how he was “sold to slavery” and of his “redemption thence.” Butler also took his class to church. He assigned Psalm 37 which assured his colonized students to “Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.”<sup>125</sup> Butler and his

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<sup>124</sup> J.H.M. Butler, “Rise, Isabella, Rise,” in *Philippine Public Schools: A Monthly Magazine for Teachers*, Vol. 1 No. 7 (October, 1928), Volume 675, Entry 95, Record Group 350, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>125</sup> John H. M. Butler, *Phonics for Filipino Teachers* (Manila: Oriental Commercial Company, Inc., 1927), Rare Books, Special Collection Section, University of the Philippines Diliman. Butler likely became interested in phonics as a subject through the work of Yale University’s Edward Wheeler Scripture whose work Butler cited in John H. Manning Butler, “New Education in the Philippines,” 257. Wheeler was the founder of the American Psychological Association and Butler likely read his *The Elements of Experimental Phonetics* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1902) and *Researches in Experimental Phonetics: The Study of Speech Curves* (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1906) in preparing his phonics book for Filipino teachers.

students likely shared a very precise vision of the evildoers that God was referring to in their present moment.

Not content with ancient wisdom and Renaissance texts, Butler also offered a potent example of literary black modernism as a direct retort to white supremacy. Paul Laurence Dunbar's "Merry Autumn" was assigned to Filipino students as a subversive challenge to the standard colonial cannon. In the poem, Dunbar offered Filipinos a poetic rejoinder that attempted to overturn centuries of European poets who bemoaned the "solemn autumn" as a sign that "the year is dying." Much like Woodson and Butler's contrarian stance on race, Dunbar instead demanded a remaking of fall itself. While the West had come to view the fall season as a disappointing end to an abundant year, for black and brown folk sometimes the passing year had little to be happy about. Dunbar instead harkened Filipinos to reimagine the fall as "the climax of the year." This eminent culmination meant new possibilities. The pain of the past had reached its "climax." A reset of the existing order loomed large and promised a better world. European dominance, for Dunbar and Butler, had reached its zenith. Its "fall" should not be met with sorrow but rejoice.<sup>126</sup> With these explicit, optimistic challenges to a Eurocentric curriculum (and at least partially to a European brand of modernity in general) Butler, through Dunbar, was attempting to re-shape the entire American colonial project in the Philippines. What might have been a stifling and repressive colonial education was being reshaped on the ground by Butler, Woodson, and other black teachers into a site of emancipatory pedagogy that celebrated black and Filipino history and culture. Together, they were effectively hijacking the public school system.

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<sup>126</sup> John H. M. Butler, *Phonics for Filipino Teachers*, 160-161.

## Conclusion

But life was not always as rosy as Dunbar's depictions of autumn. Butler and Woodson's positionality as members of an internally colonized people at home charged with extending American colonialism abroad was fraught with contradiction. Their mission was a paradox that they and their fellow black teachers were never able to fully escape.<sup>127</sup> But by studying the lives of Woodson, Butler, and other black teachers in the Philippines one thing becomes abundantly clear—Filipino children helped awaken the consciousness of their teachers to a shared condition of coloniality.<sup>128</sup> After this first-hand entanglement with the American empire abroad—seeing its full weight come to bear on the lives of Filipino children—black thinkers like Woodson and Butler quickly began to connect the dots and articulate anew the empire they also experienced at home. Conversely, by teaching black poetry and black political strategies that might help their students survive American empire, these black teachers offered Filipinos a primer on navigating American racism from a group so often the bearer of its fury. Consequently, from 1898 until at least 1946 black American and Filipino struggles over citizenship, self-governance, and freedom would develop in concert with one another. At the very least, what the modern founder of black history month makes clear is that the birth of black history can be found in an unlikely place—the transnational convergence of Filipino children, their political thought, and the black teachers who loved them.

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<sup>127</sup> For more on this paradox among black soldiers see, Cynthia Marasigan, "Between the Devil and the Deep Sea."

<sup>128</sup> Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," *Cultural Studies* 21 March/May (2007): 168–78.

## Chapter 5:

### Soul Food, Stir Fry, and Citizenship:

### The Transnational Construction of Tom's Dixie Kitchen in Manila

“Reverse his sex and name him Josephine Baker”

---*The Pittsburgh Courier* on Thomas Pritchard<sup>1</sup>

African Americans were not the only people of African descent confronting the overseas expansion of American empire. Seafaring Afro-Caribbeans had made individual escapes to the Pacific since at least 1824 when an enslaved, mixed race Afro-Antiguan named Jeramiah Martin jumped ship at the port of Kailua on the island of Hawai'i.<sup>2</sup> These small-scale transoceanic migrations took on new meaning for Afro-Caribbeans, however, in light of African American colonization plans to the Pacific. Opportunities and possibilities opened up for the handful of black Caribbeans who were able to latch on to the wider currents of American empire even as that same empire threatened to undermine their efforts at every turn.

This chapter follows the life of one such individual, a black man from the Caribbean, whose story ties together the Atlantic and the Pacific while providing a telling window into the lives of various people of color across both oceans that

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<sup>1</sup> Billy Rowe, “Tom Prichard-- Sui Generis (Unique): One-Time Seaman Found Fortune, Fame in Manila,” in *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 12, 1945.

<sup>2</sup> For more on Martin see Guy Emerson Mount, “Slavery, Migration, and Narratives of the Black Pacific,” *Black Perspectives*, October 28, 2016. See also the file on Martin at the Jean Greenwell Archive, Kona Historical Society, Kealakekua, Hawai'i.

confronted American imperialism. This is a tale of survival told through the food that people ate and the people who cooked it. It is a story of how food created space within which cultures, capital, and peoples circulated. Through these processes, new urban landscapes were built upon changes in rural agriculture—directed by the transnational empires that distorted them both. By following how food, culture, and food culture interacted with the political economy, the flavor of black colonization to the Pacific shifts in several unexpected ways that its framers could never have imagined. While harnessing state power to realize reparations was at the heart of black colonization to the Pacific, individual black people, as they tried to make these projects real, found themselves endlessly caught between the full weight of state power and state discipline, on the one hand, and a life of serial statelessness and abandonment on the other.

## Cooking with Empire

Slavery had been abolished for almost fifty years in the British Empire when Thomas Prichard was born on July 11, 1883.<sup>3</sup> The legacies of both slavery and empire, however, could be tasted everywhere in colonial Grenada. The small Windward Island near the southern tip of the Lesser Antilles was just a hundred miles north of several other colonial outposts in Trinidad, Tobago, and Venezuela. During slavery, Pritchard's grandparents would have likely been subjected to the relentless demands of the sugar plantations that continued to dot the tropical landscape. Nutmeg, however, had already begun to replace sugar as a cash crop for many of the black Grenadians hoping to define

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<sup>3</sup> The biographical information in this chapter, unless otherwise noted, relies primarily on Tom's own testimony during his 1948 citizenship case as given and recorded before the Philippine Supreme Court in *Thomas Pritchard v. The Republic of the Philippines*, G.R. No. L-1715, July 17, 1948.

a more subsistence-based postemancipation agricultural life.<sup>4</sup> This highly valued spice had migrated from its native land of Indonesia—another island chain whose long history of European colonialism was in many ways driven by attempts to monopolize the global nutmeg trade.<sup>5</sup> Granada had been one of the first postemancipation slave societies in the Atlantic to break the monopoly on nutmeg from the Pacific by growing it directly for foreign markets. Unfortunately for farmers in both Grenada and Indonesia, this had the unintended consequence of driving global prices for nutmeg sharply lower. Thus, long before Pritchard directly encountered Western imperialism in Asia, the ripple effects of those empires had already carried a small piece of Asia back to his home Grenada.

As opposed to the centralized processing mills and the specialized assembly line tasks that sugar production demanded, nutmeg could be processed by hand in Grenada. Individuals, families, and small collectives could work together in a more leisurely rhythm largely outside of white control and the large-scale capital investments that sugar factories necessitated. As a child Pritchard likely would have sat in a small circle to separate the nutmeg pod into its constituent parts while smelling the distinctive fragrances that were released with each subsequent layer. The outer fruit, the two layers of inner skin, and, finally, the prized nutmeg seed itself all found a ready home in Grenadian cooking—deeply nourishing Tom’s sense of taste and community. The ripe nutmeg pod became so important to Grenada that it eventually emerged as a symbol of postemancipation Grenadian independence. It appeared at the center of the country’s

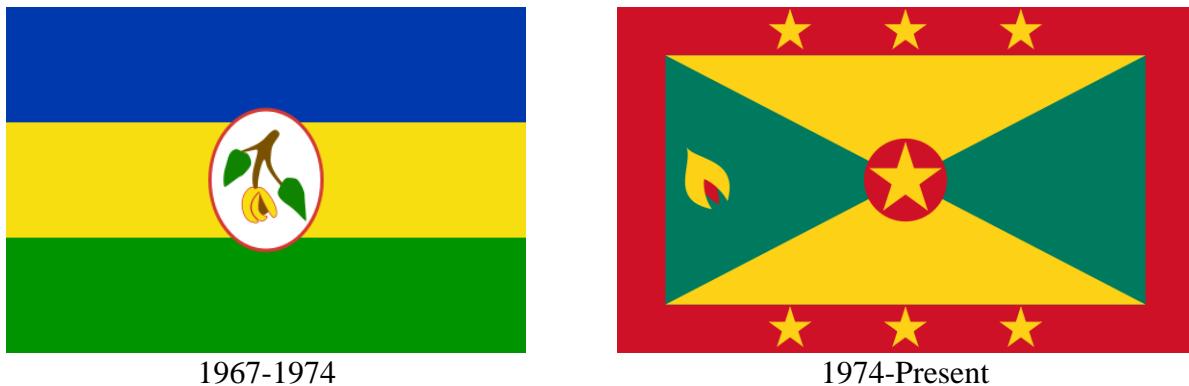
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<sup>4</sup> For more on this trend towards subsistence agriculture and a shift away from the cash crops of the transatlantic slave trade see Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*.

<sup>5</sup> For more on the history of nutmeg and its role in driving European colonialism in Indonesia see Giles Milton, *Nathaniel’s Nutmeg: Or the True and Incredible Adventures of the Spice Trader Who Changed the Course of History* (London: Penguin Books, 2000); Michael Krondl, *The Taste of Conquest: The Rise and Fall of the Three Great Cities of Spice* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2008).

first postcolonial flag and remains even today on the flag's left-most quadrant. Much like the nutmeg pod itself, understanding the complexity of Pritchard's life requires the peeling back of a number of diverse layers and examining their relationship to one another.

**Figure 18. Flags of Grenada**



In addition to the importance of nutmeg, Pritchard certainly would have grown up hearing stories about the kinds and amounts of food that his enslaved ancestors had eaten during slavery.<sup>6</sup> At some point he vowed to build upon these expressions of black culinary invention, while never returning to the scarcity that necessitated them. Tom, as he preferred to be called, became a chef. By combining ingredients, techniques, stories, recipes, smells, and textures from around the world, his artistic culinary expressions helped him confront modernity and tread a precarious path towards freedom. If nothing else Tom yearned to taste a better life. Like so many other working class people in the Atlantic and the Pacific, fulfilling this desire necessitated migration.

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<sup>6</sup> For more on the food history of the enslaved see Judith Ann Carney, *Black Rice* (Harvard University Press, 2009); Frederick Douglass Opie, *Hog and Hominy: Soul Food from Africa to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Marcie Cohen Ferris, *The Edible South: The Power of Food and the Making of an American Region* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

But Tom and his family did not leave Grenada on a whim. They first moved to Barbados in 1900, doing so within the context of a burgeoning American imperialism in the Caribbean. The U.S. takeover of Cuba and Puerto Rico had ripple effects that distorted markets, landscapes, and individual lives throughout the region. It opened up certain doors even as it firmly closed others. While it is unclear whether Tom and his family were displaced from Grenada because of some of these imperial forces or if they went to Barbados to gain greater access to American empire through Barbados's traditionally closer relationship to the U.S., the move was only a brief stepping stone for Tom. Arriving as a seventeen-year-old young man and staying on the island only a few short years, he likely saw enough of Barbados to learn a few more stories of black culinary history in the New World. The hungry teenager certainly would have sampled an even wider variety of Afro-Caribbean dishes in Barbados—chronicling them all in his sensory memory.<sup>7</sup>

In 1902, however, a new opportunity apparently sailed in to the harbor at Bridgetown, Barbados. It was the same harbor where George Washington's relatives once laid claim to enslaved Africans who arrived at this same trading port as human commodities chained to the hull of a slave ship.<sup>8</sup> Tom, however, got on a different boat—but one that was eerily reminiscent of the slave ships of old. Wind powered sails had evolved into the fiery, smoky engines of late modernity. Perhaps Tom sought adventure. Perhaps desperation compelled him. Either way, he eventually signed a

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<sup>7</sup> For more on Afro-Caribbean food culture see Candice Goucher, *Congotay! Congotay!: A Global History of Caribbean Food* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Washington kept a journal of his trip to visit his extended family in Barbados that was later reprinted as George Washington, *The Daily Journal of Major George Washington*, J.M. Toner, ed. (Albany: J. Munsell's Sons, 1892).

contract to serve as a cook on an American cargo vessel.<sup>9</sup> It was a decision that promised him American citizenship at the end of his three-year indenture to an American multinational corporation—or so he thought.

**Figure 19. Thomas Pritchard, c. 1948**



Source: the American Historical Collection, Rizal Library,  
Ateneo de Manila University

After sailing to New York and perhaps spending some time in Virginia, Tom made his way from the Atlantic world to the Pacific, landing briefly on the bustling shores of America's Pacific empire in San Francisco. There he left the private sector and

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<sup>9</sup> For more on the importance of postemancipation contracts both as actual documents and as ideological currency for both the formerly enslaved and the system of liberal capitalism see Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract*. For more on how slavery ended in the British empire while reifying this purportedly ‘free labor’ system see Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*.

joined a U.S. Army Transport ship as a civilian contractor in 1906. The Philippine American War was still raging and it created the job that Tom would now fill. Supplying sufficient food to American troops had emerged as a constant challenge for the nascent American empire.<sup>10</sup> Not unlike today, Americans ate everything in sight. Shortages and scarcity became common place and soon plagued the fertile Philippine islands. As one African American soldier and the uncle of famed novelist Ann Petry wrote to his sister from San Fernando in La Union, “we were barefooted and was living on the country getting whatever we could to eat.”<sup>11</sup> If the food that soldiers sought was in the hands of Filipino villagers, hungry Americans, white and black, considered it fair game and part of their military objective.

This malnutrition of American troops (especially those in African American regiments) was a constant refrain from soldiers in their diaries and letters back home. But as in most wars, civilians suffered the most. As black and white soldiers scavenged for food, entire Filipino villages were literally starving to death. At least initially, no friendly boats delivered them rice. Instead, boats, like the one Tom worked on, supplied food to those who took their food. In this iteration of empire, Tom’s job was to cook meals for the sailors who were transporting the food that fueled the seemingly endless hunger of American soldiers. They needed to eat to have the energy to continue taking

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<sup>10</sup> For more on the logistical and administrative nightmare that the American military faced in creating an industrial food economy see Records of the United States Army Overseas Operations and Commands, 1898-1942, Entries 2406, 2250, 2251, and 2256, Record Group, 395, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>11</sup> Willis H. James to Bertha James Lane, July 4, 1900, Folder 33, Box 3, James Family Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. This was a recurring theme for James who also wrote his sister on May 24, 1900 from Bulacan saying “We have been suffering terrible here for the want of something to eat” and on September 19, 1900 telling her that “they marched us nearly to death” while “half of the men were barefooted.”

even more food. For Americans, killing human beings and squashing revolutions were working up additional appetites of all sorts.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps disenchanted with this predicament, or unwilling to participate any longer in the direct subjugation of a fellow colonized people, Tom decided to start cooking for everyone. In 1911, he left the maritime business behind and got his start at Clarke's restaurant on the old Escolta in downtown Manila. There Tom quickly developed a loyal following with his "daily 'home cooked' luncheon course."<sup>13</sup> Yet no sooner did Manila take note of Tom's talents before Clarke's restaurant would find itself at the mercy of a state-supervised foreclosure sale. The Bank of the Philippine Islands, which had recently been privatized as part of American rule, decided to liquidate the famed establishment due to Mr. Clarke's failed investment in a gold mine in Itogon, Benguet.<sup>14</sup>

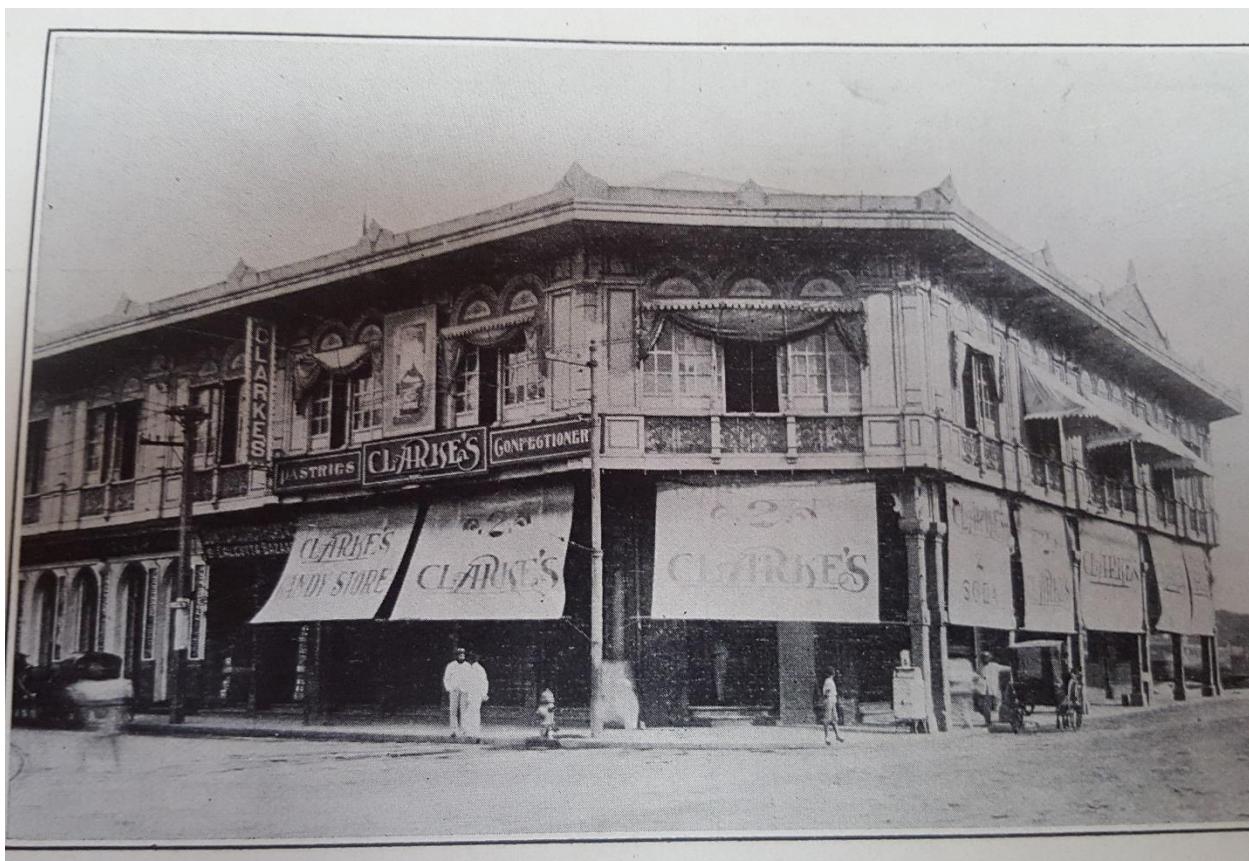
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<sup>12</sup> For more on how these increased imperial appetites extended into the realm of sexuality see Marie T. Winkelmann, "Dangerous Intercourse."

<sup>13</sup> *The Afro-American* (Baltimore), March 24, 1928.

<sup>14</sup> The American Chamber of Commerce Journal, December 1939

**Figure 20. Clarke's Restaurant, c. 1911**

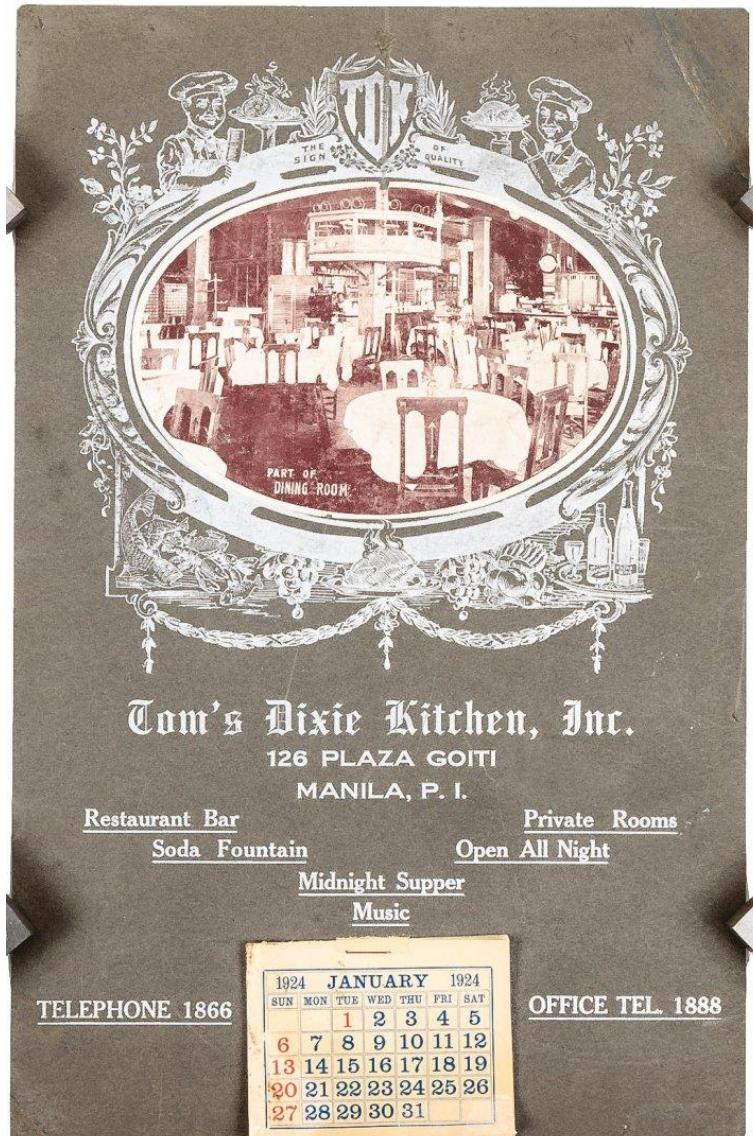


Source: The American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University

Tom was out of a job. Perhaps with the help of his A-list clientele at Clarke's, many of whom were founding members of the American Chamber of Commerce in Manila, or perhaps with the meager savings he had mustered in his seven years at sea, Tom managed to start a small lunch counter restaurant. It opened just down the road from Clarke's in the new bustling heart of Manila's banking, entertainment, and transportation district—Plaza Goiti.<sup>15</sup> Clearly signaling his newly adopted persona as a black southerner in Manila, he called the place Tom's Dixie Kitchen.

<sup>15</sup> *The American Chamber of Commerce Journal*, December 1939, University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Figure 21. Calendar (c. 1924) Recently Purchased at Auction by a Private Collector



Source: Live Auctioneers

White Americans ate up the taste of Dixie that Tom was cooking. One of his first clients, A.V.H. Hartendorp, the former Thomasite and American media mogul, remembered that it was “the delicious southern-style American dishes which brought

people into the place.”<sup>16</sup> Another client, Frank Bender, described Tom’s Dixie Kitchen as “not an upscale spot, but it had loud jazz, cheap drinks, and good oriental food plus southern fried chicken, fish, and hush puppies.”<sup>17</sup> But white Americans were buying much more than a meal. The restaurant’s name, the presence of black music, and black Southern cuisine were also being sold by Tom as part of an overall restaurant experience. As such, white Americans were effectively buying a black Grenadian man’s claim as an authentic purveyor of African American culture. Tom’s virtuosity as a chef enabled him to learn enough passable African American dishes (either while at sea or while visiting American ports) to satisfy these white customers while also exciting an entirely new audience of Filipino diners. In this highly staged context, most white customers clearly believed they were interacting with an “American Negro.”<sup>18</sup> They certainly felt comfortable knowing that even in Manila a “big, black, and smiling” servant was “presiding behind the counter.”<sup>19</sup> Rather than being a liability, Tom’s blackness and his apparent African Americanness, once properly packaged in the Philippines, might have been his single greatest business asset.

Much like the minstrel performances of his fellow Afro-Caribbean Bert Williams, Tom skillfully played this role as an African American in Manila for all it was worth.<sup>20</sup> While it is unclear beyond his restaurant’s name exactly how consciously he might have embellished his accent, mannerisms, and personal narrative in order to be read as an African American, Tom clearly remained silent from time to time about his Grenadian

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<sup>16</sup> *The American Chamber of Commerce Journal* (August 1964) University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>17</sup> As quoted in Adrian Robert Martin and Larry W. Stephenson, *Operation Plum: The Ill-Fated 27th Bombardment Group and the Fight for the Western Pacific* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> *The Journal of the American Chamber of Commerce* (September 1964), 408.

<sup>19</sup> *The Journal of the American Chamber of Commerce* (August 1964), 388.

<sup>20</sup> For more on Williams and the intra-diasporic performance of race see Chude-Sokei, *The Last “Darky.”*

roots, allowing white Americans to assume what they wanted. African Americans, for their part, seemed anxious to go along with the act and proudly claimed Tom as one of their own. At least one black newspaper, upon hearing of his success, stated that Tom was “a former Virginia race man and one time cook on a Chesapeake steamboat.”<sup>21</sup> Another black paper from the U.S. held up the Grenadian chef as “a monument to the ingenuity of the American Negro.” This second paper even went so far as to claim an insight into Tom’s psyche, claiming that this man from the Caribbean “remembered always that he was an American Negro.”<sup>22</sup>

Filipinos bought in as well. In Cornejo’s 1939 Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Philippines, for example, Tom was listed in as being “born in U.S. on July 11, 1883.”<sup>23</sup> While this date is exactly the same as the one that Tom himself would later give in his sworn testimony before the Philippine Supreme Court (and was, therefore, probably accurate), it is unclear if Tom gave the Philippine directory writers the false impression that he was born in the U.S. or if the editors found out his birthday from a third party and just assumed that he was an African American.

Yet this story of Tom as an African American chef in the Philippines was far from universal. Other competing rumors of Tom’s identity continued to circulate even as they were similarly inaccurate. A few white Americans seemed at least to be aware of Tom’s Caribbean origins, which his accent would have likely betrayed. With little understanding, however, of the linguistic nuances or island affinities of the region as a

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<sup>21</sup> *The Afro-American* (Baltimore), March 24, 1928.

<sup>22</sup> *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 12, 1945.

<sup>23</sup> Miguel Cornejo, *Cornejo’s Pre-War Encyclopedic Directory of the Philippines* (Manila: Miguel R. Cornejo, 1939).

whole these white observers simply saw Tom as a hardworking “Jamaican Negro.”<sup>24</sup> Much like slaves on antebellum auction blocks were the site of fantasy and narrative products of the minds of their purchasers, customers invented and projected various usable identities on to Tom as well, even as he was doing the same for himself. While Tom had his own motivations, his customers certainly engaged in this process to validate their own racial self-conception while consuming their own imagined narratives of Tom’s black body.<sup>25</sup> Tom’s customers could purchase lunch anywhere, but they were drawn to Tom’s Dixie Kitechen at least in part by their racialized narrative of its owner. It is likely that white Americans, far from home in the colonial Philippines, found comfort and reassurance in these projections of blackness as they consumed their meals.

Indeed, other innovations in the popular culture of the Philippines lends support to the idea that Tom’s biography shaped the American expatriates’ attraction to Tom’s cuisine. Concurrent with the growing popularity of Tom’s restaurant, minstrel shows were also gaining popularity throughout the Philippines.<sup>26</sup> As it was “back home,” race was being remade, translated, and contested in the islands through America’s most popular form of mass entertainment. The traveling “Neill-Frawley stock company,” for example, was one such professional troupe that went to Hawai‘i and then the

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<sup>24</sup> Frank Tenny, “Tom Pritchard” (obituary), *The Journal of the American Chamber of Commerce* (July 1964). A.V.H. Hartendorp also seemed to believe that Tom “had been born in Jamaica.” A.H.V. Hartendorp, “The ‘Let Your Hair Down’ Column,” (Tom Prichard obituary), *The Journal of the American Chamber of Commerce* (August 1964).

<sup>25</sup> For more on how black bodies were inscribed with histories and identities during slavery so as to produce a consumable retail commodity see Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>26</sup> See for example the *Morning Telegraph* (New York), January 19, 1903 which states that the “Neill-Farwley stock company” performed in Hawai‘i and the Philippines as well as *Manila American*, January 31, 1903 which reviews a minstrel show at the Zorillo Theater put on by the Manila Elk Lodge. For a look at how minstrel shows functioned to incorporate and condition immigrant communities into the national character through a common denigration of African Americans see Chapter 6 of Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*.

Philippines before moving on to Hong Kong.<sup>27</sup> According to reports in the Philippines, one of their actresses, Christine Hill, “did good work and deserve[s] special mention” for remaking herself “as the negro servant.”<sup>28</sup> These professional stagings of race were mimicked by amateur minstrel performances in the Philippines that were often directly inspired by (and even institutionally connected to) their paid counterparts. The Manila Elk Lodge, for example, produced a show that was meant to honor one of the Neill-Frawley company’s professional performers, fellow Elk Lodge member Jack Wade. The fraternal organization did this by reenacting black stereotypes for “everybody in town” at a sold-out performance at the Zorillo Theater in 1903, attended by thousands of Americans, and at least a few Filipinos. It included a white man cross-dressing as “a black wench” and a “merry band of blackface boys” singing songs such as “Aint Dat a Shame” and “Way Down Yonder in the Cornfield.” In an apparently touching moment, the departing Wade, who was traveling back to the states to be with his ailing wife, received a rousing standing ovation as “[t]he blackface make-up concealed the big tears that rolled down his cheeks.”<sup>29</sup> It is not clear if any of Manila’s black residents were in attendance that night or what they might have thought.

## Afro-Asian Food Pathways

Tom and his customers continued this performance of race off stage even as they were no doubt informed by the kinds of artistic reenactments they saw taking place on stage. In this context, Tom’s cooking soon began to reflect these complex collisions of

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<sup>27</sup> *Morning Telegraph* (New York), January 19, 1903.

<sup>28</sup> *Manila Times*, January 3, 1903.

<sup>29</sup> *Manila American*, January 31, 1903.

reformulated racial identities taking shape in Manila. Over time, however, Tom's menu began to read less like a pandering minstrel performance to white racists and more like the sophisticated musings of a seasoned black internationalist. An analysis of his menus show a remarkably diverse set of offerings, some of which only paid passing reference to Dixie and its minstrel tradition. In fact, when taken together, his dishes constituted perhaps the first attempt in human history at an Afro-Asian fusion cuisine. With over three hundred dishes, epicures could sample Caribbean oxtail, Louisiana gumbo, Filipino lumpia, Mexican tamales, French consommé, Welsh rarebit, Maryland fried chicken, and Chinese chop suey.<sup>30</sup> The entire world was seemingly on a plate at Tom's Dixie Kitchen. Many of these traditional street foods had emerged from rural peasant countrysides elsewhere, but were now being elevated and consciously positioned as formal restaurant fare in Tom's well apportioned dining room.<sup>31</sup>

Yet in addition to this amalgamated offering of traditional dishes, Tom also introduced a curious new concoction to the Philippines manufactured by C.W. Post Cereals—something its founder called Grape-Nuts. This breakfast cereal (containing neither grapes nor nuts) situated Tom within a much larger American tradition of introducing artificial, industrially-produced, food-like products to new markets abroad. Uncertain if Grape-Nuts would capture the imagination of his Filipino customers, Tom hedged his bets and also served its chief competitors: Shredded Wheat and Corn Flakes.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Tom's Oriental Grill Menu, American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University.

<sup>31</sup> For more on Filipino food culture in this respect see Robert Ji-Song Ku, Martin F. Manalansan, and Anita Mannur, eds. *Eating Asian America: A Food Studies Reader* (New York: NYU Press, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Tom's Oriental Grill Menu, American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University.

Tom's role in shifting consumer tastes held profound consequences for Philippine agriculture, industrial food pathways, and environmental landscapes. The growing demand for abacá (used to make the world-renowned Manila hemp) was already putting pressure on domestic Philippine food producers to re-allocate their agricultural land to serve global industrial markets. Exports of abacá nearly doubled in the first decade of American rule making it the most valuable cash crop in the Philippines by far.<sup>33</sup> Americans didn't want to eat rice. They wanted the inedible fibers of the abacá plant that only grew in the Philippines. While rice nourished, abacá bound and confined both people and things.

Along with the shifting of local tastes in food consumption that Tom and other American restaurateurs pioneered, this escalating demand for abacá represented part of a much larger shift to imported food, global commodity production, and a cash economy in the Philippines. By 1910, the Philippines were importing 6.6 million dollars per year of rice and also depended on foreign markets to supply enough fish, vegetables, and sugar to feed its population. American merchants seemed dumbfounded that Filipinos were not working hard enough to produce "an amount amply sufficient to supply the needs of the inhabitants." White Americans readily ignored, of course, the fact that Filipino land and labor were being redirected to serve the needs of the American colonial export market, while making way for American food exporters like Post, Kellogg's, and Nabisco, who armed with state-subsidies, flooded the Philippines with

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<sup>33</sup> Harry Taylor Edwards and Murad M. Saleeby, *Abacá (Manila Hemp)* (Manila: Manila Bureau of Printing, 1910), Courtesy of Cornell University Library.

cheap, state-subsidized, artificial food products.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile the hungry bellies of U.S. soldiers roamed about the countryside and raided Filipino food stockpiles bringing further damage to Filipino farmers. Colonial trade policies were thus reframed through food as the personal, racialized failures of an entire nation of people.

Indeed, one of the fundamental but often overlooked things that empires do is remake the agricultural and nutritional landscapes they dominate. The lasting health implications of this shift soon became obvious. The Atlantic World's addiction to sugar consumption also found root in the Philippines.<sup>35</sup> It disrupted much more than just domestic sugar production, which had been exported from the Philippines to the United States since at least 1795.<sup>36</sup> New consumption patterns meant that Tom's dessert-oriented customers could now indulge in pumpkin pie, coconut cake, chocolate éclair, vanilla milk shakes, strawberry ice cream, and something called a "Hawaiian Beauty Sunday."<sup>37</sup> As a result, Tom himself, along with countless Filipinos, would eventually develop type 2 diabetes, a disease that would eventually take his life in 1964.<sup>38</sup> This public health concern was exacerbated, if not created, by American colonial policy which was subsidizing American beet sugar production at home while providing favorable

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<sup>34</sup> Col. Henry B. McCoy, "Records from the Best Philippine Trade Barometer: The Manila Custom House," in *The Manila Times: Investors and Settlers Edition*, Eleanor Franklin Egan, ed. (Manila: The Times Publishing Company, 1910), American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University.

<sup>35</sup> For more on sugar culture in the Atlantic world see Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986). For sugar in the Philippines see Filomeno V. Aguilar, Jr., *Clash of Spirits: The History of Power and Sugar Planter Hegemony on a Visayan Island* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998). For more global histories of sugar see Elizabeth Abbott, *Sugar: A Bittersweet History* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2008); Sanjida O'Connell, *Sugar: The Grass That Changed the World* (London: Virgin, 2004) and Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

<sup>36</sup> Harold M. Pitt, "The Sugar Industry," in *The Manila Times: Investors and Settlers Edition*, Eleanor Franklin Egan, ed. (Manila: The Times Publishing Company, 1910), American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University.

<sup>37</sup> Tom's Oriental Grill Menu, American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University.

<sup>38</sup> *The Journal of the American Chamber of Commerce* (September 1964), University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

tariffs to Philippine sugar cane imported to the U.S.<sup>39</sup> By driving down prices, and protecting private industry with public subsidies, American food policy increased both the production and the consumption of sugar in both metropole and colony. Over the course of the so-called American Century this choice would become a ticking time bomb for public health outcomes, not only in America but throughout the world.

This globalization of food pathways, along with the conspicuous consumption that accompanied it, extended even further in light of Tom's exhaustive menu of imported spirits. While alcoholism was certainly not unknown in the Philippines prior to American rule, the ubiquity of sugar-laced, American-fashioned cocktails, all with higher alcohol contents, did not help matters. The thirsty could now sit down in one place for an international orgy of inebriation. Tom sold a Holland Gin Fizz, a Rum Negrita, Japanese beer, Australian port, Italian wines, Canadian whiskey, Irish scotch, and a German Goldwasser, which actually contained small flakes of 23 karat gold floating about in the liqueur.<sup>40</sup> As major multinational alcohol distributors competed for market share, English language newspapers in the Philippines were being bombarded with advertisements promising quick intoxication at the bottom of a bottle.<sup>41</sup> Prohibition passed over the Philippines. One of the many quirks of the country's liminal legal status was that the 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment to the Constitution did not automatically apply to colonial spaces considered "foreign to the United States in a domestic sense."<sup>42</sup> With the horrors of the American empire in full sight, both the

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<sup>39</sup> Harold M. Pitt, "The Sugar Industry."

<sup>40</sup> Tom's Oriental Grill Menu, American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University.

<sup>41</sup> See for example *Manila Times*, January 2, 1903. Ads for alcohol were ubiquitous and could be found copiously in nearly every issue of every English language newspaper in the Philippines.

<sup>42</sup> *Samuel Downes v. George R. Bidwell (1901)*, Supreme Court of the United States, 182 U.S., 224.

empire's perpetrators and its survivors found plenty of reasons to self-medicate at the end of Tom's bar.

Logistically these expanding global food pathways that Tom participated in required new technologies. The Philippines Cold Stores, just a quarter mile south of Tom's Dixie Kitchen, was one of several ice plants required to facilitate Tom's importation of global foodstuff. In a 1910 advertisement masquerading as a news article in a special edition of the *Manila Times*, the ice plant's Australian owners boasted that their facilities "can be found on three continents" making them "the biggest private ice plant and cold storage trade in the East."<sup>43</sup> The intricate process necessary to turn publicly supplied water into privatized distilled ice involved an elaborate "ammonia tank system" powered by coal burning steam pumps and a massive series of conveyor belts.<sup>44</sup> Once the large blocks of ice were produced, and the toxic ammonia gas, nitrous oxide, sulfur dioxide, and carbon dioxide emissions were released into the atmosphere and thereby externalized as costs. The ice blocks were then arranged into several inner and outer cold storage chambers. The ice itself was a valuable commodity as Americans in the Philippines by this time were already accustomed to having ice-boxes in their homes. The ice plant produced "tons of it" every day and delivered it twice daily in "small quantities to individual customers," who hoarded it in a growing but inefficient network of personalized refrigeration units.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> G.S. Yull & Co., "The Philippines Cold Stores," in *The Manila Times: Investors and Settlers Edition*, Eleanor Franklin Egan, ed. (Manila: The Times Publishing Company, 1910), American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University.

<sup>44</sup> For more on how ice was manufactured see Frederik A. Fernald, "Ice-Making and Machine Refrigeration" in *Popular Science Monthly* (Vol. 29, May 1891).

<sup>45</sup> G.S. Yull & Co., "The Philippines Cold Stores."

The real value of the plant, however, was in its ability to warehouse refrigerated goods that it imported from Australia and then resold to both individuals as well as “all the leading clubs, hotels, ships, and messes” in town. Given that Tom’s Dixie Kitchen was just a short five-minute walk away, did an incredible volume, and served lamb on its menu (which almost certainly at this time came from Australia) Tom was in all likelihood a customer of this ice plant, or one like it.<sup>46</sup> The coal powered transportation networks needed to supply the “Australian frozen meats, poultry, fish, fruit, and butter” to the ice plant were enormous. The plant had its own docks on the Pasig River and the building occupying “the whole block between Calle Bazan and Calle Orozco with the frontage to Calle Echague.” Every Australian steam ship that arrived at Manila Bay reportedly contained food for the ice plant. After setting anchor, the ice plant sent its own smaller fleet of insulated boats down the Pasig River to meet it. Once the “scrupulously clean” boats were “sealed so that neither air nor dust can enter” they returned to the ice-house’s docks where “the insulated lighters” transferred their cargo to “a small trolley railroad” that lead directly into the cold rooms.

Assuring customers that Australia’s premier ice-house shared the American colonial government’s concern with racialized public health, the company contrasted its supply chain logistics with more traditional local methods of procurement taking place in Manila. The company made a point to explicitly signal to customers that when transporting their food “there is no carting through dusty streets or smoky docks, and no defilements can reach it.” Avoiding “defilements” also meant abiding by the colonial state’s legal infrastructure. All the company’s food packaged in Australia was

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<sup>46</sup> G.S. Yull & Co., “The Philippines Cold Stores.”

purportedly “made in strict compliance with the United States pure food laws.” This entirely unnatural and laborious procedure was sold to consumers as a way to “allow fresh meats and fruits to be preserved in their natural state.” Americans were somehow able to “live more naturally” by consuming “all those things he has always been accustomed to eating.”<sup>47</sup>

### **“It is Not Excelled by the Cotton Club”**

At least in part by utilizing this global trade network, Tom’s Dixie Kitchen by the 1920’s had become a venerable Philippine institution. Tom boasted of employing twelve cooks and fifty waiters while serving over 1,200 people a day in 1928.<sup>48</sup> By 1934, one black newspaper had stretched this legend onto truly unbelievable terrain imagining that Tom’s had grown to 140 employees and 25,000 daily customers.<sup>49</sup> What is certainly true is that the restaurant took up nearly an entire city block in the busiest central square in the heart of the city’s nightlife and entertainment district. It was located at the end junction point of several street car lines in Manila, making it something of a cross between New York’s Grand Central Station and Times Square. One of its entrances was right across from the Savoy Theater while the other one faced a major banking center. It was the kind of place where some people “used to go there just to be seen.” The clientele was a wide cross section of Manila’s metropolis where people waiting for their train could grab a quick bite to eat while rubbing shoulders with a motley crew of “politicians, financiers, bureaucrats, secretaries of departments, the idle rich, the idle,

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<sup>47</sup> G.S. Yull & Co., “The Philippines Cold Stores.”

<sup>48</sup> *The Afro-American* (Baltimore), March 24, 1928.

<sup>49</sup> *Kansas Eagle*, December 21, 1934.

newspapermen, hangers-on, [and] boot-lickers." It was reported that "Tom knew them all."<sup>50</sup> By 1927 Tom had expanded this gastronomic empire with a more upscale sister restaurant on the second floor. Interestingly, he called the place Tom's Oriental Grill.

Figure 22. Tom's Oriental Grill



Source: the American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University

<sup>50</sup> *Pittsburg Courier*, May 12, 1945.

While the original Dixie Kitchen was known as a place where “[p]eople of different classes gathered,”<sup>51</sup> the Oriental Grill was more refined and a “quieter place than the downstairs and was designed for private dinners and larger parties.”<sup>52</sup> Perhaps the best surviving description of life inside the Oriental Grill comes from none other than John Lewis Waller, one of the chief proponents of black colonization to the Philippines. Waller, in an article to the most widely read black paper in the United States, *The Chicago Defender*, described his tour of the Oriental Grill in Manila to a African American readership anxious to fantasize about distant lands they imagined to be far away from Jim Crow America. Each private room was themed after a different country in the Orient with “[t]he modern jazz music of the orchestra” being “the only Occidental note in the Oriental melody of the place.” Patrons could choose to visit Singapore, Siam, Burma, Java, and Turkey or the local Philippine districts of Cebu or Iloilo. The fact that Iloilo was included clearly indicated an homage to Tom’s wife who hailed from that region and may have had a hand in providing the local knowledge that Tom needed to decorate the various spaces. The Japanese room was “covered with matting and cushions.” The Persian room popped with “deep rich colors.” At least one of the Philippine rooms was built on “a floor of split bamboo”<sup>53</sup> not unlike that which President Taft had imported from the Philippines to cover the foundation of the Oval Office.<sup>54</sup> The Oriental Grill also displayed a more exotic, erotic, and forbidden side, however. No doubt catering to the local sex-trade, the final chamber at Tom’s Oriental

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<sup>51</sup> Thomas Pritchard v. The Republic of the Philippines.

<sup>52</sup> *The Journal of the American Chamber of Commerce*, August 1964, 388. University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>53</sup> John Lewis Waller, “Finest Restaurant in the Orient Owned by American Negro: Thomas Pritchard Opens New Grill in Manila; is Show Place of Big City,” in *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 31, 1927.

<sup>54</sup> David Brody, *Visualizing American Empire*, 166–67.

Grill defied all national boundaries. It was “done in a passionate red” and was simply called “the ‘Devil’s’ room.”<sup>55</sup>

The fact that Tom’s high-class establishment was associated with Asia, while his entry-level joint was themed after the American South, clearly demonstrated that Tom understood the competing racial dynamics at play in Manila. Chinese and Filipino elites largely saw themselves as more cultured and aristocratic than the upstart American imperialists charged with ruling their country.<sup>56</sup> Tom’s choice in restaurant names clearly indicated that he was aware of this assessment, even if he did not share in its underlying sentiments. As a further nod to Asian sophistication, Tom spared no expense in outfitting his Oriental Grill with the finest symbols of cosmopolitan aspiration. He imported fixtures and decorative arts from India, Burma, Japan, and Siam and mixed them with material culture from Egypt and the African Atlantic world.<sup>57</sup> The high culture of dark skinned peoples from around the world thus confronted every white, black, and Filipino diner who could afford a meal (and a side dish of fantasy) at the upscale, nation-themed room of their desire.

While white Americans may have been oblivious to the subtle messaging of Tom’s subversive foray into architectural design and the decorative arts, they too met on the common ground created by his Afro-Asian internationalist vision. For some white Americans, this exotic taste of Asia might have worked just fine as a romanticized upscale fetish where class and sophistication, along with the brief occupation of

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<sup>55</sup> John Lewis Waller, “Finest Restaurant in the Orient Owned by American Negro.”

<sup>56</sup> I would like to thank Jojo Abinales and Richard Chu for first making me aware of the attitudes of Filipino elites and what Jojo has so appropriately named the “hick thesis” whereby Filipino and Chinese transnationals saw the Americans as a backwater second-rate power without the history and culture of either their European or their Chinese competitors.

<sup>57</sup> *The Afro-American* (Baltimore), March 24, 1928.

nationalized Asian spaces, could be purchased on the cheap in the Philippines.<sup>58</sup> Before actually sending troops into Burma, which the U.S. would later do both during WWII and the Vietnam War, some American imperialist customers could first try out a brief consumption of the culture before deciding to fully commit American military resources to the region. Frank Carpenter, American Governor of Mindanao and Sulu, may have been just such a customer. The Governor had become such a fixture at Tom's, and the place had gained such an international reputation, that overseas writers began to simply address their letters to “Governor Frank Carpenter, Tom’s Dixie Kitchen—Manila” No Philippines. No physical street name or number.”<sup>59</sup> The governor no doubt learned about the world at Tom’s Oriental Grill even as he conducted state business in the private national dining spaces of his choosing. Tom had thus created idealized colonial possibilities to American statecrafters by providing spaces where they could experiment with empire and imagine its infinite possibilities for expansion. This blurring of the lines between the colonial state and the private sector was something that was not entirely uncommon in the Philippines. But the fact that a black proprietor was at the center of this particular merger was noteworthy to say the least.

Still, there was no mistaking that spatially the Oriental Grill along with its compartmentalized Asian identities literally sat on top of, and perhaps looking down upon, the commoners of Dixie.<sup>60</sup> Elite Filipinos and Chinese mestizos certainly got the

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<sup>58</sup> For more on this tendency to own highly valued artifacts extracted from Asia in general and the Philippines specifically as well as how this material culture effected the growth of American empire see Brody, *Visualizing American Empire*.

<sup>59</sup> *The Journal of the American Chamber of Commerce* (August 1964), 388. University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>60</sup> The calendar above shows a balcony table floating above the main dining room which may have been part of the Oriental Grill’s upstairs.

message. Philippine president Manual Roxas was a friend and customer.<sup>61</sup> Future Philippine Supreme Court justice Jesus G. Barrera was a shareholder and board member of Tom's Dixie Kitchen, Inc. and likely supplied sugar to the kitchen from his Nueva Ecija sugar mill.<sup>62</sup> Fantasies of all sorts were being served up daily by Tom and his staff, whether for Americans imagining themselves as more worldly or Filipinos escaping to a briefly less colonized respite.

**Figure 23. Thomas Pritchard with Manila's Elite**



Source: the American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Pritchard v. *The Republic of the Philippines*.

<sup>62</sup> George Ferguson Mitchell Nellist, *Men of the Philippines: A Biographical Record of Men of Substantial Achievement in the Philippine Islands* (Manila: Sugar News Co., 1931), 30.

While Tom clearly catered to the white and Filipino elite he was certainly no elitist. In addition to being the preferred caterer for the Manila Jockey Club, he was also clearly committed to maintaining an accessible social, cultural, and even political space for Manila's working class.<sup>63</sup> Observers noted that together Tom's restaurants "became the favorite place of the haves and have nots" where everyone "met on common ground."<sup>64</sup> Entry level meals were notoriously affordable, at least downstairs, as one customer remarked with astonishment that "[t]he price of the regular lunch was one peso! Special orders, for beefsteak, etc. came to more, but prices were still reasonable."<sup>65</sup>

Tom's intent in this respect becomes clear through a brief analysis of how he advertised his restaurant. Targeted print ads beckoned to "service men throughout the world"<sup>66</sup> as well as rural Filipino "provincianos."<sup>67</sup> Many of his ads explicitly signaled an inclusive environment by encouraging Manila's elite to "[b]ring your provincial friends."<sup>68</sup> Tom promised that his place was "[w]here new comers and old timers get together."<sup>69</sup> While other ads contained elegant pictures of white people dancing the night away, gratuitous French phrases, and at least one conspicuous *fleur-de-lis*, Tom's business model was ultimately built upon high volume, a lively atmosphere, and the marketing of a new mass culture in the Philippines.

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<sup>63</sup> *Philippine Magazine* August 1938 Vol. 35 no. 8

<sup>64</sup> *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 12, 1945.

<sup>65</sup> *The Journal of the American Chamber of Commerce* (August 1964), 388.

<sup>66</sup> *Bamboo Breezes: United States Naval Station*, Vol. 3, No. 3, March 9, 1929. University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>67</sup> *The Independent*, October 8, 1921. Courtesy of the Eugenio Lopez Library and Museum, Pasig City, Philippines which says "Remember When you visit Manila that Tom's Dixie Kitchen is the meeting place for 'provincianos.'" *The Independent*, January 15, 1921 says "Tom's Dixie Kitchen Manila's Most Popular Restaurant The Meeting place of provincial people."

<sup>68</sup> *The Independent*, July 19, 1924. Courtesy of the Lopez Museum, Pasig City, Philippines

<sup>69</sup> *Philippines Free Press*, September 21, 1946, Courtesy of the Lopez Museum, Pasig City, Philippines

In this way, for black, white, and Filipino residents of Manila, Tom's Dixie Kitchen served as a more cross-class, interracial version of what black internationalists were simultaneously experiencing in Parisian salons and cafés.<sup>70</sup> One American observer even mistakenly called the place "Tom's Café."<sup>71</sup> While government officials held court in nationally-themed private dining rooms, by the start of the Roaring Twenties, Tom's Dixie Kitchen had also become a communal space where genuine working class opposition was being built in the public sphere.<sup>72</sup> Spatially it was woven into the very heart of Manila's built urban environment. On at least one occasion in 1925, political violence actually broke out at the restaurant. One of Tom's customers, perhaps from downstairs, openly declared his opposition to the American empire building projects taking place upstairs, saying "I believe that the Filipinos should have their independence." While similar decolonization efforts in the Philippines often landed activists in jail, on this particular occasion Tom's customer received a first-class trip to the local hospital courtesy of another, more imperialist-minded, patron.<sup>73</sup>

This political function of the restaurant was in fact well known. One local newspaper reported, that everyone in Manila knew that Tom's was the place to go for "indescribably good chow, and, incidentally, to solve the leading issues of the day."<sup>74</sup> Another paper, serving African Americans in Pittsburgh, described Tom's Dixie Kitchen

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<sup>70</sup> See Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 2003.

<sup>71</sup> *Independence for the Philippine Islands: Hearings before the Committee on Territories and Insular Affairs*, United States Senate. Seventy-first Congress, second session, Part 1, January 15 and 20, 1930, (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1930), 638.

<sup>72</sup> For more on salons, and later cafes, in the creation of an elite public sphere in Europe see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1991). For how cafes functioned for the urban working class see W. Scott Haine, *The World of the Paris Café: Sociability Among the French Working Class, 1789-1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

<sup>73</sup> *The Philippine Republic*, Vol 3 No. 10, November 1925.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

as “the most popular place in town” where “[g]ossip of the Rialto, tid-bits of scandal, rumors within the government, tips on the stock market, pungent thumbnail biographies, bombast and idle talk were exchanged like commodities.”<sup>75</sup> This trading of social, intellectual, and material capital situated Tom’s Dixie Kitchen at the very center of Manila’s cultural and political life. It became, among other things, Manila’s *Café De Flore*.

For Filipinos specifically, this meant that Tom’s was the place to go for information on the cultural as well as the political dimensions of American empire. When two Filipinos “Putakte and Bubuyong” wanted to “know how to dance the Ronda” they went to the two “world centers of learning and culture such as the University of the Philippines Browsing Room and the Round Table at Tom’s Dixie Kitchen.”<sup>76</sup> The Round Table they referred to was the American Merchant’s Association Round Table, which was also called the Manila Coffee Club that was eventually taken over by the American Chamber of Commerce. This private club had followed Tom from their shared original home at Clarke’s restaurant. The organization was deemed so valuable that upon the failure of Clarke’s establishment the club and its furnishings were actually purchased by its members at the liquidation sale administered by the Bank of the Philippine Islands.<sup>77</sup> Under Tom’s roof the organization would flourish and its influence continues to bear down on Manila to this day.

In addition to learning dances curated by Manila’s business class, several other cultural institutions were also taking shape at Tom’s. When a local reporter wanted to

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<sup>75</sup> *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 12, 1945.

<sup>76</sup> *Philippine Magazine*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (April 1937).

<sup>77</sup> *The American Chamber of Commerce Journal* (December 1939).

know “[w]hat the [s]chool-[g]oing Philippines [r]eads” he based his information on “observations at Tom’s Dixie Kitchen.” Those observations discovered that at least one magazine, *Living Age*, was only available for purchase in the Philippines at Tom’s Dixie Kitchen.<sup>78</sup> In addition to this vibrant literary scene, Tom was importing jazz music to the Philippines thereby extending his sense of black internationalism to the Philippine sonic environment. His formal dance floor provided a space where black dance steps as well as the music that inspired it could cross the Pacific. American Express, in their travel guide to Manila, took note of the “good orchestra” and modern musical numbers available to patrons at Tom’s Dixie Kitchen.<sup>79</sup> The band likely contained several black musicians and almost certainly contained members trained by the famed African American band leader in the Philippines, Walter Loving, who was among Tom’s clients and friends.<sup>80</sup> This house band also brought black music to an even wider Philippine audience via live radio broadcasts.<sup>81</sup> Using this new technology, Tom’s musicians disseminated black culture via original compositions far beyond the bounds of the restaurant. Nahum Daniel Brascher of the *Chicago Defender* claimed in 1938 that the entertainment at Tom’s “is not excelled by the Cotton Club.”<sup>82</sup> This colossal compliment clearly intended to compare the rich black cultural space Tom was generating in Manila to one of the most famed hubs of black creativity during the Harlem Renaissance.

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<sup>78</sup> *The American Chamber of Commerce Journal* (November 1926).

<sup>79</sup> American Express Company, *Manila and the Philippines* (Manila: American Express Company, 1933?), Courtesy of the University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor.

<sup>80</sup> *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 8, 1934 describes Loving’s wife Edith, whose racial background was either white or mixed raced African American, and Tom’s wife Mary, who was a fair skinned Filipina mestiza, attending a black social gathering in Los Angeles together in 1934 indicating that the two families spent time together socially.

<sup>81</sup> Elizabeth L. Enriquez, *Appropriation of Colonial Broadcasting: A History of Early Radio in the Philippines, 1922-1946* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2008), 92.

<sup>82</sup> *Chicago Defender*, February 12, 1938.

In addition to the sights, sounds, and tastes coming from his restaurant, Tom also augmented the smell of his kitchen with imported French perfumes. In 1921 he was one of five other non-Filipino incorporators of the “Paris-Manila Perfume Company.”<sup>83</sup> Like so many other things, Tom’s transnational Parisian scents were no doubt offered for sale at his restaurant. This bridging of black vernacular culture in the form of jazz with highbrow European elegance signaled by smells circulated from France positioned Tom not as a conflicted contradiction but as an archetypical modern black subject. He and his restaurant were the embodiments of modernity itself.<sup>84</sup>

But perhaps the most important and enduring contribution that Tom made to the Philippine cultural landscape came through the world of sport. Tom’s restaurant may have been the first place that many Filipinos became acquainted with what is today the country’s most fabled spectator sport—boxing. Before Manny Pacquiao became a Philippine national hero, Francisco Guilledo, better known as Pancho Villa, took the world by storm in 1923 becoming the first Filipino, the first Asian, and first non-Westerner to become a world boxing champion. As it turned out, such a possibility was first contemplated and publicly predicted in 1921 at Tom’s Dixie Kitchen. It was there that Villa’s manager Frank A. Churchill told a group of “fight fans, sports writers, and businessmen assembled” at Tom’s Round Table that “[a] Filipino is going to be a world’s champion some day.” The apparently outlandish idea was met with resounding laughter and ridicule by Tom’s other customers whose public opinions on all matters shaped not only what was popular but what was considered possible. This dismissal, however,

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<sup>83</sup> *The American Chamber of Commerce Journal* (June 1921) listed Tom as one of the five non-Filipino incorporators of the “Paris-Manila Perfume Company”.

<sup>84</sup> For more on this idea of black subjects exemplifying modernity through their competence with a both black folk tradition and the cultural currents Western modernity see Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism*.

reportedly fueled Churchill “to seek vindication” and earn the respect of the social scene at Tom’s Dixie Kitchen that by this time could make or break careers. He would soon thereafter help Pancho Villa travel to the U.S. to break the color line and take the world flyweight boxing title out of white hands just as Jack Johnson had done in the heavyweight division just a decade prior. Indeed, without Johnson paving the way, and without Tom creating the environment where such a crazy transnational idea could be discussed, boxing in the Philippines may not have taken off as it did. According to Bill Miller, a sports reporter who was present for that historic prediction, the chain of causality was clear: “A roar of laughter in Tom’s Dixie Kitchen, Manila, made Pancho Villa a champion of the world.”<sup>85</sup>

In the wake of Pancho Villa’s success, Tom would take his support of Philippine boxing a step further when he began actively promoting boxing matches through his restaurant. When the Manila Boxing Club put on a “*programa estupendo*” (tremendous lineup) of boxing in 1932, they let the city know through the leading Spanish language newspaper that “[b]illetes de venta en TOM’S DIXIE KITCHEN” (tickets are for sale at Tom’s Dixie Kitchen).<sup>86</sup> More than a decade later Tom’s commitment to the sport had not wavered. Likely with Tom acting as facilitator, world heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis visited Manila in 1948, where of course, he grabbed a bite at Tom’s postwar restaurant, The Santa Ana Cabaret. There Louis consumed the black international fare of Tom’s kitchen and signed autographs for adoring Filipino and Filipina fans.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Bill Miller, “How Pancho Villa Rose to Fame,” *The Philippine Republic* (January 1925).

<sup>86</sup> *La Voz Española*, Vol. 2, No. 52, February 27, 1932 and *La Voz Española*. [Vol. 2, no. 53], March 5, 1932.

<sup>87</sup> “Joe Louis (Boxer Champ Heavyweight at Sta. Ana Cabaret,” Part V, Vol. 2, Photo 9:125 American Chamber of Commerce Photographs, American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University.

**Figure 24. Joe Louis at the Santa Ana Cabaret, 1948**



Source: the American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University

A casual reading of this photograph reveals a number of important dynamics at play between black and Filipino peoples in Manila. While the stylishly dressed Louis is clearly in a position of authority, and even reverence, he is also having a piece of himself extracted and transformed, at least symbolically, into a material object, namely, the signed boxing glove that the Filipino fan will now possess. The expectation that Louis would interrupt his meal in order to serve as a cultural ambassador for black America and spread the goodwill of black culture to the Philippines was, of course, a burden he was by this time quite accustomed to. As the Filipino man later circulated his prized

autograph to his Filipino friends, beginning, of course, with the elated Filipina woman by his side, he could lay claim not only to a memento of transnational fame but also the cultural power and cache of black modernism itself.

At the very least the exchanges taking place in this picture were learning procedures for all parties involved. The power dynamics were also quite complicated and didn't necessarily favor Louis. At the same time that he was being honored in the Philippines Louis was also being debased and subjected to America's domestic empire. By 1948 his Filipino fans were already full citizens of their own independent nation state and technically free of American colonial impositions. Soon after this photo, however, Louis, however, would soon after this photo return home to the discipline of Jim Crow. He was, thus, an exiled guest of a Philippine people possessing an autonomy and a measure of self-governance that Lewis could only dream of in 1948. Still, the relaxed atmosphere that finds Louis's entourage in the background mingling casually with Filipino patrons shows that Tom's knack for bringing people of color together continued even after World War II. The racially ambiguous woman behind Louis's right shoulder and under the standing lamp embodies just how the boundaries between black and Filipino identities were blurring in such an environment and how the solidarities taking shape had already resulted in a mixed race black Amerasian population of which Tom's children were the perfect exemplars.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> For more on black Amerasians in the Philippines see Angelica Allen, "Blackness in the Philippine Imaginary," (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, forthcoming 2019).

**Figure 25. Thomas Pritchard Family Photo, September 8, 1934**



Source: *The Chicago Defender*

**Figure 26. Thomas Pritchard Family Photo, May 12, 1945**



Source: *Pittsburgh Courier*

These cultural exchanges that Tom facilitated between diasporic blackness and an ever-deepening Philippine nationalism often collided, however, through on-the-ground labor relations between Tom and his almost exclusively Filipino workforce. Tom seems to have kept a somewhat segregated workforce with Filipinos serving as seaters and Chinese Filipinos serving as waiters.<sup>89</sup> In order to further prevent worker solidarity and employee theft Tom imposed a modern accounting method to track customer checks and prevent “collusion between waiters and checkers to defraud him.” This innovative “unbeatable’ checking system” was reportedly “adopted by the leading restaurants throughout the Orient.”<sup>90</sup> By imposing these rigid accounting rules, inventories, and worker discipline, Tom had introduced modernity to the traditional restaurant business in the Philippines and, if reports are to be believed, “throughout the Orient.” Restaurant workers who might have previously thrived in a flexible, informal system capable of providing extras ‘on the house,’ solving problems through free food, or earning tips by circumventing standard procedures would have clearly felt stifled in Tom’s brave new world. In 1941, even before Pearl Harbor officially brought the U.S. into World War II and thereby further warping global labor markets, Tom’s Chinese and Filipino workers succeeded in closing Tom’s Dixie Kitchen permanently by organizing a massive strike.<sup>91</sup> While black newspapers often attributed Tom’s success to his “fury of authentic greatness” or, even more romantically, because he was “a man with a rendezvous with destiny” the worker’s strike reminded him that he had built his fortune on the backs of Chinese and Filipino laborers.

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<sup>89</sup> John Lewis Waller, “Finest Restaurant in the Orient Owned by American Negro.”.

<sup>90</sup> *Afro-American* (Baltimore), March 24, 1928.

<sup>91</sup> *Philippine Magazine*, June 1941, 225.

These circulations of culture and these struggles over labor, when taken together, meant that Tom's Dixie Kitchen functioned as a cultural and political proving ground for old ideas and new commitments. Just as historian W. Scott Haine has noted in his study of working class Parisian cafés, Tom's restaurant was a critical place where modernity was essentially staged, acted out, and negotiated. At the same time, however, the restaurant also made room for traditional, face-to-face interactions that often challenged various other aspects of modernity.<sup>92</sup> While modern tastes and ideas were clearly being exchanged at Tom's Dixie Kitchen, nothing proved more ancient and traditional than sharing a meal in a communal space. Similar to historian Richard White's observations of the American West, the old-fashioned friendships that developed in the Philippines, including those between Tom and his Filipino customers, often short-circuited the more rational bureaucratic relationships demanded by American empire and industrial capitalism.<sup>93</sup>

This bringing together of a diverse, emergent, yet conflicted Manila cosmopolitanism may have even led the way towards political independence for the Philippines. In the lead up to the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, Congressional Hearings on Filipino independence actually cited Tom's Dixie Kitchen as a sign that the Philippines was modern enough and ready enough for self-governance. Ironically, more than a few white politicos in Jim Crow America viewed a black man's centrality to the Philippine public sphere with patriotic pride. The *Congressional Report* boasted that "Tom, the owner is a negro, but his color is no bar to respectable whites and Filipinos."<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*.

<sup>93</sup> White, *Railroaded*, 2011. Tom's relationship with General Douglas MacArthur, described in more detail below, is a prime example of this phenomenon.

<sup>94</sup> *Independence for the Philippine Islands*, 638.

Forgetting the fact that segregation was a critical aspect of American modernity, and that Tom likely would have been lynched for his success or barred from achieving it to begin with in the real Dixie, self-congratulatory whites arguing for Filipino independence used the racial inclusion found at “Tom’s Café” as a mark of modernity. Benevolent assimilation was working, they claimed, and the black internationalist culture at Tom’s Dixie Kitchen was the proof. Thus, as a social laboratory in the Philippines, Tom’s Dixie Kitchen supposedly proved that white, black, and Filipino residents could be brought together under one roof and tentatively united—but only under the guiding hand of Tom’s uniquely diasporic brand of black culture. In this way, a Filipino-lead multiracial democracy *only* appeared possible to white imperialists after this sufficient infusion of African American taste, culture, and cuisine.

## **Serial Statelessness**

Tom’s centrality to Manila’s daily life and his ability to perform a number of different national identities came in particularly handy during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines in World War II. African Americans in the Philippines were all subject to interment. At least fifty “American Negros” ended up being recorded as prisoners in the Santo Thomas Camp alone.<sup>95</sup> Tom himself was questioned for several hours at Fort Santiago but ultimately escaped this fate either by playing up his Caribbean origins, pulling strings with his high-ranking Filipino friends, or otherwise convincing the Japanese that he and his Filipina wife and their Philippine-born children

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<sup>95</sup> “List of American (Negro) in M.I.C. as of Nov. 29, 1944,” Santo Thomas Internment Camp Records Vol. 1, American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University.

were all just ordinary Filipinos.<sup>96</sup> Almost overnight his African American performance became a liability. But old habits die hard. Once out, Tom smuggled food back to his black and white American friends who were interned at Santo Tomas, as well as feeding everyday Filipinos for free as they suffered food insecurity during the war.<sup>97</sup> He also fed, hid, and funded the Filipino and American guerilla resistance forces, who were fighting against the Japanese occupation.<sup>98</sup> When Robert Gordon Woods—the African American soldier who had helped T. Thomas Fortune with his investigation of black colonization to the Philippines—was rescued from the Los Baños internment camp in 1945, Tom housed him at his palatial estate in the tooney Santa Mesa neighborhood of Manila.<sup>99</sup>

While Tom's affinity for black Americans and the African diaspora never seemed to waiver, he must have had mixed feelings after the Japanese and American militaries reduced his restaurant to rubble in the Battle of Manila in 1945.<sup>100</sup> All seemed to be forgiven by 1949, however, when he visited an old friend largely responsible for the physical destruction of Tom's Dixie Kitchen—General Douglas MacArthur. After bombing Manila to pieces, the general's next assignment was overseeing America's post-war empire in Japan much in the same way that his father Arthur MacArthur had once ruled over the Philippines. When the younger MacArthur heard that his old friend and

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<sup>96</sup> *The Journal of the American Chamber of Commerce* (August 1964), 388 and *Thomas Pritchard v. The Republic of the Philippines* both provide conflicting accounts of Tom's time during WWII and how he escaped interment.

<sup>97</sup> *Chicago Defender*, April 28, 1945.

<sup>98</sup> *The Journal of the American Chamber of Commerce* (August 1964), 388

<sup>99</sup> Tom lived in Santa Mesa according to the caption of the photo of the Mango Terrace, in Vol 9. p. 123, American Chamber of Commerce Photographs, American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University. For more on Fortune's trip and his interactions with Woods see Chapter 2.

<sup>100</sup> While newspaper reports indicated that the Japanese may have burned the restaurant, American artillery, tank fire, and aerial bombings of the area were heavy and non-discriminate. See *Free Philippines* May 4, 1945 and *Battle of Manila*, Department of Defense, 1959, Courtesy of Archive.org, last accessed December 10, 2016 <https://archive.org/details/gov.dod.dimoc.30113>

Manila's most celebrated celebrity chef wanted to see him in Tokyo, he personally arranged for a private car to meet Tom at the docks.<sup>101</sup> This intimate access to the highest levels of American empire placed Tom in a unique position to influence political outcomes. What he did with this particular access, however, remains unclear.

**Figure 27. Ruins of Tom's Dixie Kitchen in Plaza Goiti, c. 1945**



Source: the Eugenio Lopez Library and Museum, Pasig City

Yet none of these relationships made Tom an American—or a Filipino. With the final acknowledgement of Philippine independence in 1946 Tom was soon thrust into legal limbo as a new Philippine state tried to define itself as a nation. Under the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act of 1914, Tom likely lost his status as a subject of the

<sup>101</sup> *Philippines Free Press*, September 24, 1949, 71.

British Crown when he renounced his allegiance to King Edward VII as part of his application for American citizenship in 1903.<sup>102</sup> That application was supposedly destroyed, however, in the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 where Tom had left it on his way to the Philippines.<sup>103</sup> While some uncertainty remains as to whether Tom's three years aboard an American cargo vessel automatically granted him citizenship or if he needed to file further documentation to complete it, he had no written proof of either this American application or his maritime activities.<sup>104</sup> Having come to the Philippines during American rule, with no real immigration controls to speak of, Tom had no papers and no need for them. Under Section 5 of Philippine Commonwealth Act Number 473, which governed naturalization law after 1939, Tom could not furnish the permanent resident alien certificate required upon his arrival in the Philippines because no such certificate existed when he arrived.<sup>105</sup> In a post-independence Philippines, Tom had fallen into the newly created category of the illegal alien.<sup>106</sup> Like so many post-war migrants in Europe, and African Americans living under Jim Crow, Tom was effectively stateless. He was also, to borrow Mae Ngai's striking term, "an impossible subject."

Tom likely became hyper-aware of this newly ambiguous status after the Japanese army grilled him during the war regarding his national allegiances. He attempted to rectify the situation in the postwar period by applying for Filipino citizenship in 1947. He quickly became one of the first test cases for the post-

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<sup>102</sup> British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act. August 7, 1914.

<sup>103</sup> *Thomas Pritchard v. The Republic of the Philippines*.

<sup>104</sup> For more on maritime culture before the Civil War, especially as it relates to the concept of national citizenship see Matthew Taylor Raffety, *The Republic Afloat: Law, Honor, and Citizenship in Maritime America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

<sup>105</sup> Philippine Commonwealth Act (Number 473), 1939.

<sup>106</sup> For more on how illegal immigration functioned in the construction of the American nation state see Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*.

independence Philippine Supreme Court, now finally vested with the full power to determine who was and who was not a Filipino.

During the case Tom and his life narrative were on trial. After the court of first instance in Manila preliminarily granted Tom his naturalization papers on August 29, 1947, the Solicitor General Roberto A. Gianzon, for some unknown reason, filed an injunction and appealed the lower court ruling. It was remanded to the Philippine Supreme Court. The testimony and interrogations that followed involved Tom and three Filipino friends, Felixberto G. Bustos, Victor Buencamino, and Arsenio Luz, as they all tried to convince the court that Tom should be permitted to become a Filipino. Bustos, a freelance journalist and biographer of Philippine President Manuel Roxas, assured the court that Tom was “well-esteemed, despite his race, by everybody, and he is very democratic in his dealings with our people.” While it was true that Tom’s blackness was anything but a barrier to him in Manila, his striking workers, if called to the stand, might have disagreed with exactly how democratic he was in his labor management practices. Bustos, perhaps unaware of the strike, testified under oath that “[e]xcept himself and two other Americans...[Tom] employs Filipinos in his business and his employees have nothing except good comment about his good relation with them.” Overall, Bustos’s argument rested heavily on portraying Tom as a “legitimate democratic person so far as high principles of democracy are concerned.”<sup>107</sup>

Buencamino concurred, stating that Tom’s “reputation or conduct in relation to the Government of the Philippines and the community is very good, irreproachable.”<sup>108</sup> A veterinarian by trade, Buencamino likely supplied Tom with imported meat from

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<sup>107</sup> *Thomas Pritchard v. The Republic of the Philippines.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

Australia and Vietnam through a clever side business he had developed and thus had a financial interest in Tom remaining in the Philippines.<sup>109</sup> He testified explicitly that Tom was not an anarchist, a polygamist, or a promoter of “violence [or] personal assault or assassination for the success or predominance of his ideas.” Buencamino knew of no instance of Tom being “convicted of any crime involving moral turpitude” and promised the court that Tom would prove “a valuable asset to the Philippine Government as a Filipino citizen.”<sup>110</sup> As a descendant of enslaved peoples, Tom was all too familiar for what it meant to be a commodified “asset” of a state power claiming to monopolize the legitimate use of violence. Tom hoped, however, that the Philippine state would be different—valuing him less as an “asset,” as his friend described, and more as a human being with inalienable rights.

Luz, who claimed to have known Tom since his arrival in Manila in 1911, was clearly a close friend being featured in the photo above with Tom and the Manila elite as well as in the picture below at another one of Tom’s postwar restaurants, Tom’s Mango Terrace.

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<sup>109</sup> For more on Buencamino see Victor Buencamino, *Memoirs of Victor Buencamino*, Jorge B. Vargas, ed. (Manila: Filipiniana Foundation, 1977).

<sup>110</sup> *Thomas Pritchard v. The Republic of the Philippines*.

**Figure 28. “At Tom’s Mango Terrace” (Tom at far left and Luz at far right)**



Source: American Chamber of Commerce Photographs, American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University.

Luz, a famed circus performer, stated that Tom “has always been friendly to ma[n]y Filipinos” and that “[m]ost of the prominent Filipinos are his friends, including

President Roxas.” This appeal to political power and personal friendship were in one sense meant to sidestep a rational and technocratic interpretation of the law but in another sense, the law itself actually had these informal relationships built into it. Luz testified, for example, that Tom had “mingled socially with Filipinos and has evinced the desire to embrace the customs and traditions and ideals of the Filipino people” which was, in fact, an almost verbatim requirement of the law for those seeking naturalization under the Philippine Commonwealth Act of 1939.<sup>111</sup> Luz recounted Tom’s feeding of the American prisoners of Santo Thomas during the Japanese occupation and for some reason also felt it necessary to state that “[t]he Japanese were most sympathetic with American colored people because they [k]new the racial antagonism that existed between the whites and the colored.”<sup>112</sup>

Then it was Tom’s turn. In recounting his life story, Tom tried to explain his convoluted citizenship status. He thought that his time aboard a U.S. merchant ship from 1902 to 1906, along with his filing of “a declaration of intention to become an American citizen” in New York meant that he had fulfilled his U.S. citizenship requirement because “[h]e was made to understand that after 3 years of service in the merchant ship he would become an American citizen automatically.” After losing those papers in the great San Francisco earthquake of 1906, which might have solved his citizenship problem, Tom instead had to prove his Filipinoness through other means besides his adopted (African) Americanness. He put forward his ability to speak Spanish and Tagalog along with the claim that “[a]ll his friend are here” as proof of his commitment to the Philippine nation. He assured the Philippine state that he believed

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<sup>111</sup> Philippine Commonwealth Act (Number 473), 1939 and *Thomas Pritchard v. The Republic of the Philippines*.

<sup>112</sup> *Thomas Pritchard v. The Republic of the Philippines*.

in the “absolute separation of the church and the state” but also, in the earliest days of the Cold War, that “[h]e is not a communist.” Perhaps more importantly to the letter of the law, however, Tom rested his case on his Filipino family. He stressed that “[h]is wife is a Filipina” and was “born in Iloilo.” He provided various exhibits to the court to certify that his children were educated in Philippine schools (this last part being another requirement of the law).<sup>113</sup>

The Solicitor General in seeking to deny Tom’s Philippine citizenship did not contest any of the factual claims Tom made but focused instead on three highly technical aspects of the Philippine Naturalization Law that he wanted the high court to rule on. The first objection was that the law required longtime residents who had arrived before Philippine immigration laws to have “given primary and secondary education to all his children in the public schools or private schools recognized by the government and not limited to any race.” The solicitor general interpreted this to mean that the children must have completed such schooling at the time of application, not merely attended said schools. The justices called this contention of the Solicitor General “untenable” and “based on an interpretation of the law not only too literal but unreasonable.” The justices ruled that people without children should not be required to fulfill this obligation nor those with older children past school age but only that “the children, if of school age, should be given the opportunity of getting primary or secondary education...but not that both must have completed.”<sup>114</sup>

The second question was whether the law required that children be continuously enrolled in Philippine schools that were run or recognized by the government. The law

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

stated that “it is imperative that petitioner’s children [s]hould be enrolled during the entire period of residence in the islands.” While Tom did send his children to these schools he had not done so continuously as during the war his children had fled to safety in the United States. Here too the justices said that the Solicitor General’s “contention is not well taken.” They pointed out the absurdity of the law as written pointing out that Tom had been in the Philippines for thirty-seven years and “[h]ow could petitioner keep his three children enrolled in our schools for 37 years?” Furthermore, Tom would not have been able to enroll his children in school “during [his] entire period of residence in the islands” because his children were not yet born when he arrived. The justices claimed that this impossibility in the letter of the law was “a mere clerical error or...an oversight.”<sup>115</sup>

Finally, the Solicitor General contested Tom’s American citizenship, stating that Tom had produced no written proof to validate it and that even if he had secured it, such citizenship was only intended to be a partial citizenship applying to Tom only while he was at sea under the American flag. On the first point the justices paid homage to the long Filipino tradition of oral history and dismissed the question of documentation stating that it was not required under the law and that “[t]here is nothing exceptional in the facts of naturalization to require documentary evidence to the exclusion of other evidence.” On the second question, which held that Tom’s American citizenship was not a full citizenship but of a limited nature, things got interesting. Here the legacy of American colonial law, as exemplified by the Insular Cases, ran directly into Jim Crow and the kind of serial statelessness that both black people in America and Filipinos in

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

their own land so often experienced. The justices, all born as colonial subjects, were well-acquainted with partial constitutional protections and the limitations that could be placed on citizenship stating that: “[i]t is elemental that not all the citizens of a country enjoy all the rights and privileges of a citizen.” Consequently, but without any explicit comment on the inherent injustice of that reality, the court ruled that “[t]he limitations of petitioner's American citizenship, if there are any, do not divest him of that citizenship.” The court thus ruled that “petitioner is an American citizen as stated in the decision of the lower court.”<sup>116</sup> In an interesting twist of fate for a self-consciously postcolonial society, Tom's Americanness made him Filipino and the court cited American case law as their rational for this assertion.<sup>117</sup> As a result, on July 17, 1948, in a unanimous decision, Thomas Pritchard, a black man from Grenada, became a Filipino.

## Conclusion

While it would be tempting to dismiss Tom's story as the idiosyncratic tale of a single black internationalist, Tom was in fact much more exemplary in this respect than he was exceptional. Blackness was certainly a paradoxical, ambivalent, vacillating force in the American occupied Philippines. Tom's mixed identities, shifting loyalties, and uncertain citizenship status were not unusual for black people in the Atlantic or the Pacific. Blackness globally so often resided, and continues to reside, in a similar condition of serial statelessness—jumping in and out of various state authorities, national inclusions, and social exclusions. For African Americans living in the

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> The court cited United States Statute of Naturalization as amended by Public Act No. 483 of the 79th Congress, Chapter 584, second session H.R. 3517

continental U.S., Tom's frequent appearances in the black press, and his transformation in the black imaginary into an African American folk hero helped expand the boundaries of the possible for African Americans while placing black internationalism at the center of an expanding civil rights agenda.

But, at the same time, Tom, and the black modernist culture that he circulated through also served as key translators in the Philippines and, indeed, in the world at large.<sup>118</sup> During this period, Filipinos learned new tactics from their black neighbors like Tom who were detailing how to deploy cultural means as part of a political struggle for recognition and inclusion.<sup>119</sup> Black internationalists also translated empire and circulated strategies to Filipinos on how to confront it through food, music, dance, and everyday conversations on how to survive their colonized status. Overall, blackness should thus be seen as a critical bridge by which even white Americans and Filipinos came to understand one another, and modernity at large, for better, and so often, for worse.

Yet for white Americans, the black presence in the Philippines was much more than a convenient buffer or a vehicle for translation. The very presence of black people in the Philippines demanded that America at large confront its own imperial ambitions within full site of the legacy of slavery and the ongoing failures of Reconstruction. The lingering questions from the American Civil War about the limits of the American nation and who would be included within it haunted every step of the American empire in the

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<sup>118</sup> For more on the role of translation and translators see Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 2003; Rafael, *The Promise of the Foreign*. For more on the related concept of middlemen in the African diaspora see Chapter 1 of Thomas C. Holt, *Children of Fire*.

<sup>119</sup> For more on the politics of recognition and how Filipinos remade racial conceptions for Americans see Kramer, *The Blood of Government*.

Philippines, even as new understandings of America and coloniality that developed in the Philippines circled back to the U.S. and effected the lives of African Americans.

And finally, for black migrants like Tom, the Philippines was something else altogether. It was both a fresh start and an old game. It represented yet another imperfect, compromised, impossible conundrum where black people fought to feed their families (or in Tom's case the families of others) within the context of a seemingly boundless empire that chased them wherever they went. To say that Tom participated in this empire is only to say that he lived within it.

## Epilogue

“I’m from the Philippines, badder than Billy Jean”

---Nicki Minaj (2008)<sup>1</sup>

The yearnings for emancipation and the reality of empire circulated back to Jackson, Mississippi on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1961. With the so-called Second Reconstruction in full swing, the first Freedom Riders from Mississippi set out to contest Jim Crow’s empire in the heart of the former Confederacy. Reconstruction had died but activists demanded a resurrection. Black women from Tougaloo College led the way. African Americas in the Pacific insured that they were not alone. Among the women arrested that day at the Trailways bus station, after refusing to leave a ‘whites only’ waiting room, was Mary Harrison.<sup>2</sup>

Born in Manila to Filipino parents on July 22, 1939, Mary’s first experience with American empire was one of loss. As a colonial subject, Mary’s parents were too poor to take care of her and were forced to give her up for adoption. Luckily, Mary was not an orphan for long. Ernest Harrison, an African American army chaplain, along with his wife, soon adopted her and raised her as their own. After World War II, Mary would travel the globe with her adopted black parents finding make-shift homes in Texas,

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<sup>1</sup> Nicki Minaj, “Higher than a Kite” in *Sucka Free* (Dirty Money Records, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Biographical information below on Mary Harrison (Lee) is derived from Dustin Cardon, “Mary Harrison Lee” in *Jackson Free Press*, October 11, 2016; Interview with Geno Lee, March 24, 2011, Southern Foodways Alliance; and Mary Harrison Lee, “Freedom Riders 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion,” Speech at Marriot Hotel, Jackson, Mississippi, May 22, 2011.

Germany, and Kansas before eventually graduating from high school in France. This transnational experience was critical in her decision to join the Civil Rights Movement. She said in an interview forty years after her arrest: “having that freedom to be able to do what I wish, and then all of a sudden couldn’t do it, I decided to join in.”<sup>3</sup> Like so many black transnationalists, her experiences abroad and her realization that another world was possible, contributed to her profound distain for injustice.

In her case, American empire both initiated Mary’s suffering and enabled her survival. It tore her from her Filipino birth family and enabled her black adoptive family to travel to the Pacific. This paradox continued through much of her childhood. A steady paycheck from the U.S. military meant that her family benefited from the expansion of empire while at the same time her black parents were continually subjected to its indignities because of their race. Mary’s movement around the world with black people—all experiencing their own kind of displacement—exposed her to the full depths of America’s global power both in the U.S. and abroad.

When she was arrested in Mississippi, the local police officers in Jackson were not quite sure what to make of her. Who was she? Where did she fit within America’s racial empire? They knew she was non-white and, as such, deserved to be disciplined and punished for resisting Jim Crow. But the authorities were initially unable to place Mary’s transnational colonial experiences within their understanding of the domestic racial scene. In an effort to make sense of her disruptive presence, the police interrogated Mary for several hours—examining her personal narrative as well as her

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Harrison Lee Interview, “Freedom Riders 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion Oral History Project”, Special Collections, University of Mississippi Libraries.

body. They inspected her facial features. They ran their fingers through her hair. It was at this moment that Mary remembered being most afraid.

Like her family in the Philippines a half century prior, America's empire demanded that Filipino proximity to blackness be determined with precision. Exhausted and terrified, as two armed white men "insisted on my nationality," Mary simply told the men the answer they wanted to hear: "I was black." And in that moment, she arrived at a certain kind of truth—foreshadowing James Cone's 1969 pronouncement that "[b]eing black in America has little to do with skin color. Being black means that your heart, your soul, your mind, and your body are where the dispossessed are."<sup>4</sup> This realization was as true in the islands of the Pacific as it was in the swamps of Mississippi.

In an often-overlooked line from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, given just two years after Mary's arrest, King connected these notions of national belonging, alienation, and what it meant to live under colonial rule. In 1963 King declared that even a hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation "the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land."<sup>5</sup> Seeing colonialism as part of "languishing in the corners" of American empire, while relating profoundly to the idea of being an exile in one's own land, the great Hawaiian sovereignty activist, Haunani-Kay Trask, began applying King's notion to the indigenous peoples of Hawai'i in the 1990's. For Trask, to be Hawaiian in Hawai'i, not unlike being an African American in America, was to be "an exile at home."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1969), 151.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream," Speech at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C., August 28<sup>th</sup>, 1963.

<sup>6</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask in *Louder than Bombs: Interviews from the Progressive*, David Barsamian, ed. (Cambridge: South End Press, 2004), 97.

Before her fiery speeches calling for the de-occupation of Hawai‘i and the return of native lands to native peoples, Trask would listen to speeches given by King’s rival, Malcolm X. Not only would she borrow his cadence and emotion but also his content that detailed how to build a black nation in the belly of an empire.

Clearly, the connections between slavery and empire did not stop with the granting of official Philippine independence in 1946 or the highly questionable Hawai‘i statehood vote in 1959. Indeed, today’s empire, both at home and abroad, continues to be informed by the legacy of slavery. As America’s so-called “War on Drugs” rages on, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte began unapologetically executing drug users throughout the Philippines. If we accept Michelle Alexander’s formulation that mass incarceration, driven by American drug policy, is part of *The New Jim Crow* while acknowledging that the Philippines continues to exist in a neocolonial relationship with the U.S., then the violence currently being experienced in the Philippines must be understood, at least partially, as an echo of slavery that is still working its way through empire.<sup>7</sup>

While Alexander’s explanation of the transition from Jim Crow to mass incarceration has taken hold in a number of circles, it rests upon an even more fundamental assumption about what happened to American slavery. The most obvious answer for Alexander (and many other scholars focused primarily on a race-based lens) is to state simply that Jim Crow replaced American slavery. Scholars focused on the intersection of race and class take a slightly different road. Walter Johnson, Seth Rockman, Jonathan Levy, and others associated with the ‘new history of capitalism,’

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<sup>7</sup> Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

hold that slavery was always both a form of capitalism and an enabler of capitalism. For these scholars, ‘slave racial capitalism’ simply transformed after emancipation to account for the nation’s new legal framework prohibiting slavery. While Jim Crow certainly matters for these scholars, domestic labor exploitation and class conflict are viewed along a continuum of unfreedoms with slavery as its most egregious.<sup>8</sup> For feminist scholars including Amy Dru Stanley, Tera Hunter, and Thavolia Glymph, marriage and sexism (along with Jim Crow and modern capitalism) further contributed to these ongoing forms of domination in the lives of postemancipation black women.<sup>9</sup> Thus, depending on who we ask, the echos of slavery can be located in Jim Crow, contemporary capitalism, and patriarchy.

While all of these approaches to slavery’s aftermath can provide a useful window into the question of what happened to slavery, this dissertation has argued that empire is also an essential framework through which to understand it. Empire is where America first began to experiment with building a nation without slavery and it was through that empire that America attempted its last serious project to undo the legacy of slavery through black colonization to the Pacific.

The great irony for black transnationalists is that the Last Reconstruction, as an effort to salvage the closing window of opportunity at home, in many ways inadvertently strengthened the grip of America’s global empire abroad. Individuals may have found a measure freedom through empire, but communities as a whole were digging their own graves with every act of complicity.

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<sup>8</sup> Johnson, *Soul by Soul*; Rockman, *Scraping By*; Levy, *Freaks of Fortune*.

<sup>9</sup> Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract*; Tera W. Hunter, *Bound in Wedlock: Slave and Free Black Marriage in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017); Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Yet even as the connections between slavery, patriarchy, racial capitalism, and empire spread throughout the world, so too did the resistance to them. Whether it is crusaders against sex slavery in Asia looking to black abolitionists for inspiration, or activists in Ferguson, Missouri exchanging strategies with Palestinians in Gaza (who are literally choking on the same American-manufactured tear gas) questions of internal colonialism and the connections between the empire at home and the empire abroad remain as vital as ever.

As a final example, the emergence of Barack Obama, from the occupied island of O‘ahu in the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, reveals like few other biographies the lasting paradox of the Black Pacific. Obama was born just a few months after a Filipina woman with black parents was arrested across the Pacific in Mississippi for a movement that would ultimately decriminalize his parents’ marriage (and validate his very existence). Without Mary Harrison Lee, and the many other racialized subjects of the Black Pacific, there would be no Barack Obama. Growing up in the notoriously multiracial Honolulu—a place only made possible by American empire—Obama’s political career can be accurately read as both a momentary transcendence beyond empire and the reinforcement of that empire. While his cultural influence may have signaled the former, his presidency, and the ongoing reality of race and empire in America, confirmed the later. In the end, Obama, like so many other black transnationalists, inherited a Black Pacific, and its legacy of slavery that he did not create and, in the end, could not control. Survival in that empire may be viewed as resistance. But true emancipation demands much more.

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